

***2021 Lenten Devotional:
The Teachings of Jesus Christ
On the Kingdom of God***



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***The mission of Mt. Healthy U.M.C.
is to LEAD the way to Christ
by serving others, and sharing God's Love.***

In the Christian world, the most sacred of days is Easter Sunday, the day we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus. The forty days (excluding Sundays) that precede Easter is known as Lent. It is a time when Christians focus on Sacrifice (fasting), Repentance, and Preparation for a renewed relationship with God through His son Jesus.

After being baptized by His cousin John in the Jordan River, Jesus prepared for His ministry by spending forty days in the desert, fasting, praying, and being tempted by Satan. In this Lenten Devotional, we shall focus on preparation; prepare your hearts and minds to be accepting of the works and teachings of Christ.

Each day, read the Bible verse listed. Meditate on what the passage means; what is Jesus trying to teach us? Allow the meaning to influence both your mind and your heart, and make your daily prayer reflect your thankfulness for our savior and His teachings. Who else could teach us better to prepare for the coming Kingdom of God than Jesus?

This booklet contains the teachings of Jesus'. Thousands flocked to the hills and valleys to hear the Lord speak; in the next forty days, you are one of them! Hear His words, and let them speak to you. Witness the power of His Love in His actions.

Then, just as Jesus did, pray!

*May God bless you and keep you;
May the Peace of Christ Jesus,
and the power of the Holy Spirit,
envelop you and guide you every day. Amen.*

How to use this Devotional

Each day during Lent, read the scripture passage for that day. Let the message fill your heart with its meaning, and guide you in your prayers. There are questions and comments to help you find how the message speaks to you personally; use them as needed to make your daily prayers reflect your thoughts and your heartfelt desires.

There are no prescribed readings for the six Sundays during Lent; however, for those that will join in the Lenten Bible Study, use the blank spaces (for Sundays) to record your thoughts and questions to the readings during the week. We will be discussing these during the study.

01 Ash Wednesday 02-17

BIBLE STUDY TEXT FOR SUNDAY 02-21

(Use page Sunday 02-21 for notes and questions)

Matthew 6:1-6

1 "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 "So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 5 "And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 6 But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

How many people do we encounter daily, and rarely have a quiet, honest and heart-felt conversation? How many of these people are with us every day? Are they co-workers, customers, neighbors? God is with us every day, 24 hours a day! He wants to have a closer relationship with us, and this happens when we pray. When we pray today, let us make an effort to be as honest, even as "soul-bearing" as possible. Remember, God already knows us for whom we really are, and only by knowing this ourselves can we be thankful for His redeeming Grace, and become even closer to God.

02 Thursday 02-18

Luke 9:22-25

22 "The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."
23 Then he said to them all, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. 24 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it.
25 What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?"

In our modern day Christianity, the cross represents the sins of all humanity, the burden of Christ. Jesus carried that cross from the city of Jerusalem, all the way to Golgotha, knowing He would ultimately die on it and because of it! Yet He carried that cross and did God's will. In today's reading, Jesus tells us that we must do the same; we must carry all of our burdens and responsibilities and follow Him and do God's will.

As we pray today, let us remember meet our responsibilities AND be an example of God's love to all.

03 Friday 02-19

Matthew 9:14-15

14 Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" 15 And Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Jesus, as teacher and as messiah, was the most important person in the lives of the disciples. How important is He in our lives? Is Jesus the most central figure in our daily existence?

Oh heavenly Father, send your Spirit to open the eyes of my heart that I may always see the path of Christ in my life...

04 Saturday 2-20

Luke 5:27-32

27 After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." 28 And he got up, left everything, and followed him. 29 Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others sitting at the table with them. 30 The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" 31 Jesus answered, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; 32 I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Who among us is without sin? Who among us does not need to be forgiven? Christ heals our brokenness caused by our sin! It is only in knowing our own brokenness, that we can be healed. True knowledge creates in us sorrow, and sorrow leads to repentance.

Lord God, You sent Jesus to share Your mercy with un-worthy sinners like us...

Sunday 02-21

Notes and Questions for Bible Study

(01 Ash Wednesday 02-17) **Matthew 6:1-6**

05 Monday 02-22

Matthew 25:31-40

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? 38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' 40 And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

We must ask ourselves, " In this reading, am I the righteous, or one of the least of these?" The answer is probably both! At some point we have all been down, sick, or poor; are we righteous during the other times?

