



2022
Lenten Devotional
Week 6
April 3 ~ April 9
Gathered up in Jesus
Filled with the Fragrance



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First United Methodist Church
of
Bella Vista
20 Boyce Drive, Bella Vista, Arkansas

Weekly Contributors

Sunday



BROC HITE has been our Organist and Associate Director of Music since 2012. He also teaches piano privately and at the Shepherd Music School based at Central United Methodist Church in Rogers. Prior to moving to Arkansas in 2010, he was the Organist and Music Director at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Fairfield, Connecticut.

He earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Piano Performance from Purchase College in Purchase, New York, studying under German Diez. He earned the Master of Music Degree in Piano Accompanying at The Juilliard School, studying under Margo Garrett and Marshall Williamson, and performance classes with Samuel Sanders and Jonathan Feldman. In conjunction with his other career in business, he achieved the Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Connecticut.

Monday



JILL HALE was born in Nebraska and moved to Prescott, Arizona, with her family when she was eight years old. She worked as a legal secretary and then as a paralegal for the same law firm during her entire professional career. Jill and her husband, Richard, moved here from Arizona after retirement, almost a full circle from where she began. Jill serves as church historian and as secretary for Sarah Circle and for UMW. She sings in the church choir, with the Praise Team, and plays hand bells. She also is in Bible Study groups.

Tuesday



ARTHUR & MARIAN LAWLESS moved to Bella Vista in July of 2017 from Massachusetts. They joined our church in September of 2017. Marian is originally from Iowa where most of her family still lives. She is presently Secretary for the Martha Circle and loves gardening on the church grounds as well as at home. Artie is President of the United

Methodist Men's group and is involved in several Veteran's organizations locally.

Wednesday



WANDA WILLIAMS was born and raised in Colorado but due to following grandchildren, has lived in Montana, South Carolina, and several times in Arkansas. She loves to read, do cross stitch and other needle crafts as well as make her own greeting cards. Wanda recently retired after being in human resources for many years and is now in Bentonville. Her joy is her family, which

consists of her daughter, Amy, and son-in-law James, and their two children Alec and Jenna. She also has a grandson, Craig Jr., who lives in New Jersey.

Thursday



ALEC GILMORE is currently attending the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His major is Aerospace Engineering. He and his family – Amy, James, Jenna and grandmother, Wanda Williams have been part of our church since moving to NW Arkansas in 2008. He has been active in our church in many areas including: youth, children's ministries,

devotionals, and even a sermon. He continues to watch online when time allows and is happy to be in worship when he is home.

Friday



REV. CATHERINE LUCK is an endorsed spiritual director of the UMC, and an ordained elder of 45 years, now in retired relationship to the Iowa Annual Conference. In 2007, Cathy led the founding of Oasis of Northwest Arkansas, serving as director for 10 years. Oasis serves women recovering from drug and alcohol abuse in transition

back to their families and communities. Cathy and her husband Mike Roth (retired custom cabinetmaker) have four adult children, seven grandchildren, and Savanna (16-year-old husky/border collie rescue). Cathy is available to listen to anyone who would like to explore the presence or absence of God in your life.

(also) *Friday*



PAMALA PALASTY grew up in Rogers Arkansas on her grandparents' farm. As a young rest of her family, met her husband, and gave birth to a beautiful daughter. She worked as a medical transcriptionist for 19 years. She had horses, enjoyed trail rides, and worked with a search and rescue team. She remembers

hugging and holding family members of the missing and deceased. After her daughter married, Pamela came back to Northwest Arkansas, where she has resided ever since.

Saturday



SANDY FITCH has been involved with FUMCBV since she moved to Bella Vista with her husband Hal, in 2005 to be closer to Hal's family. Hal passed away in 2010, but Sandy has made Bella Vista her home. She is active in the Emmaus Community, as Mission Steward, and leads the Blankets of Hope Ministry. Sandy is a Certified Lay

Servant. She enjoys knitting - a lot. You'll find Sandy at The Well service with her knitting needles clicking away.

Sunday, April 3, 2022
John 12:1-8 (NIV)

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³ 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. ⁴ But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵ "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." ⁶ 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. ⁷ "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸ You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

So Many Questions!

Mary and Martha were sisters to Lazarus, the man who was raised from the dead in the previous chapter. It seemed reasonable that the two women would want to thank Jesus for his kindness with a celebratory dinner (verse 2). So why did Mary have to make it weird by washing Jesus's feet with expensive perfume (verse 3)?

This story reminds us that we live in a very different time. Although some people choose to pamper their feet, especially those wearing sandals or open-toed shoes, most of us protect our feet with socks and shoes. We choose to walk on the pavement so we can even save our shoes from getting dirty. It's clear that feet were always exposed to the elements, and getting them clean at the entry to the home was important to keep one's home tidy.

