

Re-Imagine Christ Community



Capital Campaign Daily Devotional

March 4, 2019 to April 6, 2019

Prepared by the Saints of Christ Community

Christ Community United Methodist Church
Selinsgrove, PA

Statement of Purpose

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. These passages of Scripture and the accompanying devotions are intended to serve as daily meditations while we walk through our capital campaign. Each week of the campaign considers a different theme, while also partnering with the same word: *Legacy*.

Legacy is often defined as “an amount of money or property left to someone in a will.” In terms of faith, however, legacy is the gift of God’s grace given us in order to pass on to others.

Many faithful men and women – some still present on earth, but a great many more now singing with the Saints forever – have passed Jesus to us. This legacy of the Living God now living in us calls us to constantly consider the grace of Jesus Christ, for it is by His grace that we have learned: *prayer, gratitude, faith, sacrifice, and celebration*. This legacy, though, is no legacy at all if we do not pass it on to the next generation.

Together, we have re-imagined Christ Community for mission and ministry in the twenty-first century. Now it is our time to walk faithfully into the legacy we will leave.

Special Thanks

While the Holy Spirit led me to select the passages of Scripture herein, it is our faithful brothers and sisters at CCUMC who have written these beautiful devotionals...sharing, in part, their legacy of faith for the faithful.

A special thanks to John Castrignano and Kim Smeltz for their dedicated work as Prayer Team co-chairs for this campaign and devotional. They faithfully asked our brothers and sisters to compose devotionals, and they received an overwhelmingly positive response. A special thanks also to Ann Garges for gathering the devotionals and sending them to me electronically – this saved vast amounts of time!!! Lastly, thank-you to all the authors who shared Jesus within these pages...your faithfulness humbles me!!!

In Christ,
Rev. Randall G. Bennett, Jr.

~ Legacy of Prayer ~
March 4 – March 10, 2019

“Lord, what do you want to do through me?”

Monday, March 4, 2019

“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”

He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

The man said, “The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” – Genesis 3:8-12

This passage may seem an odd place to begin a week of study on prayer. However, it illustrates for us a very important point: God created people to be in a relationship with Him. Adam and Eve enjoyed a face-to-face relationship with God before their fall. The Lord was walking in the garden in order to do what He did every day with Adam and Eve: spend time with them. How heartbroken God must have been when He had to separate Himself from Adam and Eve because of their sin. God is gracious, though, for when human love failed, God’s love remained steadfast. Though Adam and Eve could no longer enjoy a face-to-face relationship with God, the Lord was never far from His image-bearers...and He’s never far from us.

Prayer is one of the ways that God has given us to draw near to Him. In Methodist circles, we understand Prayer as a means of grace – a God initiated pathway to be in relationship with Him. As you begin this week of study on prayer, I invite you to pray this simple action-prayer:

Prayer: (Breathe in, Breathe out, and say) “Lord, thank-you for Your breath of life!” As you breathe, add this to your prayer: “Lord, what do you want to do through me?” – *Devotional by Randy Bennett*

Tuesday, March 5, 2019

“Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, “God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.” Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh.

At that time men began to call on the name of the Lord.” – Genesis 4:25-26

“Lord, what do you want to do through me?”

Nothing can be more tragic than for a parent to suffer the loss of a child. This was also true for our first parents, Adam and Eve. In their case they had a ‘double tragedy’. Able was murdered by his older brother, Cain. Our scripture lesson for today quotes Eve as saying, “God has granted me another child in place of Able, since Cain Killed him.” In the course of tragedy, how many times have we heard, “Where is God?” God is right there sharing in our grief. He is also right there bestowing his blessings and his goodness on us.

With Adam and Eve, God gave them another son, Seth. Could Seth replace the joys they experienced with Able? No, not at all. Seth brought joys of his own; among them, he was a son in Adam’s own likeness and in his own image (Genesis 5-3). This was also the time that God’s people started to look to the Lord in Prayer. They “began to call on the name of the Lord.”

I often need to be reminded to count my blessings. In God’s goodness, Christ Community has been blessed in so many ways. As we travel through this Lenten Season and through our Re-imagine Christ Community; lift it up in our prayers, in our gratitude, in our faith, in our sacrifice, and in our celebration.

Prayer: Dear Lord, only you can lead us and show us the way you would have us go. Thank you for your blessings, for your goodness and for your wisdom. In the divine name of Jesus, we pray. Amen. – *Devotional by John Castrignano*

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

“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

Prayer for Unity: Holy and righteous Father, we thank You for our Church Family. Thank You for calling each of us to serve Your Kingdom. Thank You for using our individual gifts and talents to manifest Your Kingdom here on earth as it already is in heaven. Lord, we are thankful for the freedom to worship You and for Your bountiful blessings.

Merciful Father, forgive our many sins. We admit that at times we have sinned against You and against one another. Father, teach us how to live together in unity and to love one another. And walk us through the steps of rebuilding loving fellowship between us. Help us to continue to obey Your command to “love our neighbor as ourselves” so that we will not self-destruct by backbiting and devouring one another.

Loving Father, we declare that we will love You with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength. As a Church Family, we confess that we will love one another, as ourselves. Your Word tells us that if we love You, we must also love our Christian brothers and sisters, too. Therefore, we declare that we will not look out only for our own interests, but we take an interest in each other’s needs.