Heavenly Father, allow us to hear your message as we read Your word. Let your spirit come upon us and guide us as we pray, and as we live...

06 Tuesday 02-23

Matthew 6:7-15

7 "When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 "Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. 14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; 15 but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Many of us learned this prayer when we were young; how many times have we prayed these words as the "empty phrases" our Lord was talking about. It really is the perfect prayer. It speaks of God as holy, generous, forgiving, just, faithful and requires the person praying to have faith in God's will.

Let us carefully consider each phrase, and open today's prayers with the Lord's Prayer.

07 Wednesday 02-24

BIBLE STUDY TEXT FOR SUNDAY 02-28

(Use page Sunday 02-28 for notes and questions.)

Luke 11:29-32

29 When the crowds were increasing, [Jesus] began to say, "This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. 30 For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation. 31 The queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here! 32 The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here!

What sign do we seek? Do we need a sign to know that God is with us? Is our faith strong enough to sustain us without a sign?

Question the strength of your faith, and if necessary, ask God not to prove himself to you, but to give to you a faith that requires no sign.

08 Thursday 02-25

Matthew 7:7-12

7 "Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? 10 Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! 12 In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets."

How awesome is our God! He will give to us if we but ask. What does God want from us in return? "In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you."

As we pray today, consider the things we request from God. Do we ask for specific things? Do we ask for God's will to be done to alter our life? Both? Then let's consider our lives; in everything, do we treat others as we would be treated?

09 Friday 02-26

Matthew 5:20-24

Jesus said to his disciples, *20* For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. *21* "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder"; and "whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.'" *22* But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, "You fool," you will be liable to the hell of fire. *23* So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, *24* leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

How can God, a God of pure love, tolerate hypocrisy? Do not simply refrain from murder; love one another! God does not want our offerings as much as He wants us to love our neighbor.

As we pray today, let us remember all those who do not see our very best, those who might not know that we are Christians based on our actions.

10 Saturday 02-27

Matthew 5:43-48

43 "You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'" *44* But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, *45* so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. *46* For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? *47* And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? *48* Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

It is easy for us to think we cannot be perfect like God; we are flawed humans after all. The truth is we can never be perfect if we do not try. Remember, Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water with Christ!

Heavenly Father, lead us to do your will; send your Holy Spirit to stir our hearts to show love to all, as commanded by Christ our savior...

Sunday 02-28

Notes and Questions for Bible Study

(07 Wednesday 02-24) ***Luke 11:29-32***

11 Monday 03-01

Luke 6:36-38

36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. **37** "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; **38** give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

How just is our God! Our savior gives us such simple rules to follow, and we often fail to heed them. This is our brokenness! This is why God sent His Son to redeem us!

Lord God, thank you for your magnificent Love and Grace. You have already forgiven us our sins, help us to treat others as we would like to be treated.

... In Jesus name we pray; Amen.

12 Tuesday 03-02

Matthew 23:1-12

1 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, **2** "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; **3** therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. **4** They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them.

5 They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. **6** They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, **7** and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. **8** But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. **9** And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. **10** Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. **11** The greatest among you will be your servant. **12** All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

Jesus is describing the hypocrisy of the self-righteous. The man who knows himself, and knows he is a sinner, is penitent before God.

As we pray today, let us humble ourselves, kneel before our God and ask for forgiveness and a desire to serve, that we may be His servants in the earthly kingdom of God.

13 Wednesday 03-03

BIBLE STUDY TEXT FOR SUNDAY 03-07

(Use page Sunday 03-07 for notes and questions.)

Matthew 20:20-28

20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. 21 And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." 22 But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." 23 He said to them, "You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." 24 When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers. 25 But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. 26 It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

We have all wondered at some point, what is our purpose in this life. Jesus explains it is to serve others, that we might become citizens of God's kingdom. Do we serve God as Christ directed? Do we do it every day?

Oh Lord, grant that we may become humbled servants, doing the work you have for us. Send Your Holy Spirit to encourage us to find and serve your children of this world, so we might become like your child ...

