



115 LURAY AVENUE
FRONT ROYAL, VA

www.frontroyalpres.org



Front Royal Presbyterian Church has had a long-standing tradition of ushering in the Lenten season on Ash Wednesday with a simple soup supper prior to the evening worship service.

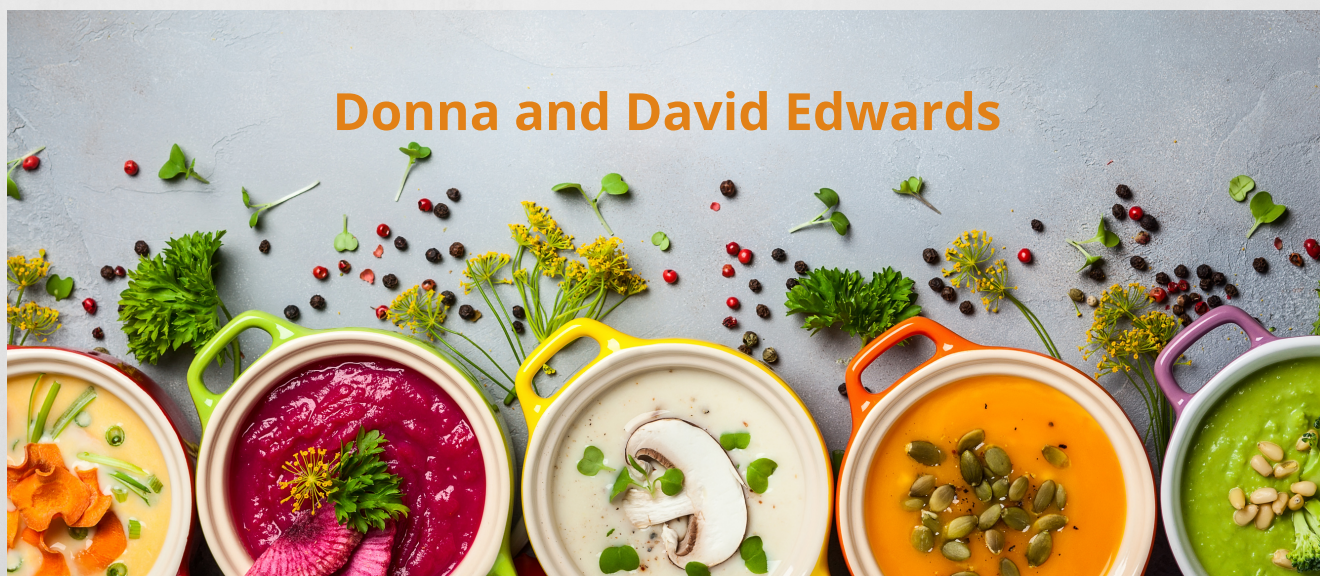
This event was sponsored by the worship committee, choir members, and talented soup makers throughout the congregation, and it was always a highly anticipated supper.

Each year one could expect to sample 6 to 10 varieties of homemade soups. It was by far one of our best attended evening functions at the church and a favorite of David's and mine.

With this fond memory in mind and in lieu of an actual Ash Wednesday soup supper this year, we are submitting this Chicken Corn Soup recipe for you to try at home.

Though the fellowship will be missed this year, perhaps a warm cup of soup will remind you of beginnings of past Lenten journeys.

Donna and David Edwards



CHICKEN CORN SOUP

From: Betty Groff's Country Goodness Cookbook

This is the way the recipe reads right from the cookbook. At the end of the recipe, I will share my tweaks!

Put the chicken in a large kettle.

Cover with enough water to make at least 4 cups stock.

Add saffron, salt, and pepper.

Bring to a boil and simmer until tender.

Let chicken cool enough to handle.

Remove the skin from the chicken and debone.

Cut the meat into bite-size pieces.

Measure 2 cups of the chicken, saving the reminder for chicken salad, etc.

Bring 4 cups of broth to a boil.

Add the corn, celery, and parsley.

Boil for 5 minutes.

Add the chicken. Check seasoning.

Add more salt and pepper if needed.

Serves: 6

1 (2-1/2 pound chicken)

Water

Pinch of saffron

2 teaspoons salt

¼ teaspoon pepper

2 cups corn kernels

1 cup chopped celery

1 Tablespoon chopped parsley

Dash freshly ground pepper

Here are the changes

I made to the original recipe. Additional ingredients are needed:

After we have enjoyed all the carved chicken off of a prepared store-bought roaster chicken (Martin's or Costco's, etc.), I make my own stock using the balance of the remaining chicken bones, etc. I pour store bought low-sodium chicken stock (1 or two cartons) over the chicken bones and add water if it does not cover the chicken bones. To that I add a quartered medium-size onion, piece of garlic, parsley, whole carrot and boil the meat off the bones. When it is done, I place a big pot under a strainer and drain off (separate) the liquid from the bones, chicken, and vegetables. I discard the bones, vegetables, and chicken.

Now I have flavorful "double stock". I used Organic Sweet Yellow Frozen Corn, & add 1-cup sliced fresh carrots when you add the corn, etc. I cook chicken thighs (bake or boil) and add those juices to my stock. After the thighs cool, I cut them up in bite-size pieces to add to the recipe when it says, "add the chicken". I do not use salt when cooking. Go to Good Thymes Health Food Store and get their minimal amount of SAFFLOWER. You have to ask them to get it for you. It is very inexpensive (less than a dollar) and is very flavorful! Use this as a substitute for the saffron.

Enjoy! Happy Eating.

Donna Edwards



Marked by Ashes
(from the book Prayers for a Privileged People by Walter Brueggemann)

Ruler of the Night, Guarantor of the Day...

This day----a gift from you

This day---like none other you have ever given,

Or we have ever received.

This Wednesday dazzles us with gift and newness and possibility.

This Wednesday burdens us with the tasks of the day

for we are already halfway home

halfway back to committees and memos,

halfway back to calls and appointments,

halfway on to next Sunday,

halfway back, half frazzled, half expectant,

half turned toward you, half rather not.