Why did Mary use so much perfume? Perfume had a very different role in Herod's Israel. We might apply a few drops of perfume after showering or bathing when headed out to a special event. We weren't using perfume on a regular basis to cover up the odors that would naturally occur from a combination of infrequent bathing and a hot climate.

Why didn't Mary just use a towel or soft piece of cloth? Hair had some precedent as being used in bathing feet. Hair was a material that was soft to the skin, plus it gave Mary the chance to have a physical connection with Jesus.

In order to make this story more memorable, it was helpful to have a Devil's Advocate question Mary's behavior. Who better than Judas Iscariot himself! Judas questioned why Jesus merited such an honor (verses 4 and 5). Judas was thinking with his head, but Mary was acting with her heart.

Jesus could see Mary's pure heart and wasn't about to chastise her for her extravagant decision. Jesus was criticizing Judas's pre-occupation with earthly wealth at the expense of keeping one's eye on the prize in heaven.

What questions did you have as you were reading this passage? Were you able to come up with your own answers?

Broc Hite

Monday, April 4, 2022
Isaiah 43:16-21 (NKJV)

*Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea
And a path through the mighty waters,
Who brings forth the chariot and horse,
The army and the power
(They shall lie down together, they shall not rise;
They are extinguished, they are quenched like a wick):
"Do not remember the former things,
Nor consider the things of old.*

*Behold, I will do a new thing,
Now it shall spring forth;
Shall you not know it?
I will even make a road in the wilderness
And rivers in the desert.
The beast of the field will honor Me.
The jackals and the ostriches,
Because I give waters in the wilderness
And rivers in the desert,
To give drink to My people, My chosen.
This people I have formed for Myself;
They shall declare My praise.”*

Slowly reread the above verses and spend time viewing the images they create in your mind. Picture God parting the sea for the Israelites to cross over and escape from Pharaoh—the mighty roar filling you with both fear and excitement. Feel the unbelievable power of God. The army of Pharaoh was indeed extinguished. Oh, that He could reach out right now and stop the war in our world today!

Now we move to thinking about “I will do a new thing.” The image that comes to my mind here is spring coming upon the land. This is my favorite time of year when plants arise from the soil and trees bud out. Soon they will explode into a profusion of every shade of green, and beautiful flowers will bud and bloom and fill the air with their fragrance. For me this is the resurrection in our own time and will reach its apex when we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

We can also picture a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. This is especially easy to bring to mind if one lived most of one’s life in Arizona. When I was a child, we did a lot of camping in the camper that my father built. He had installed bunk beds that could sleep five. It was rustic but a truly beautiful creation. We often searched for roads in the wilderness and camped beside rivers in the desert. These are God’s promises to us. If we look, we can find beauty each and every day.

The last image for me is of God giving us a drink. An earthly drink would be from one of those rivers beside which we camped, pure and sweet. It may also be spiritual drink that we receive from reading the Bible, praying, worshiping or studying together in Christian community, and enjoying God’s amazing creations around us.

Even during the dark time of Lent, as we work to resist temptations and pray for forgiveness, we can look forward to the joyous time of resurrection and salvation.

Prayer: God of parted seas, new beginnings, and blessings in the wilderness, help us to be constantly aware of Your presence in our lives, of how You surround us with beauty everywhere we look as each day, each season is renewed. In Jesus’ name. Amen

Jill Hale

Tuesday, April 5, 2022

Psalm 126:1-3 (NKJV)

A song of Ascents

¹When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, We were like those who dream. ²Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them. ³The Lord has done great things for us, And we are glad”.

Verses 1-3 speak of a wonderful joyous time. Let’s look at verse one, the “captivity of Zion”. In 538 B.C. King Cyrus of Persia defeated Babylonia. He then set the exiles free to return to Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is on Mt. Zion where the exiles returned, However, the word Zion also came to represent the nation of Israel and the people of God. So, the meaning of verse 1 could be the joy of the Israelites being set free after dreaming of returning home from 50 years of captivity. Truly, a time of great joy.

Verse two “the Lord has done great things for them.” This statement refers to the neighboring “Gentile” nations, not in a covenant with God. They saw the great things the Lord had done for Israel and acknowledged God’s favor for these people. These Gentile nations were considered ungodly, even heathen by Israel. This showed credit to God even among the ungodly.

Finally, verse three, “and we are glad” exemplifies the great joy the Israelites feel. After 50 years of captivity, they are now returning home, a free people, back on familiar ground and a sense of belonging.