14 Thursday 03-04 Luke 16:19-31

19 "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20 And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. 22 The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. 24 He called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames." 25 But Abraham said, "Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. 26 Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us." 27 He said, "Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house, *(continued on next page)*

28 for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.' 29 Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.' 30 He said, "No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced, even if someone rises from the dead.' "

When Jesus spoke these words, He had not yet been crucified and raised from death. How many still do not believe, even after His resurrection? If you are reading this, you either already believe in the power of God's Grace and Forgiveness, or you are searching for understanding of "The Way" of Christ Jesus.

Heavenly Father, bless the reader of this text with understanding and faith. Open the minds and hearts of all who know You, and all who wish to know You, to Your word and Your will. In the name of Christ Jesus our savior we pray; Amen.

15 Friday 03-05

Matthew 21-33-43

33 "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. 34 When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. 35 But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. 37 Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' 39 So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. 40 Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" 41 They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time." 42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes?' 43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom."

Throughout the Gospels, we hear Jesus refer to the vineyard. Whether He means the Christian Church, or the world in general, the message is the same; if we do not produce fruit, we will be pruned and tossed into the fire, so that fruit producing branches have a better chance to thrive. What fruit do we produce? Are we making disciples for Christ? Are we truly Disciples of Christ?

Allow these thoughts guide us as we pray today.

16 Saturday 03-06

Luke 15:22-24

22 But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

The story of the prodigal son contains many lessons. (I encourage you to read the entire parable, Luke 15:11-32.) The meaning of the verses we read today are equally profound; when someone changes their life, when a person forsakes the sinful ways of the past and comes to God, there is much rejoicing and celebrating! You can hear the voice of God in the last verse; 'for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!'

As we pray, remember what the son said to the father as he returned home; "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son," and remember, He has forgiven us already!

Sunday 03-07

Notes and Questions for Bible Study

*(13 Wednesday 03-03) **Matthew 20:20-28***

17 Monday 03-08

Luke 4:24-30

24 And he said, "Truly I tell you; no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. 25 But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; 26 yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. 27 There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." 28 When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. 30 But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

In this reading, an analogy is offered; the prophet who is not accepted in his hometown, might be compared to a Christian whose faith has matured, and the family and friends who might now see him as self-righteous. It does not change the faith of the individual, but it does make it more difficult to openly display that faith. Christ was both admired for the authority with which He taught the masses about scripture, and reviled by those in power, a power derived from their office within the church. Our faith, as it grows and becomes more significant in our daily lives, will cause some to doubt us, mistrust us, even slander us.

As we pray today, remember that those who are persecuted because of Christ, are blessed by Him as well!

18 Tuesday 03-09

Matthew 18:21-22

21 Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times."

Matthew 6:14-15: 14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; 15 but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

As we pray, we should ask our Heavenly Father to guide us to remember those we may not have forgiven, to be sensitive to their situation, to treat them with an extra portion of graciousness and kindness as we encounter them in home, church, and beyond.

19 Wednesday 03-10

BIBLE STUDY TEXT FOR SUNDAY 03-14

(Use page Sunday 03-14 for notes and questions.)

Matthew 5:17-19

17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. 18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. 19 Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

The Jews of Jesus' day were looking for a messiah that would free them from Roman oppression, that would lead them, that would change everything. Today we know, that while Jesus did change things in the lives of many, His ministry was to teach the laws of God, and bring people closer to Him.

May the Holy Spirit imprint the Commandments of God the Father on our hearts as we pray today, and also the new commandment of Christ Jesus; "Love one another as I have loved you."

20 Thursday 03-11 Psalms 95:6-9

6 O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
7 For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. O that today you would listen to his voice! 8 Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, 9 when your ancestors tested me, and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.

Today's reading conveys the thought that God is the maker of all things; that we should humble ourselves in His presence and worship Him.

As we pray, let us hear the excitement and imperatives of this passage; and then take time to clear our minds and let the wonder of God fill our hearts.

21 Friday 03-12 Mark 12:28-34

28 One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; 30 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 32 Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; 33 and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." *(continued on next page)*

34 When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

This theme is repeated throughout the scriptures; love God and love your neighbor as yourself. Our God is a God of love; all else offends Him. Jesus ministry was one of love also. He healed out of love, he forgave sins out of love, He even raised the dead out of love.

Lord God, teach us to love as Jesus has instructed. Let our hearts be stirred by Your Word and Your enormous Love, and hear our prayers that we might learn to please you...