This Wednesday is a long way from Ash Wednesday,

but all our Wednesdays are marked by ashes -----

we begin this day with that taste of ash in our mouth:

of failed hope and broken promises

of forgotten children and frightened women

of more war casualties, more violence, more cynicism;

we ourselves are ashes to ashes,

dust to dust;

we can taste our mortality as we roll the ash around

on our tongue

We are able to ponder our ashes with

some confidence, only because our every Wednesday of ashes

anticipates your Easter victory over that dry, flaky taste

of death

On this Wednesday, we submit our ashen way to you-----

you Easter parade of newness

Before the sun sets, take our Wednesday and Easter us,

Easter us to joy and energy and courage and freedom;

Easter us that we may be fearless for your truth.

Come here and Easter our Wednesday with

Mercy and justice and peace and generosity.

We pray as we wait for the Risen One who comes soon.

submitted by Marta Steane

Come Unto Me

Ann Weems

When the journey gets too hard,
When we feel depleted,
When our compassion turns to complaining,
When our efforts toward justice and mercy
seem to get us nowhere,
It's time to remember the humility part –

That it is God who has made us
And not we ourselves;
That the saving of the world
or even one part of it is not on our shoulders.
It is then we can come unto him,
and He will give us rest.
With rest we'll remember what it is we are
about.



REFLECTIONS ON LENT

Lamenting and repenting for our
sinfulness from Ash Wednesday through
Holy Saturday

Efforts focused on self-denial, self-control,
simplicity, & spiritual disciplines bringing us
closer to God

Naturally a solemn and reflective journey
we each must walk alone

Transgressions released by way of Jesus'
sacrifice on Good Friday

Lengthening of daylight hours during the 40
days leading up to Easter

Example set by Jesus through his sinless life
on how we are to serve others

Necessary period of testing in the
wilderness to show us Jesus experienced
human trials

Temptations resisted by Jesus through
knowing the word of God and fervent prayer

Written and submitted by Donna Edwards

Fasting is the spiritual practice that is described in Isaiah 58 as the people of Israel engage in devoted acts of worship. Written sometime in the 520s BCE, these words come to a people who have been restored.

And these ancient words are built to last and made to travel; they were spoken and written for communities of people who lived in the real world, no more pious or less hectic than the one in which we live.

The people of God have finally come home from exile, returning to Judah and reestablishing their way of life. It is as if they have been released from their “time-out” by God and are now trying extra hard to make things right.

For a time, they honor the God ... But, by the time the prophet speaks these words, the community has fallen into an empty ritual, going through the motions while leaving their faith at the door.

How often do we find ourselves in those same empty rituals?

Fasting isn't just denying yourself of food, but it is a way of life, a way of worship and a new and radical way of living out our faith. And it is meant to be hard, because nobody promised the life of faith would be easy.

Isaiah is preaching to us.

“Is this not the fast that I have chosen; to lose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of every yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?”

How are you living out Isaiah's fast in your life?





LENTEN ROSE

THE LENTEN ROSE BURST INTO BLOOM
BEFORE THE SPRING AROSE.
ITS GREEN BUDS BRAVELY VENTURED
FORTH,
SURROUNDED BY THE SNOW.
IMPELLED TO SPREAD THE JOYOUS NEWS
IN TIME FOR EASTER'S DAWN,
IT STRUGGLED THROUGH THE FROZEN
EARTH
TO PRAISE THE RISEN SON.

A POEM BY CONNIE FAUST

submitted by David Edwards

John 2:13-22
The First Straw

It's 32 AD in the bustling city of Jerusalem during Passover. Jewish families are making their pilgrimage and making their offerings. The temple courtyard smells like a barnyard and the sound of change clinking in the money changers hands.

clink... clink...

It would be difficult for even the most righteous person to pray in this place.



And Jesus enters...

And in the midst of regular, ordinary even lawful and religiously correct business, Jesus comes through like a hurricane tossing tables and causing a scene.

An unassuming Jew, quiet in demeanor all of the sudden filled with the righteous anger of one who can't stand the injustice a moment longer.

It's all of the protests over the past few years rolled up into one massive march on what they consider to be injustice.

Consider the lilies...

Jesus was executed by the state not because of his patience with those in power but because of his impatience with those in power. Jesus' impatience was born out of his anger at injustice.

In other words, Jesus wasn't crucified because he asked us to "consider the lilies" but because He was a threat to the way of life that many had become accustomed to.

And Jesus still continues to overturn tables in our own lives.

Jesus is still all about cleansing the world of our deep sins that we have settled into like a comfy chair at the end of the day.

What ways is Jesus overturning your life?
Are you willing to let Him?

We are a nation of a lot of STUFF. My guess is that if you looked around, you would find lots of stuff in your house.

The church is the same way.

The kitchen holds at least 550 mismatched forks, spoons and knives along with a service for 250 And don't get me started on how many microwaves are in the church.

I think we might even have Eve's fig leaf in the storage shed out back...

But it isn't so easy in the church to follow Maria Kondo's method of de-cluttering your life in the church – someone is bound to get hurt.

So, we hold on. And then I'm reminded of what Jesus had to say:

Sell your possessions and follow me...

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...

So where is the balance, because we aren't very good at balance either in the church, work or in our spiritual lives?

Maria Kondo would say "If it doesn't bring you joy... get rid of it." Somehow, I'm afraid that won't work in the church... too much stuff would go missing, maybe even a pastor.

But as people of God, we must let go of our possessions and the hold that they have on us. We need to lighten our loads so we can continue moving forward in Christ.

So, I challenge you, to lighten your load at home and to find what is necessary to continue the work of the Gospel. Maybe once you get rid of the 54 silver candlesticks Elda gave back in 1921, you'll find that the time you once spent polishing them each month could better be sent tutoring a child, feeding the hungry, healing the sick... preaching the Gospel.

I had the joy of attending the Empty Bowl dinner benefitting the House of Hope recently and it reminded me of the scene from Indiana Jones where Indiana had to choose the Holy Grail from among the beautiful and ornate goblets in the cave. The villain chose the most beautiful goblet he could find, covered in gems and shining gold and when he drank from it, he withered away into the dust.