Thank You for increasing Your presence, power, anointing, and abundance in our CCUMC Family. You are great and greatly to be praised. The earth is Yours and everything in it; the world and all its people belong to You. Thank you for holding all creation together! In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

WWJD: The unity of believers is a testimony to the deity of Jesus. But when we cannot get along with one another, it prevents the world from believing in Christ. Therefore, let’s stick together-even as God and Jesus are ONE.

Jesus prayed that the WORD of GOD would UNITE all His true followers. My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who WILL BELIEVE in Me through their MESSAGE... Jesus is speaking not only of His 12 Disciples, but the multitudes in all ages who would believe their Testimony... has reference to the fact ALL must take the WORD TO OTHERS.

We are all in Christ Jesus and unity is critical manifestation of Spirit-empowered church. I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.” (1 Corinthians 1:10) – *Devotional by No Ringer*

Thursday, March 7, 2019

"On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

*" 'Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?*

*The kings of the earth take their stand
and the rulers gather together
against the Lord
and against his Anointed One.'*

Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly." - Acts 4:23-31

I wonder, "Who prayed for me? "Who prayed that I would be saved?" The answer I come to is Grammy Hess. I am part of her legacy, in this world and in the world to come! Thank God. I am a Christian, in large part, because she believed. Her boldness of faith was not a loud, in-your-face boldness, but a confident, dependent reliance on the goodness and faithfulness of God. Things were not always easy or comfortable for Grammy, perhaps rarely so, but she always exuded the quiet courage and resilience of steadfast faith. When I picture her, I see her with her open Bible and know she prayed boldly for her grandchildren. I am thankful, so thankful, for her prayers on my behalf.

Who do I pray for with the same fervency? How about you? Who do you bring to the throne of God?

We are in perilous times and there's little evidence that things will get better. Just the opposite. The world is likely to continue its downward path away from Truth, away from Peace, away from Decency. It is a violent, angry "in-your-face" rage that confronts our children each day. Evil does not hide anymore. Evil is proud of itself.

So, can I...will I...pray to the True Living Master for the Rock-solid faith that comes boldly to His throne and confidently asks for the lives of my children, my neighbors, my enemies? What legacy will my prayers leave for the next generation?

Prayer: Dear Lord of Heaven and Earth, Lord of Life, I ask to know You better, to have and live the steadfast assurance of Your victory over evil both in my life and in the lives of.....(fill in the blanks.) Give me the power to live righteously, to pray ceaselessly, and to boldly proclaim the Honor, Glory and Truth of Jesus. Amen. – *Devotional by Beverly Mitchell*

Friday, March 8, 2019

“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” – Ephesians 3:14-21

Prayer: Father, help us at Christ Community to dwell in this promise, to dwell in your love and knowledge, and to be filled in God’s fullness. Help us to ask or imagine more than we can think of. All glory be yours in Christ Jesus. Amen – *Prayer by Kim Bickhart*

Saturday, March 9, 2019

“Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.” – Revelation 5:6-8

Prayer is a mystery to me, I certainly don’t understand how one time you can pray and receive the answer quickly and another time the answer may not come for months or even years.

Like Zechariah in Luke 1:13 when the angel said “Your prayer had been answered, you will have a son and name him John.” Now Zechariah might have stopped praying that prayer years ago since he and Elizabeth were now old. He might have said “What prayer? That was a long time ago.” But God didn’t forget. When God’s time was right they got their answer.

When we pray in faith and in Jesus name about anything, we receive our answer. Sometimes rapidly, sometimes we receive and don’t recognize the answer, and sometimes we wait. That’s the mystery.

But God remembers the prayers of his saints and keeps them in a bowl. Sometimes it's one prayer that tips the bowl and the answer spills out. Sometimes it's many.

Our faith is not on the amount of prayers we pray but in the One to whom we pray them. He is the One who knows all things He loves. He hears us. His timing is perfect. He will answer!

Prayer: Thank you Lord for hearing our prayers. Amen. – *Devotional by Gail Maurer*

Sunday, March 10, 2019

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” – 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

There are many beliefs that can complicate our views on giving. Giving is not only monetary, but what and how we give to our fellowman is just as important.

God has given to us gifts. Those gifts could be music, teaching, writing, art, carpentry, farming and etc. God wants us to use those gifts by joyfully sharing them. What we do affects our outcome. We need to have more than good intentions. We need action and attitude. By giving what is In our hearts with no compulsion.

God loves a cheerful giver. The Greek word for cheerful is hilaros, which gives one a sense of abundance. In today's world it can be difficult for even the most faithful to give readily or cheerfully. We need to remember that He who did not spare his own Son gave him for us all. A monetary donation is nothing compared to what we receive because of Jesus' sacrifice.

Out of the joy of our salvation, let us give joyfully asking God to open our hearts. – *Devotional by Patty Cobler*

~ Legacy of Gratitude ~
March 11 - March 17, 2019
"Lord, how can I show gratitude?"

Monday, March 11, 2019

"So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds – everything that moves on the earth – came out of the ark, one kind after another.

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done." - Genesis 8:18-21

Key Verse: The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. Ge. 8:21

Noah, along with his family and all the pairs of living creatures on the earth came out from the safety of the ark and escaped God's judgment on a wicked, rebellious and disobedient people. The ark provided temporary safety and security from the flood that covered the earth for a period of 364 days.