Prayer: Our Lord, and our protector, We are grateful for all the goodness and joy you provide in our life. Let us never forget the favor you bestow on us. Amen

Blessings to All,

Artie & Marian Lawless

Wednesday, April 6, 2022

Psalm 126:4-6 (NIV)

“Restore our fortunes, O Lord. Like streams in the Negev. Those that sow in tears will weep with songs of joy. He that goes out weeping carrying seed to sow will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.”

This is a beautiful verse. The streams mentioned in verse 4 refer to the *wadis*, which occasionally blessed the land with a sudden overabundance of water. Sowing was the agricultural processes God gave the people.

Many people believe that they cannot help someone when they are in deep despair themselves. Not quite a year after my son was killed in a motorcycle accident, a woman whom I knew through work, was in a terrible car accident that left her youngest daughter dead. I knew her pain and sorrow. So, I girded up myself and went to see her. We

cried together and I was able to give some wisdom and a couple of books on grief that I had clung to. I hope I helped her and I didn’t get rid of my grief. But I carried my seeds to sow and returned with my songs of joy – my knowledge that I did help someone who needed me, my sheaves of joy.

Prayer: Dear God, We know that you are always with us and while we don’t know your plans for us, and have a hard time with some of them, let us know that we do have seeds of joy that we can carry with us. Remind us of the wadis in our lives that can give us a plentiful harvest. Amen

Wanda Williams

Thursday, April 7, 2022

Philippians 3:4b-9

⁴If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. ⁷But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in^[a] Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

Saint Paul the Apostle is one of the most prominent figures in the Bible, and not without reason. His journey of conversion amidst a life of individual struggle and personal growth gives plenty for him to write about, and to have written about him.

Paul wrote at least seven books of the Bible - Philippians definitely being one of them – though some scholars argue that that figure exceeds thirteen. In any case, the words in even short excerpts like these contain tremendous value and opportunity to reflect upon. It may be because I am engineering student whose brain is constantly occupied by math of some sort, but for me this scripture initially reads like a weird equation. Paul adds up all of his reasons for why his flesh-bound value would seem high: his literal flesh was manipulated to identify him with his people, he grew up respecting man-made laws, and furthermore enforced these laws by attacking the church, which was dissident to such laws. That amounts to a lot of status - which Paul ultimately subtracts from his life. In his words, it is a 'loss for the sake of Christ.' For Paul to makes such great gains among his society, only for him to throw it all away presents an interesting thought exercise. We think a lot about all of the things we try to add to our lives, be it in terms of wealth, perhaps in how many people we influence, or some measure of power. Like Paul, we seek to constantly add to our status but when does it end? The thing about fleshly gains is that we are never fully satisfied. There is always more money to be earned, or things to buy, or more people to have in your circles, or more things to have under your control. But what does it all amount to in the end? When does it end? If we bind our pursuits to the flesh, not only are we subject to the earth, where evil resides, but we are also separate from the eternal life and goodness promised by God. When it comes down to it, we all live by our own standards, with our own moral compasses and core values. The question is what role God plays in guiding all of that. There is a reason Paul is integral to this lesson: he did grew up poor, and adapted to a life of making things work however he could. This instilled a stubborn self-reliance, a sense that he was in control. Paul is quick to recall this chapter of his life anytime he teaches because he knows that it can resonate with anyone. We feel like the world expects us to carve our own path with the cards we are dealt,

and that can lead to a guiding perspective in which God doesn't really fit. Of course, God recognizes this. He wants us figuring out this part of our lives. He wants us to suppress our flesh-bound pursuits and adapt to those of spiritual righteousness. It is not easy for us to ignore the pleasures of our world, but as we have talked about, God will never face us with a challenge we cannot overcome. He asks that we avoid getting caught up with how much we can add to our status on earth, sacrificing all of that in favor of the way of life He has crafted for us. This is a way of life that promises prosperity, peace and unyielding love. That is an invaluable payoff.

PRAYER: Lord, we acknowledge that the world we live in is dominated by temptations and fleshly pleasures that do not reflect Your faith and righteousness. We confess that it is difficult to resist these, but know that You are all we truly need. We pray that you guide us beyond the flesh. We pray for our ability to enrich our spirits for You. And thus, it is in Your Name we pray, Amen.

Alec Gilmore

Friday, April 8, 2022
Philippians 3:10-14 (CEB)

¹⁰ The righteousness that I have comes from knowing Christ, the power of his resurrection, and the participation in his sufferings. It includes being conformed to his death ¹¹ so that I may perhaps reach the goal of the resurrection of the dead. ¹² It's not that I have already reached this goal or have already been perfected, but I pursue it, so that I may grab hold of it because Christ grabbed hold of me for just this purpose. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I myself don't think I've reached it, but I do this one thing: I forget about the things behind me and reach out for the things ahead of me. ¹⁴ The goal I pursue is the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus.