He Chose Poorly

Indiana on the other hand, searched the goblets remembering all along that Jesus was indeed the son of a carpenter, a king in his lineage, but not a king adorned with silver and gold but with a crown of thorns. Indiana searched the cave and found what most would consider a rude imitation of a goblet, made of clay, rudely thrown together and of no specific color, yet when Indiana drank from it, he lived.

Indiana Chose Wisely.

The bowls at the Empty Bowl dinner were all amazing and my daughter Isabelle had picked out one with a butterfly for me – seeing that I do love the theology of the butterfly. It sat in front of me throughout our dinner and before we left, I walked one more time around the room. And like Indiana, I saw it. I swear it hadn't been there before and to anyone else, it would have been a rude creation with little use. It is slightly larger than a mug, but with no handle. Its colors are that of the earth, not the bright yellows, blues and reds of a butterfly. Too small for soup, too big for tea... just right to share in the cup of Christ, the sacrifice of our Savior.

It reminds me that oftentimes, we look around for the shiny, the flashy, the most popular or the most beautiful to the eye, when we as a church, as a body of Christ are called to look past that.

Look past everything else around you and I guarantee you'll be the vessel God needs to show His love to others.
What in your life is God trying to show you?
How have you rejected ideas, possibilities?
Maybe even people because they aren't shiny, happy and safe?



THE PATHWAY HOME

Each has a little wanting place
hidden somewhere deep inside,
an orphaned waif with haunted face
who crying, sighing doth abide,
searching for the pathway home,
listening for the voice of one
who whispers, "Child, I bid you come.
I name and claim you as my own."

- - Donna Jordon



Heavenly and merciful Father, as I enter this season of Lent, I come before you with a humble and penitent heart. I know I don't live the life you desire for me. I know I sin and don't always follow your path. During this season, cleanse my heart and wash away my sin. Make in me a new heart, full of love for you and a desire to more closely walk in your way. Lead me to daily commit to you and give you my full heart. May this be a season of salvation and new life in you. All this I pray through your Son Jesus Christ.
Amen.

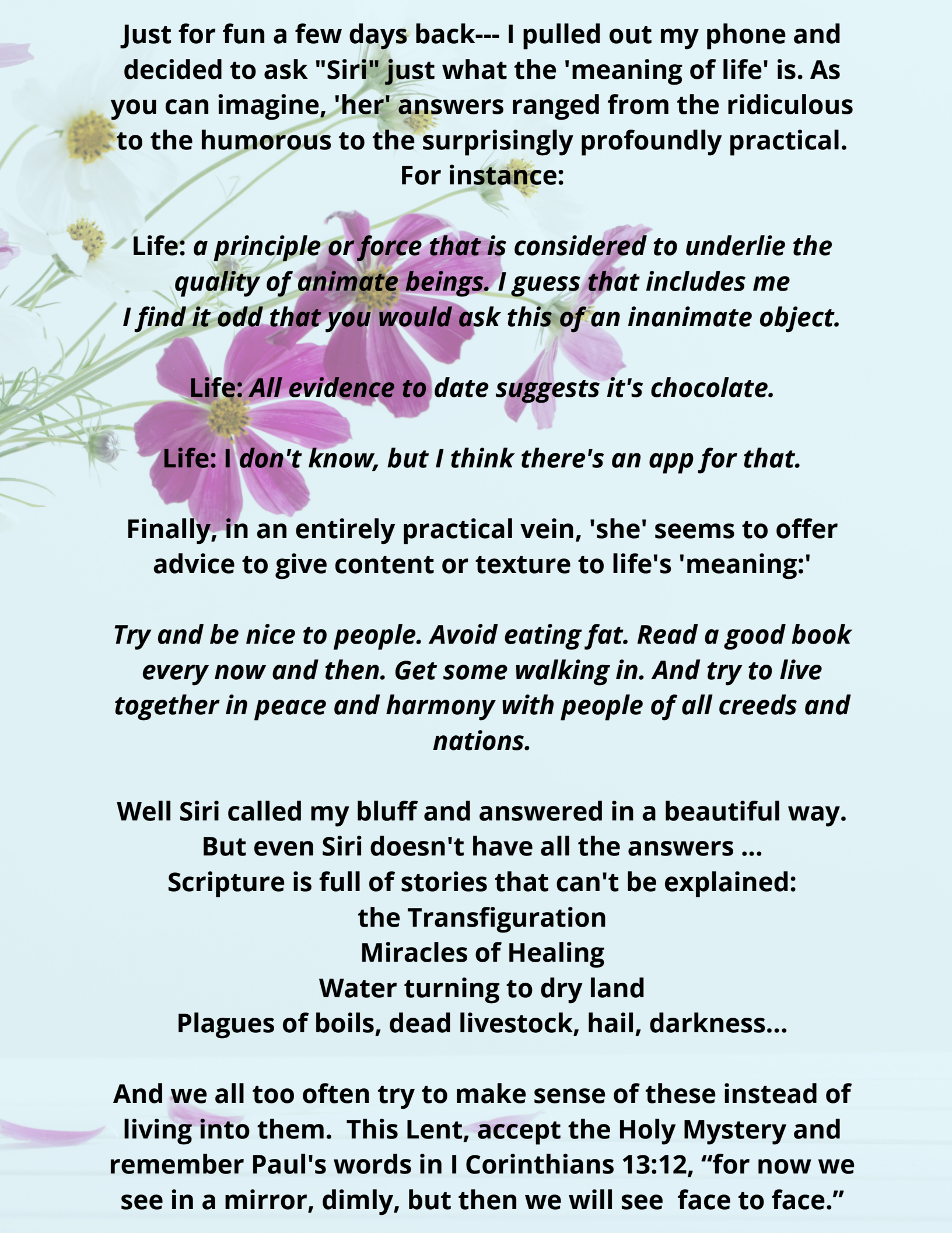
But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." Then the Lord said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?" — Jonah 4:9–11

You've been there — your feet ache, your stomach growls, you're sweaty and feel the heaviness of exhaustion overtaking you. Maybe your arms are full or you're trying to do too many things at once. Then one seemingly small thing happens — you drop something, someone says something to set you off — and it seems like the whole world is crashing down around you.