Noah, considered by God a righteous man (Ge. 7:1) and obedient (Ge. 7:5) was saved along with his family. He and his wife, sons, and son's wives became the new progenitors of the human inhabitants on earth.

Noah's altar and sacrifice to God was pleasing to God, but short lived. Noah, a righteous man did not produce a righteous nation. He still produced unrighteousness in future generations. The waters of the flood could not cleanse mankind of their sinful nature (Eph. 2:3). Our nature; something we are, not something we do is still present in the heart of man. It is the difference between performance, what we do and condition, who we are. Only God, by his grace, in the person of Jesus Christ can cleanse our sinful nature (Eph. 2:4).

Prayer: Father, we are thankful for the safety and security provided to us in the person of Jesus Christ. His sinless life and sacrificial death and resurrection cleanses us from our sinful nature from which all unrighteous behavior stems. - *Devotional by Jim Garges*

Tuesday, March 12, 2019

*"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.*

*Cry out, "Save us, O God our Savior;
gather us and deliver us from the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name,
that we may glory in your praise."*

*Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.*

Then all the people said "Amen" and "Praise the Lord." - 1 Chronicles 16:34-36

Key Verse: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

Then: Plagues, war, murder, destruction, devastation, sinful behavior

Now: Earthquakes, floods, fire, disease, death, sinful behavior

Our world has been troubled by sin since the days of Adam and Eve. Some days we feel we are on top of the mountain and are grateful. On other days it feels like the mountain is sitting on top of us. Are we still grateful?

God looks at us with all our baggage and loves us anyway. His generosity to us, despite our failings, is truly overwhelming. God's love created you and me. He loved us enough to provide redemption for us through the sacrifice of his only begotten Son, Jesus. He walks beside us through the good and bad times in our lives. If you are in a dark tunnel today, recognize that Jesus is the light at the end of your tunnel. He will pull you through it!

Life can be wonderful, or it can be disappointing. But God is always good. Let's be grateful for who God is and what He does. Celebrate His goodness from everlasting to everlasting!

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your love that endures forever! Thank you for your presence in our lives. We are secure in our relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Let our lives overflow with gratitude and thanksgiving. In Jesus name we pray. Amen. - *Devotional by Ann Garges*

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

*"Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.
For the Lord is the great God,
the great King above all gods.
In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.
The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.
Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;
for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care." – Psalm 95:1-7*

Prayer: Almighty God, we praise You for giving us the joy of nature and each other. We praise You for giving us the legacy of caring for our earthly home. We praise and extol Your goodness, love and sharing. Bless us, Father, as we care for our church home as it grows and expands to welcome more believers to magnify Your Name, accomplish Your will and build up Your kingdom on this earth. We praise and worship You as our Rock, our Great God, our Shepherd, our Maker and our Great King, Who reigns forever. We will continue to give You all our praise, honor and glory with all our hearts, souls and minds. We pray all in Jesus' name. Amen.

May Your Greatness shine on Christ Community Church as we forge forward to do Your will in our church home and in our community. May we reflect Your goodness and kindness to our neighbors, strangers and all peoples. Unite us Lord in the Holy Spirit and bless our church members with Your spiritual gifts to magnify Your name among all. We ask this prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

Kneel before Our God, worship Him, sing Him a song of praise, read His word and share proclamations of His Greatness! Blessed be our God, now and forevermore. – *Prayer by Cheryl Bohler*

Thursday, March 14, 2019

"Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" – 2 Corinthians 9:10-15

Do I give generously to God or do I use my finances for my own needs? Do I have urgent needs that are not "wants"?

Paul assured the Corinthians that God was able to meet their needs. Here the illustration of seed to explain that what God gives us should not be hidden or used foolishly. Instead the seed should be cultivated to produce more crops.

The person who gives little will only receive a little in return. When we invest what God has given to us, He will provide even more for us to use for His service.

Prayer: Father, help me to give back to You what is yours. Amen. – *Devotional by Anonymous*

Friday, March 15, 2019

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." – Philippians 4:6-7

The Sunday school class of Grades 3-5 responded to this with a prayer:

Prayer: "Dear Father, Be thankful for what you have and don't want what other people have, don't be sad or worry, because God is with us."

Saturday, March 16, 2019

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." – Colossians 3:15-17

Key Verse 17: And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Some people like to spend their leisure time working with their hands. Whether it's gardening, woodworking, designing, painting or countless other ways in which they use their talents and abilities.

Our Father, God, has always been busy at work. He created the universe and all that is within it; the sun, moon and stars, plants and trees, and animals and humans. His work is a masterpiece and above all others humans are His special creation. He designed us in intricate detail and entrusted us with a desire to work. This includes caring for His creation and creatures. No matter what kind of work we do, in our leisure or at our jobs, God gives us what we need to work for him.

May everything we do, bring glory to God and may we always give thanks to God the Father through Jesus for the privilege we have to work.

Prayer: Dear Father God, Thank you for the opportunities you give us to serve you through our work and for empowering us to do the work you've called us to do.

Amen. – *Devotional by Rosanne Thomas*

Sunday, March 17, 2019

"Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him – and he was a Samaritan.

Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well." – Luke 17:11-19

If you've ever observed young children, they tend to do a lot of asking but rarely as much thanking. That's often how we approach God as our heavenly Father: we ask, ask, ask because we know He cares. Unfortunately, we don't always make time to praise Him for who He is and thank Him for what He's done. Eventually this will lead to a me-centered attitude in our relationships with others, our relationship with God, and how we approach every arena of our life.