22 Saturday 03-13

Luke 18:9-14

9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

There are two different kinds of prayer in the parable: Thankfulness & Forgiveness. The Pharisee is thankful that God has blessed him, yet he seems unaware of his own flaws as a human being. The tax collector on the other hand, is ashamed of his flaws, and even has trouble looking toward heaven as he seeks God's forgiveness. Yet he doesn't thank God for anything.

Let us use these to make one glorious prayer today; let us thank God for all His blessings in our lives, and humble ourselves to ask for forgiveness of our sins.

Sunday 03-14

Notes and Questions for Bible Study

(19 Wednesday 03-10) **Matthew 5:17-19**

23 Monday 03-15

BIBLE STUDY TEXT FOR SUNDAY 03-21

(Use page Sunday 03-21 for notes and questions.)

John 4:46b-54

Now there was a royal official whose son lay ill in Capernaum. **47** When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. **48** Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." **49** The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my little boy dies." **50** Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started on his way. **51** As he was going down, his slaves met him and told him that his child was alive. **52** So he asked them the hour when he began to recover, and they said to him, "Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever left him." **53** The father realized that this was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he himself believed, along with his whole household. **54** Now this was the second sign that Jesus did after coming from Judea to Galilee.

Oh, how weak we humans can be! Is it true we cannot believe without a sign, or a miracle? We have never seen Jesus perform a miracle in person, but we know that He has from the scriptures.

As we pray this day, let us ask for the faith that Jesus speaks of. Let us pray that our faith may inspire others to believe!

24 Tuesday 03-16

Matthew 13:31-33

31 He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; **32** it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." **33** He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

How great is our faith and dedication to the Kingdom of God? Is it as large as the mustard seed? The seed will grow if it has food, water and good soil. If our faith is such, we need to feed and nurture this faith with scripture, prayer and works of love and compassion!

In our prayer today, visualize the multiplying effect of the seeds we sew for the Kingdom of God, and do not underestimate their potential.

25 Wednesday 03-17

Psalm 145:8-9, 13-14

8 The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. 9 The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made. 13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The Lord is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds. 14 The Lord upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down.

The psalmist is foreseeing the words of Christ in Luke 18:14; "for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

Heavenly Father, we humble ourselves as we pray to You; allow us to do Your will as if it were our own; let us be the servants You desire...

26 Thursday 03-18

Matthew 1:18-25

18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. 20 But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." 24 When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, 25 but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

When we are faced with an important decision, especially one that concerns the will of God, He will always guide us. It may not be an Angel or a burning bush, but the message is there if we choose to listen, and quiet our hearts so we may hear it.

Holy God, we sometimes find it difficult to do Your will. Teach us to hear your will in our hearts, and allow us to have the faith required to follow when we cannot see what lies ahead; to do what we might not understand, because You ask us to do so...

27 Friday 03-19

John 7:25-30

25 Now some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is not this the man whom they are trying to kill? 26 And here he is, speaking openly, but they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Messiah? 27 Yet we know where this man is from; but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from." 28 Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him. 29 I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me." 30 Then they tried to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come.

Jesus said "You know me, and you know where I am from." Do we know Christ? How dedicated are we to reading scripture as a way to know our savior?

As we pray today, let us dedicate ourselves to learning about Christ, offering our thanks and petitions, and doing good works that are the will of the Father daily.

28 Saturday 03-20 John 7:40-47

40 When they heard these words, some in the crowd said, "This is really the prophet." 41 Others said, "This is the Messiah." But some asked, "Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he? 42 Has not the scripture said that the Messiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?" 43 So there was a division in the crowd because of him. 44 Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. 45 Then the temple police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why did you not arrest him?" 46 The police answered, "Never has anyone spoken like this!" 47 Then the Pharisees replied, "Surely you have not been deceived too, have you?"

There were those who doubted then, and there are those who doubt today. We should not let the doubt of others undermine our faith! Our beliefs are based on the spiritual; the love we feel, the love we share, and the miracles that have occurred around us.

As we pray today, let us remember all the amazing things God has done for us, and all the things from which He has spared us.