Jonah has a long list of his own. He's had quite a day. Even his one moment of comfort in a shade tree is taken away, and it seems like his world is ending. God, though, points out that his anger about his own discomfort outweighs his concern for the entire city of Nineveh. I admit, I've had my fair share of Jonah moments. As a parent of young children, juggling schedules and the famous Los Angeles traffic, I can get easily exasperated if I'm not careful.

In a now infamous study, seminary students going to preach on the Good Samaritan were found to be less likely to stop on the way and help someone in distress if they thought they were late than if they thought they had plenty of time. Even when our hearts and words are in the right place, we are susceptible to pass on the other side of the road if we commit the sin of stress. When I read of Jonah's anger at losing the shade from the tree, I am reminded to be present in the moment, to be aware of what is going on in my body, to put my concerns in their proper perspective and to take one step in the right direction. Only then can I rejoice over the city of Nineveh or stop to help my neighbor in need.

Frances Rosenau



Just for fun a few days back--- I pulled out my phone and decided to ask "Siri" just what the 'meaning of life' is. As you can imagine, 'her' answers ranged from the ridiculous to the humorous to the surprisingly profoundly practical.

For instance:

Life: a principle or force that is considered to underlie the quality of animate beings. I guess that includes me I find it odd that you would ask this of an inanimate object.

Life: All evidence to date suggests it's chocolate.

Life: I don't know, but I think there's an app for that.

Finally, in an entirely practical vein, 'she' seems to offer advice to give content or texture to life's 'meaning':

Try and be nice to people. Avoid eating fat. Read a good book every now and then. Get some walking in. And try to live together in peace and harmony with people of all creeds and nations.

Well Siri called my bluff and answered in a beautiful way.

But even Siri doesn't have all the answers ...

Scripture is full of stories that can't be explained:

the Transfiguration

Miracles of Healing

Water turning to dry land

Plagues of boils, dead livestock, hail, darkness...

And we all too often try to make sense of these instead of living into them. This Lent, accept the Holy Mystery and remember Paul's words in I Corinthians 13:12, "for now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face."

There are at least two different kinds of time. One is chronos and refers to linear time, the kind of time you find represented by the watch on your wrist or the calendar in your pocket or purse... the time that tends to enslave us and make us dance to its rhythm and march to its cadence.

But there's another kind of time in the Bible called kairos. It doesn't refer to linear time... the kind of time that is marked by a calendar or timepiece. And, as you might imagine, it is harder to explain and to understand. Think of it as the time when a woman is in labor, it can't be stopped. It is time as fulfillment, or perhaps even better, events in time that are inevitable and cannot be stopped.

Jesus put it this way, as rendered by Eugene Peterson in The Message:

"In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal."

*The hour has come," Jesus says,
"for the Son of Man to be glorified."*

"It's Time."

Do you want to see Jesus on your time schedule – Sunday morning and Thursday morning Bible Study or are you willing to be reckless in your love for Him and allow Kairos time to take over, to awaken the dead in you to the possibilities around you?

A very overweight man decided that it was time to shed a few pounds. He went on a new diet and took it seriously. He even changed his usual driving route to the office in order to avoid his favorite bakery.

One morning, however, he arrived at the office carrying a large, sugar-coated coffee cake. His office mates roundly chided him, but he only smiled, shrugged his shoulders and said, "What could I do? This is a very special cake. This morning, out of my forced habit, I accidentally drove by my favorite bakery. There in the window were trays of the most delicious goodies. I felt that it was no accident that I happened to pass by, so I prayed, 'Lord, if you really want me to have one of these delicious coffee cakes, let me find a parking place in front of the bakery.' Sure enough, on the ninth trip around the block, there it was!"

Temptation is strong, but we must be stronger.

If you made a Lenten promise, how is it going? Are you rationalizing your way out of it or are you holding firm?

Lenten Poem by Ann Weems

Lent is a time to take time to let the power
of our faith story take hold of us,
a time to let the events get up
and walk around in us,
a time to intensify our living unto Christ,
a time to hover over the thoughts of our hearts,
a time to place our feet in the streets of
Jerusalem or to walk along the sea
and listen to his Word,
a time to touch his robe
and feel the healing surge through us,
a time to ponder and a time to wonder....
Lent is a time to allow a fresh new taste of God!
Perhaps we're afraid to have time to think,
for thoughts come unbidden.
Perhaps we're afraid to face our future
knowing our past.
Give us courage, O God,
to hear your Word
and to read our living into it.
Give us the trust to know we're forgiven
and give us the faith
to take up our lives and walk.

From night to night, In cold and fright,
stood I near charcoal fire,
And, warming there, Did curse and swear,
And show myself a liar.
"Are you not he from Galilee, The friend of Him all meek?"
The cock did crow.
"I do not know The Man of Whom you speak."
But then He turned, And in me burned A flame,
lit from His gaze,
At which I wept for oaths unkept and all my lukewarm days.
When He was tried Him I denied and failed to pass the test,
Though promised I with Him to die, should fail
Him all the rest.
Filled with regrets and empty nets, I turned to former hire.
But when dawn came, He spoke my name,
while burned the charcoal fire.
Now at the shore, He asks once more If I will be His friend
And, on the sands, with pierced hands, gives me
His sheep to tend.
– Fr. Timothy J. Draper



One of my favorite Native American legends
is the story of the two wolves.

An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life. "A fight is
going on inside me," he said to the boy.

"It is a terrible fight, and it is between two wolves.

One is evil – he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance,
self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies,
false pride, superiority, and ego."

He continued,

"The other is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility,
kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion,
and faith. The same fight is going on inside you – and inside every
other person, too.

"The grandson thought about it for a minute
and then asked his grandfather,
"Which wolf will win?"

The old Cherokee simply replied,
"The one you feed."

How are you feeding your spirit?
Which wolf are you tending to and which one are you ignoring?

***Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved,
clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility,
gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one
another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive
as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love,
which binds them all together in perfect unity.***

Colossians 3:12-14



Lent is the intentional practice of wilderness living. The more time I spend in the wilderness, the more convinced I become that time there is absolutely necessary for our spiritual life. I think there is a case to be made for the fact that wilderness is even essential to missional living. After all, between Jesus's calling and anointing by John in the Jordan, and Jesus's first official sermon in Nazareth – he had to spend his forty days in the wilderness. Being called and anointed was not enough for Jesus – he had to spend his time in the domain of the wild beasts.