We are challenged to let an attitude of thankfulness emanate through our relationships, everything we do, and everything we say. It seems like a big key to this is singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Obviously, we can praise God in different ways, but singing seems to engage and influence our souls in a unique manner. Songs can be so powerful in the way they tune us into God's character and faithfulness –so much so that the longest book of the Bible is a collection of these songs (a.k.a. Psalms). This idea can be particularly challenging for those of us who aren't gifted in music or singing, but no less important. Here are a few practical thoughts on how to do this on a personal level.

- Read and meditate on some of the Psalms that reflect your attitude of gratitude towards God. Using a concordance or online study guard can help with searching.
- Borrow a hymnal from your church. Find some songs that speak to you personally. You may even want to research the story behind the hymn.
- Download some praise songs to your computer or mp3 player. Listen to them while doing chores or exercising.
- Buy a praise music CD to listen to while driving. Even try out singing some songs while driving. You may already sing plenty of top 40 tunes during the daily commute, so make a substitution.

When was the last time you deliberately praised God for who He is and thanked Him for what He's done with song (other than in church)? - *Devotional by Anne Carter*

~ Legacy of Faith ~
March 18 – March 24, 2019
“Lord, how can I step in faith instead of fear?”

Monday, March 18, 2019

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.” – Hebrews 11:1-4

I hear “How do you do it?” “How do you stand the pain?” You see, I am a maker of kidney stones. I think I fall in the definition of a rock quarry. By my count it’s at least 460 stones and I have been a stone maker for 30 years.

When all this stone drama started, I already had faith in God. It was not very deep, more like a little hole. In the beginning there was a lot of begging and pleading to end the pain. So many lithotripsies and stents. ER visits and weeks and weeks at a time in such unbearable pain. And then I went into a deep depression. I hit rock bottom. I just couldn’t keep this up any more.

My dear friend Margie asked me one day if I gave it all to God. I didn’t. I was handling all it on my own. At first it was hard to give God my confidence to handle all the pain, but Holy Spirit showed me how He was with me through those times. A husband that held my hand, friends and a loving church that was on their knees in prayer, and Doctors and Nurses with skills to heal me. My faith receives from God the blessings He gives! He gives me forgiveness. He gives me peace. He gives me hope and He gives me spiritual provision. I just need to give it all to Him. Like an unborn child is connected to their mother with an umbilical cord, getting all the nourishment they need, faith, to me is the umbilical cord to God. I just needed to become a child again and trust that He will provide.

Now when asked, “How do you do it?”, my answer is, “faith.”

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for providing me with all I need, especially at times when I don’t even know what to ask. Thank you for the gift of faith that connects me to You. Amen. – *Devotional by Debbie Bingaman*

Tuesday, March 19, 2019

"By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith." – Hebrews 11:5-7

In 1979 I stepped out of my comfort zone and accepted an invitation to come to a worship service in Hummel's Wharf. The church was originally called St. Paul's United Methodist Church, they recently merged with another church called Shreiner's United Methodist Church and they became Christ Community United Methodist Church.

God was calling me out of the darkness and into a life of obedience to Him. Admittedly, I was scared. A sweet girl named Linda, invited me to church and in only two weeks after I started attending, she and her family moved to NY. I questioned, "Why would the Lord bring a person into my life that cared about my spiritual life and then move her away?" However, I knew I couldn't run away. God had placed a burning in my heart that I could not deny, I was to be worshipping at CCUMC. By faith, I stayed. Even though I was not living my life for Christ, I knew He and the Holy Spirit were very real and I needed to renew my relationship with Him. He was always there for me, I let my anger toward life draw a wedge between us and rebelled against Him. I knew if God led me through the doors of St. Paul's, He had something there for me. Like the hymn, *I Surrender All*, when I knelt on my knees and through my tears, my past hurts and pain, I reunited my friendship with Jesus. My journey of faith was restored and I would doubt him no more. I found a new family at CCUMC. Together we searched the scriptures and my prayer life was strengthened. God gave me the desire to serve Him and work in service for our church. It was an interesting time as well, for the churches. They were deciding on a new structure.

Here I am 40 years later! What a journey. As with my personal life and CCUMC, we had tread rocky roads and climbed the mountain. We at times became 'status quo' and still managed to stay faithful to Christ and continue to build His church.

As we meditate on Re-Imagine CCUMC, may we have the faith of Enoch who always wanted to please God and the faith that Noah had with building the Ark in holy fear. May we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus as we walk through another structural and spiritual growth of CCUMC. They go hand in hand. God wants to grow His church.

I feel blessed as I witness the work of our leaders who are led by the power of the Holy Spirit to continue to grow CCUMC and be ever so concerned about its future for our children, grandchildren and generations to come.