Sunday 03-21

Notes and Questions for Bible Study

(23 Monday 03-15) **John 4:46b-54**

29 Monday 03-22 John 9:1-17

1 As he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. 2 And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. 4 We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 As he said this, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, 7 saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Silo'am" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. 8 The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, "Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?" 9 Some said, "It is he"; others said, "No, but he is like him." He said, "I am the man." 10 They said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" 11 He answered, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Silo'am and wash'; so I went and washed and received my sight." 12 They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know." 13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. 14 Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15 The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." 16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" There was a division among them. 17 So they again said to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

Today's reading delivers a message of love; there is no improper time to show the love of God to our neighbor. While keeping the Sabbath is important, remember the words of Jesus in Mark 12:30-31 (Friday 12 March); 30 "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. 31 The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these."

Father, allow us to see the opportunities You have placed before us, and guide us to do your will always. ...

30 Tuesday 03-23

John 8:21-30

21 Again he said to them, "I am going away, and you will search for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." 22 Then the Jews said, "Is he going to kill himself? Is that what he means by saying, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" 23 He said to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. 24 I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he." 25 They said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Why do I speak to you at all?"

(continued on next page)

26 I have much to say about you and much to condemn; but the one who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." 27 They did not understand that he was speaking to them about the Father. 28 So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me. 29 And the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him." 30 As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

The single most important belief of Christianity is stated by Christ himself in verse 24; "you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he." Yet there is so much more than this here! Speaking of the Father, Jesus said "He has not left me alone," and, "I always do what is pleasing to Him."

As we pray, let us remember that God is always with us as well, and ask Him for the determination and love to do what is pleasing to God.

31 Wednesday 03-24

BIBLE STUDY TEXT FOR SUNDAY 03-28

(Use page Sunday 04-05 for notes and questions.)

Luke 1:26-33

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

When Gabriel spoke to Mary, she must have been amazed, scared and confused. What tasks does God have for us? Do we have doubts of our ability to do His will? Of course, we do, but it is our faith that will see us through!

Heavenly Father, whatever tasks you have for us, help us to accomplish them with faith and honor, to bring glory to You! ...

32 Thursday 03-25

John 8:54-59

54 Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, he of whom you say, 'He is our God,' 55 though you do not know him. But I know him; if I would say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him and I keep his word. 56 Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad." 57 Then the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am." 59 So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

The acts of kindness, of love, of mercy that Jesus taught us to do by His example, are not to be done for praise or recognition, but to bring glory to the Father and expand the Kingdom on Earth.

May the Gospel of Jesus Christ inspire our hearts as we pray over them today and always...

33 Friday 03-26

John 10:31-38

31 The Jews took up stones again to stone him. 32 Jesus replied, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?" 33 The Jews answered, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God." 34 Jesus answered, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'?' 35 If those to whom the word of God came were called 'gods'—and the scripture cannot be annulled, 36 can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, 'I am God's Son'?' 37 If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. 38 But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

We must not let those who would doubt and condemn our efforts, the works we do by the direction of, and for the glory of God, deter us! If God has placed on our heart a course of action, who can say otherwise?

Heavenly Father, let all we do bring glory and honor to Your name, and expand Your kingdom on Earth...

34 Saturday 03-27

John 11:47-52

47 So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council, and said, "What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." 49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! 50 You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed." 51 He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God.

The concept of sacrifice, the giving of something of great value for the redress of sins, is perhaps more familiar to the first century Jew than the twenty-first century American. As Christians however, we understand that Christ's sacrifice was the ultimate price for the forgiveness of all sins; and all of us have sins for which we need to be forgiven.

As we pray, let us thank God for his magnificent love and Grace, as well as the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Sunday 03-28

Notes and Questions for Bible Study

(31 Wednesday 03-24) **Luke 1:26-33**

35 Monday 03-29 John 12:1-6

¹ Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ² There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ³ Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" ⁶ (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.)

There is a concept within the church called extravagant giving, that there is no cost too great to show God's love to others. Mary's gift to Jesus could be seen as an example of that. Do we give like this? All gifts do not need to be sacrificial, but some of the greatest gifts are!

Father, Your son Jesus taught us to pray, to give, and to love. Allow us to be like him and show Your Grace to all we encounter...

36 Tuesday 03-30 John 13:31-38

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³² If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews, so now I say to you, "Where I am going, you cannot come." ³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." ³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterward." ³⁷ Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."

³⁸ Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.

How wonderful is this new commandment? Simply, Love one another, and yet we can make it seem so difficult! We are not the only ones who fail in our efforts to serve God; Peter, upon whom Christ would build His church, failed (sinned) three times in one night. Yet Jesus still loved Peter, and He still loves us, even in our failures.