One of my favorite authors and preachers is Barbara Brown Taylor, she writes this:
It's only the wilderness if there's something out there that can eat you. If you are to be any good to God in this world, you will have to spend your own time with the wild beasts. This is at least part of why Jesus's characteristic call was to "take up your cross and follow me." You risk your life to do this. You cannot follow Jesus in safety.

Wandering in this wilderness is disorienting, uncomfortable and often frustrating. It is also unavoidable, for it is often there, when we feel most alone and lost, that we meet our Risen Lord.

After being baptized by John in the river Jordan, Jesus went off alone into the wilderness where he spent forty days asking himself the question what it meant to be Jesus.

During Lent, Christians are supposed to ask one way or another what it means to be themselves

If you had to bet everything you have on whether there is a God or whether there isn't, which side would win?

When you look at your face in the mirror, what do you see in it that you most like and what do you see in it that you most deplore?

If you had only one last message to leave to the handful of people who are most important to you, what would it be in twenty-five words or less?

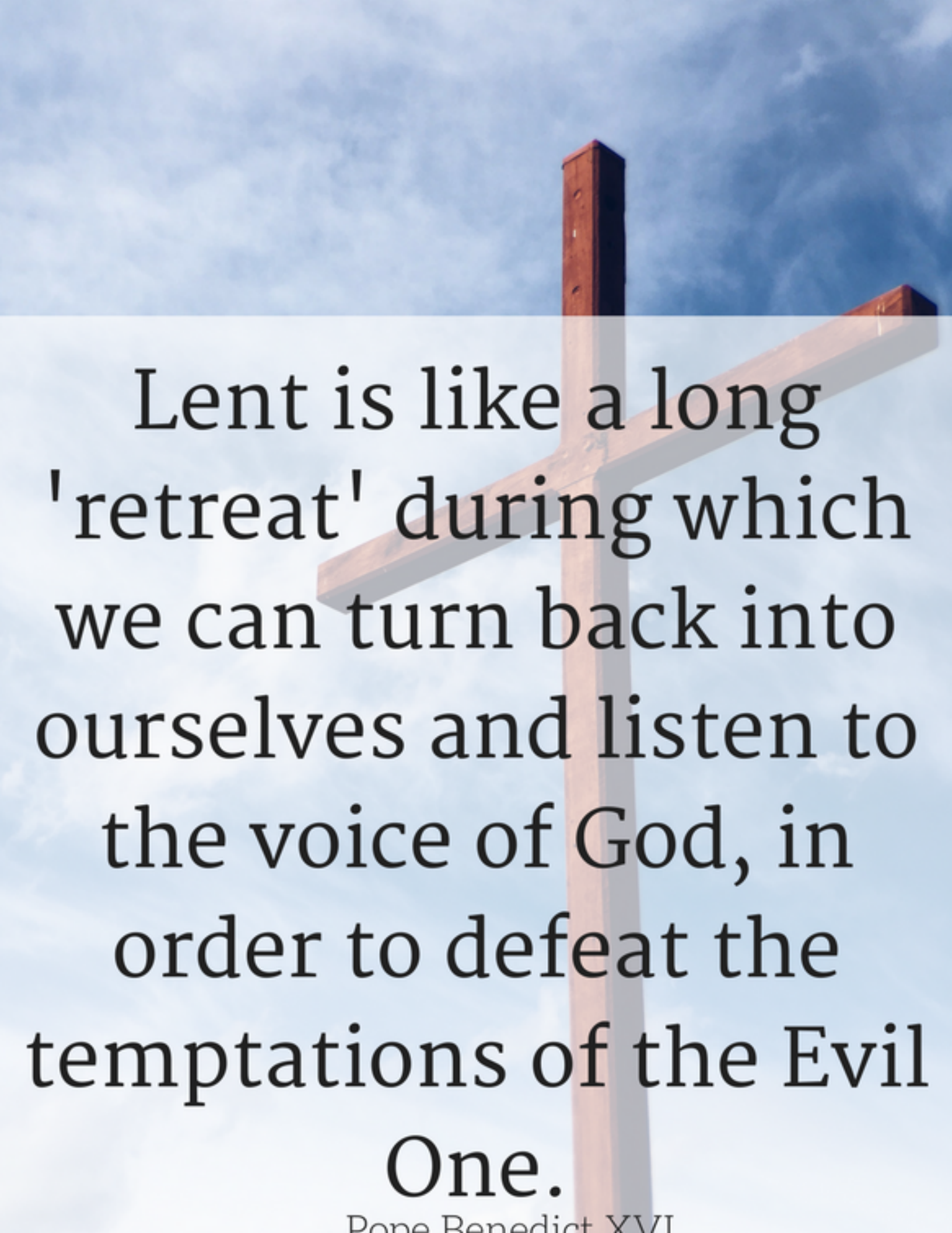
Of all the things you have done in your life, which is the one you would most like to undo?

Which is the one that makes you happiest to remember?

Is there any person in the world, or any cause, that, if circumstances called for it, you would be willing to die for?

If this were the last day of your life, what would you do with it?
To hear yourself try to answer questions like these is to begin to hear something not only of who you are but of both what you are becoming and what you are failing to become. It can be a pretty depressing business all in all, but if sackcloth and ashes are at the start of it, something like Easter may be at the end.

Frederick Buechner

A large wooden cross is centered in the background, set against a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. The cross is made of two thick wooden beams. Overlaid on the cross is a semi-transparent white rectangular box containing text.

Lent is like a long
'retreat' during which
we can turn back into
ourselves and listen to
the voice of God, in
order to defeat the
temptations of the Evil
One.

Pope Benedict XVI



In Israel, shalom is both a greeting and a farewell. When greeted by “shalom,” it is a form of hopeful blessing that you are filled with God’s perfect peace and well-being. It is a prayer that you will have health, prosperity and peace of mind and spirit. Shalom denotes fullness and perfection, an overflowing joy that moves from your innermost being and is expressed in the way you live your life and engage with others.