By faith two churches came together and became CCUMC and by faith the church continues its journey until Christ's return. We walk by faith, not by sight. Daily, Christ works in our life when we surrender our all to him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for your Holy word and the legacy of your people that have gone before us. Help us to always keep our eyes fixed on you, surrendering our will to you and believing that you can accomplish much through us, your faithful servants. Please guide us as we continue our legacy of faith. As your word illustrates "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." - *Devotional by Janice Castrignano*

Wednesday, March 20, 2019

"By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

By faith Abraham, even though he was past age – and Sarah herself was barren – was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore." - Hebrews 11:8-12

I am not an adventurous person. In my fifty-eight years I have not moved from my hometown of Sunbury, Pennsylvania, for more than a year at a time. The unknown frightens me a bit, and I tend to seek out the familiar in my life. I attended three colleges, all in my home state, and received a degree that could have taken me anywhere. Instead, I found employment near my home.

Even so, my life, like everyone's, is a journey. I have made decisions, wise and foolish; exhibited weakness when I should have shown strength; and accomplished things I never thought I could. I've faced challenges that I literally thought would be the end of me, and I've found strength that only God could provide. Looking back, certain seasons in my life seemed like I was living someone else's life and not my own. Sometimes I didn't even recognize myself.

I was in such a place when the call came that drew me to Christ Community twenty-five years ago. I had wandered far from God, and my life had been turned upside down.

The last thing I wanted was a position of responsibility in the church. I felt exhausted, unworthy, and completely uninterested in any kind of commitment. But, by God's grace He called me, and His Holy Spirit helped me say, "Yes, I'll go." I recognized it as God's hand reaching out to offer me a second chance though I didn't know then how it would affect the legacy I'd leave behind.

Today's Scripture reminds us of the great faith of Abraham. It recounts an episode in Abraham's life when God called him to leave his home and go to a place God had planned for him to go. Leaving everything familiar behind, he moved forward to a place he would receive as an inheritance and where he and his descendants would flourish - forward into the unknown. That sounds terrifying to me, but the Bible tells us plainly how Abraham responded. He obeyed and went, and he did so by faith. He moved forward, looking ahead to blessing and a promise, and leaving a legacy for us to inherit and pass on to future generations. Abraham believed God and trusted Him to fulfill His promises. He trusted him with his life, his family and his future. Just like Abraham we can move forward, too - away from fear, and into blessing, trusting God's promises and remembering his faithfulness in the past.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I praise you for your goodness and your unfailing love. Please help me to walk in faith and not fear, to move forward in obedience, and to leave a legacy of faith so that others may know you and follow you. I place my life and my future into your faithful hands. Amen. - *Devotional by Julie Thomas*

Thursday, March 21, 2019

"By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.

By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

And what more shall I say?" - Hebrews 11:29-32

FAITH: One of the greatest gifts from God is faith. It is described very well in Hebrews Chapter 11. Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain for what we do not see. Imagine being the people living in a time where because of faith in a few instances God intervened in a way his people could avoid their enemy and escape death. Not only did they witness mercy and glory but because of faith they actually took part in those miracles.

Think about how easy it would be to believe and keep your faith especially if you were to witness such great things. I believe we are living in a time where people desperately need to restore their personal faith in the Lord, so that we can witness and be a part of the greatest miracle yet to come.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for faith, having it allows us to escape the problems we are living with in this present time. Please continue to give us strength to what is righteous before your eyes. – *Devotional by Anonymous*

Friday, March 22, 2019

“Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

“Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”

“Come,” he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.” –

Matthew 14:22-36

Picture the scene: Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat. Imagine while Jesus is not by their side, the boat being struck repeatedly and violently by wind and waves. The disciples then think they see a ghost and are terrified! They were immediately reassured by Jesus to “not be afraid”.

Ponder: Was Peter putting Jesus to the test when he replied “Lord, if it’s you, tell me to come to you on the water”? Already shaken and frightened, he was the only one in the boat to react at all. Peter acted in faith, got down out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. With focus lost Peter started to sink because he took his eyes off of Jesus. When we fall short and lose focus (faith) we should all do as Peter did. Cry out “Lord, save me”! The huge waves are gone and they continue onto land at Gennesaret. Men there recognized Jesus and they spread the word. They knew who he was, and what he was capable of. The people had faith in Jesus’ healing and all who touched him were healed.

Step out of the boat in faith to live the life God has planned for you. Recognize and keep your eye focused on Jesus. Have faith in who our God is and what he is capable of. Cry out to him when you need help. He will not let you sink.

Prayer: Lord, help me to hear your encouraging words and to not be afraid. With my hands in yours, and my eyes focused on you, I know you are there for the storms in my life. – *Devotional by Anonymous*

Saturday, March 23, 2019

“Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”

“No,” they answered.

He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.”

Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!" – John 21:1-19

Ah, Peter. He has always been one of my favorite disciples mostly because despite his strong love and desire to serve Jesus, he sometimes was not in sync with God's plans. This is so typical of human behavior, or at least for me.

Yet Jesus knew Peter's heart. In this passage, Jesus starts a commitment renewal of God's plan for Peter with a fishing scene similar to the beginning of their relationship (Luke 5:4-7). Then Jesus asks Peter three times, "Do you love me?" Three times-not only to bring to mind the three times Peter denied him in the courtyard (Luke 22:54-62) but also, I believe, to give some sense of assurance of forgiveness. Jesus also makes it very clear that he wants Peter to feed his sheep. Again, this renews and deepens a calling Jesus gave his disciples when he said he would make them fishers of men. (Luke 5:10-11).

Through Peter's love for Jesus and Jesus' forgiveness, Peter's has been restored into a full commitment of God's will for his life.