Pamela: Pamela's Sacred Story continues: It's difficult not to relive my past sometimes. As I walk with God, I try to just look through the rear-view window and not step back through it. I look to see what I can learn from my previous suffering now that I know I am in God's protective love. In these verses, Paul is encouraging us to grow in faithfulness. I am just an infant in Jesus Christ. I realize there is much to learn. My Bible suggests that we set goals for ourselves. Like trying to understand the Bible, going to church regularly, and being of service. These goals are a start as I strive for heaven. I'm not a confident person but I believe in a strength and confidence that comes with knowing God. Hopefully, my continued yearning, growing and my willingness to be of service to my Savior will help me achieve the goals that God wills.

Cathy: Oh, to be a babe in Christ again! What a freshness in Pamela's response to these Lenten scriptures. I know that you are noticing because many of you have spoken to her in thanksgiving and support for her journey. Everyone reading these devotions has an individual journey to undertake. Whether you are just starting out, or coming back, or midway through your faith-life, a function of our sisterhood/brotherhood in Christ is to encourage one another as Paul is encouraging the Philippian congregation.

My own journey has had its really rough spots as well as blessings. It's tempting to call the death of loved ones, or a divorce, or a lost job "our participation in Jesus' sufferings". Perhaps more accurately those are places in which Jesus participates in our sufferings. So how do we participate in Jesus' sufferings?

Jesus suffered to see people hungry, struggling, condemned as sinners. Jesus suffered to see the walls dividing people from each other and from God. Jesus suffered death on the cross to reveal how we betray God's

love for us, God's grace in our lives, and our giftedness as co-creators with God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus suffered death on the cross to reveal the power of resurrection beyond death.

I've always been intrigued by the word suffer used in the KJV version "Suffer the little children come unto me". According to an etymology dictionary, that usage suggests we "undergo, be subject to, be affected by, the experience." In other words, BE TRANSFORMED! Paul was transformed from persecutor to protagonist and defender of the life of Christ. He gave up his past, became as a child, in order to become a messenger for Christ.

"God isn't finished with us yet" the old adage proclaims. None of us. This journey is a life-long transformation. What are your goals for next steps toward growing in the power of his resurrection, participation in his sufferings, in receiving the righteousness that comes from discerning and living according to the will of God? Study? Worship and Prayer? Spiritual Direction? Service? Even at 70 years old, even with a lifetime of study, worship and service to Christ, I join you in praying that God isn't finished with me yet!

Prayer: O God, perfect us in love, that we may conquer all selfishness and hatred of others. Fill our hearts with Thy joy. And shed abroad in them Thy peace which passeth understanding, that so those murmurings and disputings to which we are too prone may be overcome. Make us long-suffering and gentle, and thus subdue our hastiness and angry tempers. Grant that we may bring forth the blessed fruits of the Spirit, to Thy praise and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Henry Alford, 1810-1870, was an English Theologian and Author.)

Pamela Palasty & Cathy Luck

Saturday, April 9, 2022

Psalm 129 (CEB)

A pilgrimage song.

From youth, people have constantly attacked me—let Israel now repeat!—from youth people have constantly attacked me—but they haven't beaten me! They plowed my back like farmers; they made their furrows deep. But the Lord is righteous—God cut me free from the ropes of the wicked. ⁵Let everyone who hates Zion be ashamed, thoroughly frustrated. Let them be like grass on a roof that dies before it can be pulled up, which won't fill the reaper's hand or fill the harvester's arms. Let no one who passes by say to them: "May the Lord's blessing be on you! We bless you in the Lord's name!"

The notes in my study Bible tell me this is a song from the people of Israel, praising God's faithfulness and calling out those who drove them into slavery. The Israelites are coming home and any who would keep them away from their home will be cursed. It's a psalm of praise.

Isn't that what we are trying to do daily? Just get home to God. We've allowed ourselves to be driven from our home with God by the worries of the world. Perhaps we've turned our back on God from some perception that God turned away from us through loss or life experience. I know I turned away from God in my youth for those very reasons. If God to take away those I loved, then God didn't love me – or so my 13-year-old logic said.

Years of life experiences and questions kept me from coming home. Loss of relationships, loved ones, starting over more than once all led me to question why God had abandoned me. God patiently waited for me to come to the realization that I had abandoned God. Boy Howdy! That realization was like a 2x4 upside the head. God had been there all the while, gently trying to lead me back home.

As I read this Psalm with today's eyes, I don't see the attackers as nations or powerful leaders. I see the attackers as my own doubts and frustrations and temptations to be led away from home. I see my own willfulness and pride as trying to keep me away from my home with God.

Prayer: Glorious Father: I praise you for your patience and mercy. I thank you for your grace and understanding that my own willfulness and kept me away from you for so long. Thank you for welcoming me home. Amen

Sandy Fitch