The season of Lent moves us to reflect deeply upon shalom. We live in a world in desperate need of peace. The United States has just come out of a contentious election while struggling with a global pandemic and grappling with racial violence. Poverty, misery and despair fill many corners of the world. Violence holds a vicious grip on the lives of many people. We desire peace. We need peace. We must pray — and work — for peace here in the U.S. as well as in other parts of the world.

To obtain peace, though, we must explore the full extent of its meaning. The search for shalom must examine it as relational, connectional and communal. It is relational wherein my peace cannot be achieved if others are denied what makes them whole. It recognizes that what impacts you impacts me. It is connectional in that it begins with a recognition that we are children of God created “in the image and likeness of God.” Shalom is communal in that it builds community and enables us to live as one. Scripture proclaims the need for shalom. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, blesses

us:

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives”

John 14:27

One of my very favorite children's sermons to do with kids is on the temptation in the wilderness found in Luke chapter 4.

I set it up with a basket of the yummiest treats ever, cookies, soda, candy all the good stuff. And just as the kids come up their eyes light up and I tell them:

"Oh, I forgot something. Be right back."

and as I leave, I turn to say:

"Don't eat anything, I'll be right back."



Meanwhile, I always have a Satan ready to do the tempting. This Satan has been choir members, a youth, another pastor, anyone the kids respect, and they tell them:

"Pastor Carrie won't mind, she probably won't even notice one little piece missing, go ahead."

They always look to one another to see what the others will do, but there is always that ONE kid that dives right in.

One year, the kid went straight for the goodies when his brother grabbed him by the collar,

pulled him back and told him quite sternly:

"STOP! Mom said that'll make you fat."

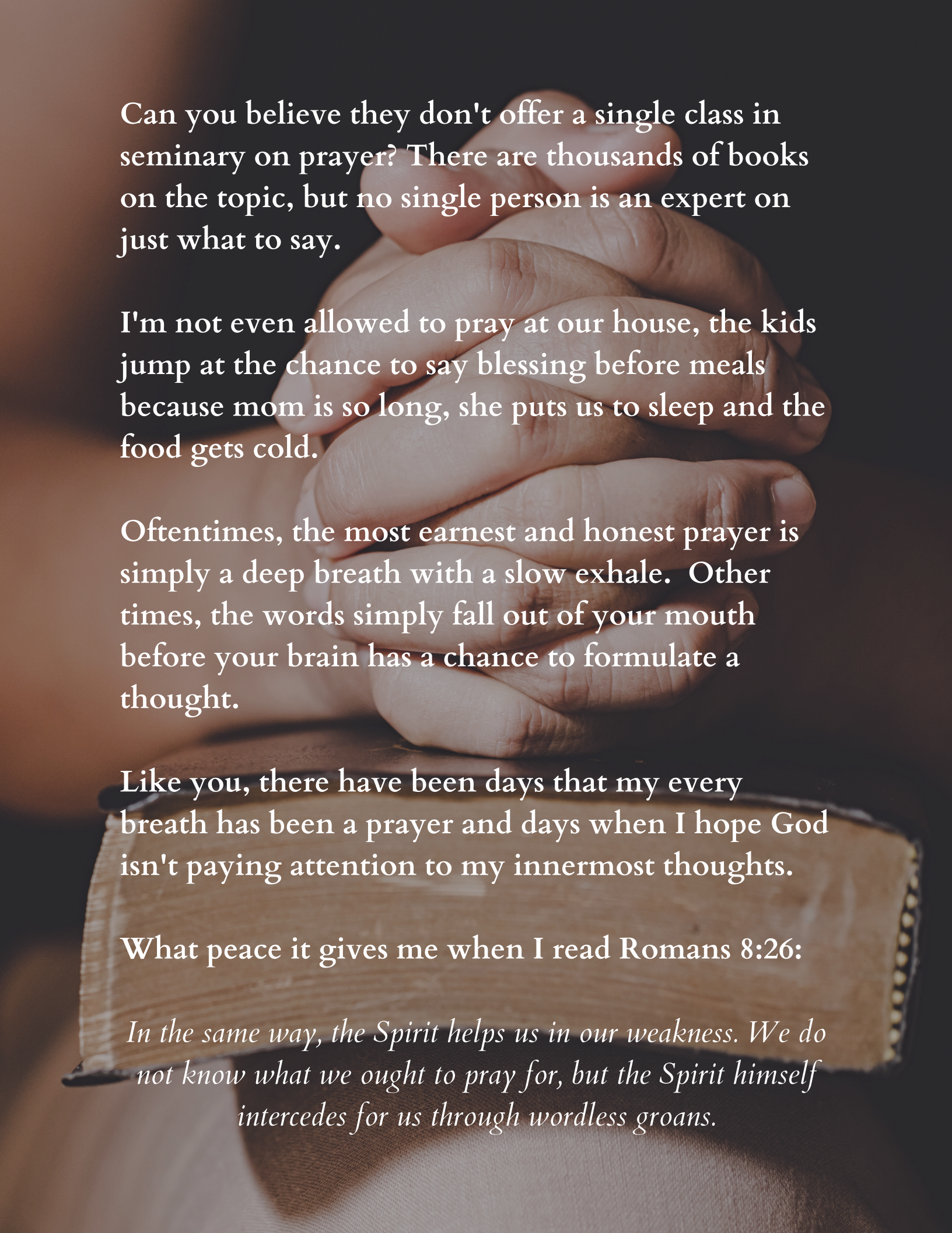
- Mic Drop -

Temptation... what holds you back from diving right in?

The law? The consequences? The calories?

At what point in our journey do we grow up enough to choose wisely because in Christ we are made free? And in Christ, our very lives are a test of how much we love the one who redeemed us?





Can you believe they don't offer a single class in seminary on prayer? There are thousands of books on the topic, but no single person is an expert on just what to say.

I'm not even allowed to pray at our house, the kids jump at the chance to say blessing before meals because mom is so long, she puts us to sleep and the food gets cold.

Oftentimes, the most earnest and honest prayer is simply a deep breath with a slow exhale. Other times, the words simply fall out of your mouth before your brain has a chance to formulate a thought.