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for your great love for your creation. It is so great that you sent your Son to forgive us of our fallings away from you and to restore us to a right relationship. It is only through your power that this gift is even possible. Amazingly you give this gift each and every day.

Thank you for forgiving me where I have failed. Thank you for giving me this day to love you more fully, live out your purpose for my life, show other's your love and forgiveness, and grow in your Kingdom. "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." May I understand and do what is your will for my life this day. Amen. –
Devotional by Toni Longacre

Sunday, March 24, 2019

“O unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.” Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment.

Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

He replied, “Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” – Matthew 17:17-20

Why were the disciples unable to drive out this demon? Jesus pointed out their lack of faith. Was Jesus being harsh? Jesus loved his disciples. I believe Jesus was showing the disciples how important faith would be in their future ministry. He was giving them a life lesson.

I keep bookmarks with the names of my grandchildren in my Bible. The bookmarks have Scripture references for each of them. My littlest grandson’s bookmark lists John 15:7 “*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you*”.

How do we remain in Him? How do we grow our faith?

First, believe that Jesus is God’s son. Second, receive Him as Savior and Lord. Third, follow His commands. Fourth, believe in His Word and follow the Scriptures. Fifth, relate in love to the community of believers who are Christ’s body.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to grow my faith in you. I want to learn more about you. Give me the desire to read my Bible more often using Your eyes to see the truth in your scriptures. Amen. – *Devotional by Anonymous*

~ Legacy of Sacrifice ~
March 25 – March 31, 2019

“Lord, what can I sacrifice for the sake of Your Kingdom?”

Monday, March 25, 2019

“Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.”

When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.” – Genesis 22:2, 9-12

“With faith, discipline and selfless devotion to duty, there is nothing worthwhile that you cannot achieve.” – M. A. Jinnah

Prayer: Dear God, we pray to you today to ask you to help with needs we will not say aloud. We pray you watch over our friends and their families. We also pray for our enemies. Amen. – *Devotional by CCUMC Youth*

Tuesday, March 26, 2019

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” – John 3:16-17

Think back to when you first learned this verse. What did you first think when you heard it?

Personally, it taught me that God’s love for me is great and eternal. He loved us as sinners, so much that he sent his one and only son to save us from our own evil. He sacrificed his child to sinners that have not loved him and have not obeyed him. It reminds us that he loves us and cares for us more than anything.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to see and appreciate your love for us every day. Aide us in our attempts to be like you and your son. Amen. – *Devotional by CCUMC Youth*

Wednesday, March 27, 2019

“Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus’ honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.” He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

“Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.” – John 12:1-8

John 1:5 “The night shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it!”

“Alleluia, how the people cheer and palm leaves rustle as the king draws near.” – John Beavis

Prayer: Lord, give me strength in my weakness. Give me faith in my fear. Give me power in my powerlessness. I’m trusting you. Amen. – *Devotional by CCUMC Youth*

Thursday, March 28, 2019

“As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. “I tell you the truth,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.” – Luke 21:1-4

The 2 coins: we think that doesn’t sound like much, but to this woman it was everything. She gave out of her love for God. Giving can mean many things. We can give to God by serving in ministry, sharing the Gospel and giving of our money.

During this time of Lent we remember the sacrifice of the cross, Jesus gave His life as a sacrifice for us. He did this out of His love for us and out of obedience to God the Father. Sometimes we don’t think we have much to give but even the smallest amount of time, money given to God out of a loving, humble heart is always the best gift.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I thank you for the gifts you’ve given me. Teach me how to be a good steward of the gifts, talents and money that you have blessed me with. Show me how I can best serve You. I pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen. – *Devotional by Anonymous*

Friday, March 29, 2019

"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." – Ephesians 5:1-2

As I read this verse, I'm reminded of a Sunday School class I was in where we studied The Mind of Christ. We will never have the Mind of Christ or be able to fully imitate God for there is only 1 true God. We, however, can draw closer to Him and he will draw closer to us. How do we do that? We read His Word and pray and stay in fellowship with other Believers. In doing these things He will reveal more of Himself to us. It's a relationship, a friendship. The more we get to know Him the more we change. It doesn't happen overnight, its an ongoing growing that won't end till we go home to be with Him. This is how we can imitate God thru spending time with Him.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to be more like you. Teach me to Love like you love. Give me Wisdom Lord so that all that I do and say may Glorify you. Forgive me when sin, cleanse me and make me whole. Show me how I can best serve you, my family, my church and my community. Thank you for hearing and answering my prayer. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. – *Devotional by Anonymous*

Saturday, March 30, 2019

"Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." – Hebrews 13:15-16

Time. The most valuable thing we have is time. Being endowed by our Creator with the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness means we are free to choose how we spend our time. We all have 24, 7 and 52, but what makes it valuable is that we don't know when it ends. We can give our time to a business or industry which will tell us how much money an hour of our time is worth. Overtime pays more not because of what we do but because of what we miss. Ultimately, we can choose how we spend our time.

I have met with some men recently who do not have that freedom because they are doing time in prison. I am struck by the knowledge that these guys would love to be able to take a trip with me to see the countryside and get out just for a brief time. And they all appreciated my sacrifice of time away from home that I gave to be with them.