God, despite our failures, you love us still. Allow us to have a new mind, and a new heart for You and Your divine Grace.

37 Wednesday 03-31 Matthew 26:14-16, 20-25

¹⁴ Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵ and said, "What will you give me if I betray him to you?" (*continued on next page*)

They paid him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him. ²⁰ When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; ²¹ and while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me." ²² And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, "Surely not I, Lord?" ²³ He answered, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴ The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born." ²⁵ Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" He replied, "You have said so."

Betrayal. No account represents this as vividly as Judas' actions in today's reading. To a much lesser degree, when we vow to pray and we don't, when we vow to share the love of God and we don't, have we not also betrayed our Lord?

Lord, help us to be true disciples of our Savior Jesus. Send Your Holy Spirit to guide us daily, and inspire us to do Your will...

38 Thursday 04-01 (Holy Thursday, Maundy Thursday)

John 13:2-15

² And during supper ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸ Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." ¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason, he said, "Not all of you are clean." ¹² After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

In Mark 23:12, Jesus said, "12 All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted." To teach us to serve, Jesus humbled Himself; He disrobed, got on His knees and washed the feet of His apostles as a servant. How do we serve others? Do we do this with the spirit of God's love in our heart?

Lord God, give us the heart of a servant, and the courage to humble ourselves to serve you as Jesus taught us.

39 Friday 04-02 (Good Friday) John 19:25-30

25 Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." 27 Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. 28 After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty." 29 A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. 30 When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

To nearly His last breath, our savior showed us how to care for each other. It is the act of showing God's love that pleases Him. As sad and difficult as this passage is to read, we must always remember that crucifixion and death are only the precursor to the resurrection and the life of Jesus Christ.

In place of spoken prayer, let us contemplate in silence the last moments of Jesus' life, his sacrifice, and what it accomplished for us.

40 Saturday 04-04 (Holy Saturday)

Matthew 27:57-66

57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. 58 He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. 59 So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth 60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb. 62 The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate 63 and said, "Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' 64 Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise, his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception would be worse than the first." 65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." 66 So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

It is a day of mourning for the apostles, and all who loved Jesus. The scriptures do not tell us which of His followers believed Jesus would be raised on the third day; it seems that the Pharisees understood.

Though our hearts are filled with sadness that a savior was required to die for our sins, let our hearts be filled with joy that Jesus loves us so much that He humbled Himself so completely, as to Serve us in such a selfless way.

Easter Sunday

Mark 16: 1-8

1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" 4 When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." 8 So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Because God loves us so much, He has given us freewill, the ability to choose between right from wrong. God already knows that while we could choose His path, some of us will choose otherwise and sin against Him. The pain of a loving parent who watches a child make a bad decision, or a series of them, may be the only comparison our earthly experience can offer. Of course the parent still loves the child as much as before, but the errant child will be somewhat out of favor with the parent until that child repents. It is the same with God. He still loves us so very much, but realizes we cannot repent for all we have done. God does not like the void that has come between Him and his children, and offers a sacrifice for our sins. God offers the life and death of His son Jesus as the sacrificial lamb, to atone for our sins. Yet even God cannot assign this task; Christ has the same freewill that we do. Jesus had to be willing to do this; He had to choose to submit to the will of God, and He did so out of love.

We have been given a gift. Because of Christ Jesus, we have the ability to step into that void between God and us and dwell in His Grace. All we have to do is accept the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, as a result of the Resurrection.

We been given another gift as well. Beyond forgiveness, we have been given the opportunity to serve this loving and holy God, just as Christ did. To that end, it is the hope and prayer of all at St. Paul that the past forty days of prayer and meditation have been influenced by the Holy Spirit, and have brought you closer to God. We prayed this together before you ever saw this program, and we know that it is given, for we asked in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



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Sunday Worship Service: 10 AM
(Check the church's website for COVID-19 updates.)

We support the Mt. Healthy Alliance Food Pantry:
7717 Harrison Avenue; 521-3700; www.mthealthyalliance.org
Mon., 11 AM–1 PM; Tues., 5 PM–7 PM; Thur., 9 AM–12 PM; Sat., 9 AM–12 PM
Serving 45231

Mailing Address for the Mt. Healthy Alliance:
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*The mission of Mt. Healthy United Methodist Church is to
LEAD the way to Christ by serving others and sharing God's love.*