Like you, there have been days that my every breath has been a prayer and days when I hope God isn't paying attention to my innermost thoughts.

What peace it gives me when I read Romans 8:26:

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.



An Easter Story

One of my most treasured Easter moments is when I was very young. My Mother saved up to buy all of us new Easter outfits for church.

My father took several pictures of us in our front yard. I just remember being so happy and making our mother happy too.

Attached is a picture of that day. It was taken in 1961. I googled the date. It was April 2nd, 1961.

I was 5 years old.

Top row is my Brother Henry-12, Tim-11, Sister Laura-10.

Bottom row: Brother Pat-3, Sister Linda-8, Me-5.

And of course, my beautiful mother is standing behind us.

RuthWhite Younk



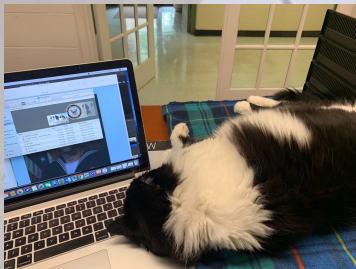
Lenten Thoughts from Monty:

What is this Lent I keep hearing everyone talk about? Pastor Carrie says she's taking a Lenten journey, and I'm worried about is who is going to fill my food bowl? And then I learn it is more of a spiritual journey, one of prayer, devotion and the telling again of the story of Jesus, and I do love it when she talks aloud when writing.



I've learned words like,

Meditation: a time with no agenda, just quietly seeking out God. (I'm really good at that!)



Temptation: knowing you shouldn't do something but wanting to anyway - like taking a nap on Misty's keyboard when she's working.

Denial: Apparently some guy - Peter is an expert on this one, he denied knowing Jesus 3 times! Why would anyone do that? And by the way... no it wasn't me that was on the chair, someone planted my hair there.

Sacrifice: Giving something up for your spiritual health... this one is confusing... maybe I'll give up knocking over the video camera during recording.

But the one word I'm really looking forward to is...

Hallelujah: an expression of joy at the Resurrection. I get more excited about that than treats and ear rubs every day of the week.



A Prayer for Lenten Grace

Loving God,
During the sacred season of Lent, bring me closer to you.
Prepare a place in my home and heart for silence and
solitude, so that I may re-discover the grace of a
prayer-full life.

Help me to fast from those things that threaten the
well-being of body and soul and remind me of the
grace of simplicity.

Enlarge my heart so that I give to those in need and, in
so doing, re-discover the grace of gratitude and
generosity.

May this season be a grace-filled time to
rekindle my love for and faith in you.

Amen.



*I thank my God
upon every
remembrance of
you...
- Philippians 1:3 (KJV) -*



**Some of you have accepted
a difficult challenge this year -
to write 40 letters in 40 days.**

**The first response I got when I suggested this was
"I don't have that many friends."**

**But you do! We often forget that the Body of Christ is gathered
among all believers, young and old and yes even those we haven't
met.**

**A few months ago, I received a letter in the mail in response to my
Pastor's Corner in the newspaper. It began with:**

**"I have never written a letter like this, but I feel compelled
to share this with you..."**

**And the letter went on to commend the words written, for they
were written in the midst of much turmoil in our good and great
nation.**

**We are so used to receiving only bills and junk mail in the mailbox,
how refreshing it would be to open a letter of gratitude, comfort,
encouragement or just a note to say thank you.**

**If you haven't been writing letters, start now. Consider how
powerful Paul's letters in scripture are to us today, I have no doubt
that he ever imagined that his words would be among those that
will stand the test of time.**

**I even save personal letters, those that mean a great deal to me,
they hang in the inside of my kitchen cabinets, above my computer
and one stays in my wallet. To me, the words that dear friends have
sent me throughout the years have been timeless and no doubt a
message from God from another brother or sister in Christ.**

I have only had my feet washed a handful of times by another person. Each time, I have scrubbed them incessantly before service, gotten a pedicure and made sure my feet didn't smell.

And each time, as another believer has kneeled before me, with a washcloth and a bowl of water, all those worries faded away.

What a hard job! The older I get, the harder it is to kneel. The more difficult it is getting up and down. How humbling it is to have someone else share such an intimate act.

It may have not been so for the Disciples, they were used to foot washings. But this one was different. It isn't meant for the King of Kings to kneel as a servant and wash another's feet.

"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet. "Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."9 "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

I'm pretty sure, like Peter, I would object. But it's Peter's eagerness to be completely clean that always amazes me.

Do we really crave getting rid of all the dirt and mess and fuss of the world around us? I dare say few of us can

Maybe we start one foot at a time... acknowledging that we are broken and trusting God has got the rest.



"Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?" – Isaiah 58:7

Israel was caught walking through the motions of fasting and prayer. Their actions were accurate and right but unacceptable in the sight of God because of their misuse of the poor and their neglect of those in need. In his epistle, James reminds us,

"

"Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you tells him, "Go in peace; stay warm and well fed," but does not provide for his physical needs, what good is that? So too, faith by itself, if it is not complemented by action, is dead." – James 2:15-17

If we feel no compassion, if we turn away from a brother in need when we have the means to help him, our inactivity condemns us.

Luther reminds us,

"God is merciful. Yet He is not idle. He does not let sinners go unpunished. To the humble, who fear Him, He is merciful...There are several degrees of love...an enemy must not be offended, a brother must be helped, a member of one's household must be supported. You know Christ's commands concerning love for one's enemies. But you owe more to a brother who loves you in return."

True, we are redeemed by grace through faith for Jesus' sake. Grace, mercy, even faith are all gifts. When speaking to the healed leper Jesus says,

"Rise and go your way, "Your faith has made you well."

– Luke 17:19

Rise up. Go. and keep going. Your faith has and continues to save you.

**“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” –
Matthew 5:3**

Jesus begins His Sermon on the Mount declaring nine times that His disciples are blessed. They are blessed because of what He has done for them. These beatitudes are not demands Jesus is pushing upon you. Rather, this is your new reality in Christ. These are the gifts that the Savior bestows.

These beatitudes are not prescriptive – steps and demands you must accomplish – they are descriptive. This is your truth as you await the new heaven and new earth.