Unlike God, we human beings can only be in one place at a time, so maybe that's why God considers time devoted to Him a sacrifice on our part. To gather together at one time means we are missing out on being able to spend our time in other ways during that time. I told my daughters when they were young that if you wanna go out with the boys at night you hafta go to church with the men in the morning. Isn't that the least we can do with our time because of what He did for us...take a few minutes of our time to use our lips to give thanks to God our Creator, our Provider and our Savior?

In Luke 17:11-19, Jesus heals ten lepers and only hears one return to thank Him. It's hard to imagine that the other nine didn't have the time to come and give glory to God and thanks to Jesus. It's not that hard to please God! It just takes a little time.

Prayer: God we thank you for the gift of life and the time to live it. Thank you for giving us all we need and for your sacrifice on the cross for us so we could be forgiven. Forgive us when we waste our time. May we never be too busy that we can't find time for you. In Jesus Name, AMEN. - *Devotional by Tim Bingaman*

Sunday, March 31, 2019

"As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him – you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." - 1 Peter 2:4-5

As I read over the above scripture, my Bible's Commentary tells me that there are two wonderful promises upon which we can build our lives and our spiritual growth. The first promise is that we are acceptable to God because of Jesus and the second promise is that we will never be put to shame if we place our trust in him. With these truths as the foundation, we can build lives that please God.

As I ponder my Christian walk, I ask myself the question: "Am I meeting the letter of this scripture, am I a living stone offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ?" I often see this legacy of sacrifice at Christ Community being carried out by the saints in and through the ministries of our church. This is done in serving and meeting the needs of one another and all for the glory of God, not self.

Prayer: Thank you Lord through your Divine Providence that I am a part of the Christ Community Family. Please enable me to continue in our legacy of sacrifice. To God be the glory. Amen. - *Devotional by Anonymous*

~ Legacy of Celebration ~
April 1 - April 6, 2019

"Lord, help me to see the results of Your faithfulness and celebrate!"

Monday, April 1, 2019

*"Praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord from the heavens,
praise him in the heights above.
Praise him, all his angels,
praise him, all his heavenly hosts.
Praise him, sun and moon,
praise him, all you shining stars.
Praise him, you highest heavens
and you waters above the skies.
Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for he commanded and they were created.
He set them in place for ever and ever;
he gave a decree that will never pass away.
Praise the Lord from the earth,
you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,
lightning and hail, snow and clouds,
stormy winds that do his bidding,
you mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars,
wild animals and all cattle,
small creatures and flying birds,
kings of the earth and all nations,
you princes and all rulers on earth,
young men and maidens,
old men and children.
Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for his name alone is exalted;
his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.
He has raised up for his people a horn,
the praise of all his saints,
of Israel, the people close to his heart.
Praise the Lord." - Psalm 147*

When is the last time you provided praise? I have the blessing to be able to walk to work and in doing so, I have the opportunity to take in God's creation. In the spring, there are numerous trees budding and flowers springing up from the earth. In the fall, my walk is filled with leaves in countless colors - reds, oranges and yellows. The look of a freshly fallen snow in winter paints the scenery a crisp white. God has given me a variety of natural beauties to admire each day.

However, I find I do not take advantage of this opportunity. I will be preoccupied with emails from work, listening to a podcast, or finding something to pass the time while I walk.

In Psalm 147, the author begins and ends with the command “Praise the Lord.” Praise is defined as expressing warm approval or admiration of something. When we praise, we are celebrating what has occurred. Throughout the Psalm ‘praise’ is used thirteen times and highlights all of God’s creations in detail and how we should praise all of our surroundings. It begins with praising the heavens above and concludes with praising His name. The psalm instructs us on how we should be focusing on these details of praise throughout our day and praising God for all he has done. This includes our natural surroundings, including the sun, the moon, the water, lightning, hail, snow, clouds, stormy winds, mountains, hills, fruit trees and cedars. Furthermore, we are told to praise all people from kings, princes and other rulers to young men, to maidens to old men and to children. As you go about out your day, take a moment to Praise the Lord. Look for opportunity in your day to Praise God. Look at your surroundings, take notice to your environment during the day, and pay attention to the people in your life. Praise the Lord. Reflect on all He has done for you, things He may have provided you, people He has placed in your life. Praise the Lord.

Prayer: Dear God, Thank You God for all you have created. As I look at the vastness of Your creation and realize the enormity of You, I am amazed You should care for me. How can it be that You died for me when I was dead in my sins? Thank you for loving me so much that You would come to earth and suffer and die so I might be saved by grace through faith in You. Words cannot express the depth of gratitude and love I have. Knowing You love me so very dearly. I praise you today with my heart and song, I praise you for your faithfulness, and I praise you for your great power and love. I confess my need for you, to be in every minute of my life. I forget all you have done for me. Yet you never leave me. Thank you for your presence. I ask for your spirit to fill me, to draw me close to you, and to work your purposes through me, as I set my eyes on you. I praise you for all you have created, from heaven to earth, from nature to me. Lord, I Praise You. AMEN. – *Devotional by Stephen Apanel*

Tuesday, April 2, 2019

“Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.” – Luke 15:3-7

Finding something you've lost always brings joy. In my case, I misplace my glasses about 10 times a day (every day). I need them to see distance, so when I'm in the house I frequently lay them down. Then it's on to the next thing, and I forget where I put them. My frustration turns to relief when I locate them.

These verses remind us that the Good Shepherd and heaven rejoices for every lost sinner that receives salvation. They rejoiced for you! Can you picture this scene? The Good Shepherd searches for all who are lost. Our world is full of "lost sheep." There's a Savior seeking them, and there's a celebration for each one who is found. This is where CCUMC's vision to "Create opportunities for others to know God's love" makes a difference. There's also joy for those "in the flock." The initial celebration for being found and saved becomes the ongoing worship song shared by the children of God.

Prayer: Father in heaven, I give thanks for being sought and found by the Savior you provided. I pray your blessing upon Christ Community United Methodist Church's vision to continue to create opportunities for others to know God's love. Bless and guide the re-imagining of CCUMC, to your glory and purposes. Amen. – *Devotional by Steven Rauch*

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate." – Luke 15:17-24

I can just imagine this father, looking out of his window, just hoping against hope to see his son. I can picture the father praying fervently every day that his son was safe and that he would return to him. And then the day finally came, he saw his son walking in the distance. Did the father wait for his son to come to him? The father could have thought "he left, I will just wait for him to come to me". Of course, that is not what he did, he went running to his son, hugging him and showering him with grace and mercy.

Our Heavenly Father does the same thing for us. We need to remember that we don't need to make everything right in our lives to come to God. No matter how hard we try, we could never make everything in our lives perfect. God is waiting for us, just as we are, when we make a mistake, waiting for us to turn back to him. We need to remember that although we are not perfect, God's love and compassion is.

Prayer: God, forgive me of my sins. I give you my life, just as I am, and I make you my Lord and Savior. Amen. – *Devotional by Lisa Weikel*

Thursday, April 4, 2019

“Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of people, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.” – 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

There is a bond between Jesus and those who love him. This bond even surpasses death. Because Christ died and rose again, we who love him will also rise and be with Him forever!

How blessed we are to have the promise of eternal life through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and to know that we will be with Him throughout eternity.

Nothing this world offers can give us the eternal home that God has given us through Jesus Christ!

Prayer: God, thank you for the hope and promise of the eternal life we have through Jesus. Amen. – *Devotional by Bruce and Helen Hoover*

Friday, April 5, 2019

"Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

"Hallelujah!

For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

*Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!*

*For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.*

*Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear."*

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' " And he added, "These are the true words of God."

At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." – Revelation 19:6-11

What are we celebrating?

During my entire four years in high school, our football team never lost a game. We celebrated with parades, pep rallies, much cheering and a lot of bragging.

I am a NASCAR fan. There is just something magical about being in the stands; shoulder to shoulder with other fans listening to the roar of the cars as they go by and the crowd as they cheer on their favorites. And then, the celebration in Victory Lane begins. But all of this excitement pales in comparison to the joy and celebration we will experience when the Lord reigns.

*"Hallelujah!
for our Lord God Almighty reigns.
Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!*

It won't make any difference who won a football game or what NASCAR driver came in first. What will matter is being invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Prayer: Father, keep our minds and hearts centered on you and the joy we can experience in knowing you. Amen. – *Devotional by Suzy Tressler*

Saturday, April 6, 2019

*“Praise the Lord.
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens.
Praise him for his acts of power;
praise him for his surpassing greatness.
Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
praise him with the harp and lyre,
praise him with tambourine and dancing,
praise him with the strings and flute,
praise him with the clash of cymbals,
praise him with resounding cymbals.
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord.” – Psalm 150*

In a message delivered in 1889, Charles H. Spurgeon shared, “Praise is the rehearsal of our eternal song. By grace we learn to sing, and in glory we continue to sing.”

Experiencing the music of worship, regardless of the instruments, setting, or style, I cannot help but close my eyes as I experience but a glimpse of the music of Heaven. My heart swells with the dynamics and harmonies in the midst of praise! How precious and exciting is it to think that in praising God, we are rehearsing for what awaits us in His presence.

As we praise the Lord, our focus is solely on him. Praise goes beyond thanksgiving for our blessings. To praise the Lord, is to be God-centered. When praising Him, we are no longer focused on ourselves, our feelings, or our present circumstances. We praise Him for Who and What He is!

Imagine as we rehearse our eternal song, what awaits us in glory when we will praise God, in His presence!

Prayer: Father God, I pray that the legacy of Christ Community will be one of devotion and praise. Allow our “rehearsal” to be filled with increasing joy and exuberance as we strive to remain in Your will. In your precious and Holy name we pray. Amen. – *Devotional by Candy Willard*

Epilogue as a Final Devotional

By Rev. Randall G. Bennett, Jr.

Wow! I have just finished reading everyone's devotional and they were awesome! God has done the most marvelous and amazing work among the people of Christ Community: He has *Connected* us through Jesus and with each other; He has called us into a deeper Commitment in our faith; and He has and is *Creating* opportunities to impart the legacy of Jesus Christ to others.

One of the unique privileges of serving as your pastor is that I have come to know your stories. Reading these devotionals and knowing the stories-behind-the-stories is truly humbling (that includes you, "Anonymous." I don't know for certain who you are, but I have a pretty good idea!!!). The power of *Connection* is that of story: your story, my story, and the same Story Teller in each one of us sharing His story: Jesus.

Brothers and Sisters, my prayer from Ephesians 3:14-21 continues to be my prayer for Christ Community, and I invite you to pray it aloud as a final devotional:

"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen Christ Community with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that Christ Community, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that Christ Community may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all Christ Community can ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within Christ Community, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."