In Lent, we lay bare our sin, our imperfections, our weaknesses. We come to the Lord, not only confessing our sin, but realizing our own inadequacies.

The spiritually poor – those persons who acknowledge their moral bankruptcy – theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom of heaven is yours. It is yours, not by what you strive to accomplish but by the gift which is given to you by faith. Even now, by faith, you receive this gift.

**Blessed are they, the poor in spirit
Theirs is the kingdom of God.
Rejoice and be glad!
Blessed are you, holy are you.
Rejoice and be glad!
Yours is the kingdom of God.**

... love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. — Romans 12:10-13

As Americans, many of us feed off of anger, disrespect, fear, serving ourselves, seeking quick results, maintaining independence and extending hostility to strangers. Yes, you read that correctly — hostility to strangers. Don't believe me? Have you not opened your social media news feed today?

As the church, we have an amazing opportunity to model for our culture how to live in a community that is held together by mutual affection, honor, passion, service, hope, patience, perseverance, generosity and hospitality.

"Hospitality" is a good word to meditate on during Lent. Hospitality makes room for others and welcomes with open arms. Hospitality says, *"There is always space for another"*

Christian hospitality is demonstrating God's love toward people who may seem different from us. As God's beloved community, we get to embody a life of hospitality. This Lenten season, may we be a community where all people feel at home among us.

The Everyday Sacred Moments

Virtual worship has been the norm for some time now. Watching church in our pajamas, from the couch slowly waking up to the day. At first, we sat quietly, just as we would in church, listened to every word with our hands quietly folded in our laps (ok, maybe not, but it's a nice picture.)

Now, it's a mixture of dogs barking, and bacon sizzling interspersed with bowed heads and "mom, you forgot debts again in the Lord's Prayer."

At first, I hushed everyone, silence!... but now, I tend to enjoy the everyday sacredness of the family worship style. It feels natural. Some would disagree, but I'm reminded that worship isn't only when we attend service at 11:00 Sunday morning, but it can be found anywhere and everywhere.

In the lake on a boat. (Matthew 8:24)

Traveling down the road. (Luke 24)

Sitting by the bedside of a sick friend. (John 11)

Easter, God willing, we will gather again for worship here at FRPC. May it be a sacred time... a time of not only worship but fellowship, rejoicing and healing for the ills of the past year.

"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" —Luke 19:38

**If only the people knew how fickle they would be.
As the King of Kings rides a donkey into the city,
their cheers ring in Jesus' ears.
He knew.**

Momentarily, while the crowds are enamored with Jesus, the disciples are probably feeling pretty good. It seems like everything is falling into place for a new earthly kingdom to emerge. Jerusalem is welcoming their king. The people are anticipating a Messiah who will rescue them politically and free them from societal oppression—to overthrow the Roman Empire and reestablish Israel's power in the world.

But God is up to something so much bigger.

Aren't you glad Jesus knew what He was riding into on that day?

Sometimes God's plans don't make sense in the moment. His infinite ways can never be constrained by our finite understanding—though He can certainly be trusted.

Jesus knows full well what he is riding into in your life. He knows the hurt, the loneliness, the grief, the betrayal, the anger, the doubt, the despair, the exhaustion, the weariness, and the constant struggle. He knows all the madness. Yet your King lives, beloved—and he will indeed triumph over every last bit of it.

Pray, I ponder, consider that as you seek to abide in Him this week.



in Holy Week

Almighty Father, who sent your only Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sin, show me how I can honor you and bring glory to your name, by walking in the way of Jesus. Give me grace and mercy as I try and fail, guidance when I'm not sure which way to go, and wisdom to trust you in all things. For your love brings light and life to all who seek it. May I seek you ever more as I walk with you through this Holy Week and

**If you've ever cleaned house, it is never finished.
If you've ever had kids, raising them is never finished.
Home repairs...
Therapy sessions...
Nothing ever seems finished.**

**In 33 AD, things weren't all that different. The
sacrifices in the Temple, every day, confessing sins and
receiving atonement. An endless cycle. Nothing was
ever finished.**

**On a hill, not so far away, in the afternoon, seven
phrases were said by a man being crucified on the
cross.**

**One of those was
"It is finished."**

**All of the sudden as the blood of the
sacrifices and the squeals of the animals
was heard in the Temple,
the curtain ripped in two.**

**It was finished.
One final sacrifice that ended it all.**

**And three days later, that same man, rose from the
dead, against all odds and completed what He had
begun.
It is finished. Praise Be to God.**





HOLY THURSDAY

LORD GOD,
YOU SENT YOUR SON INTO THE WORLD,
AND BEFORE HIS HOUR HAD COME,
HE WASHED HIS DISCIPLES' FEET.
YOU HAD GIVEN ALL THINGS INTO HIS HANDS.
HE HAD COME FROM YOU, AND WAS GOING TO YOU, AND WHAT DID HE
DO? HE KNELT DOWN ON THE FLOOR, AND WASHED HIS FRIENDS' FEET.
HE WAS THEIR TEACHER AND THEIR LORD, YET HE WASHED THEIR FEET.
LORD GOD, HELP US LEARN FROM HIS EXAMPLE; HELP US TO DO AS HE
HAS DONE FOR US.

THE WORLD WILL KNOW WE ARE HIS DISCIPLES
IF WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER.
STRENGTHEN OUR HANDS AND
OUR WILLS FOR LOVE AND FOR SERVICE.
KEEP BEFORE OUR EYES THE IMAGE OF YOUR SON,
WHO, BEING GOD, BECAME A SERVANT FOR OUR SAKE.
ALL GLORY BE TO HIM WHO LIVES AND REIGNS WITH YOU AND THE
HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD, NOW AND FOREVER. AMEN!

"What's so good about Good Friday?"

The high priest Caiaphas and the Pharisees got rid of a popular, influential preacher—but at what price? Pontius Pilate, the hard-bitten Roman governor, reluctantly allowed Jesus to be crucified to appease the mob and their leaders demanding Jesus' life.

Pilate turned him over to the execution squad, for whom this was just another death sentence along with two others that day—until the centurion realized they'd killed the Son of God (Matthew 27:54)! If the disciples called it "good," it was only after encountering the risen Christ (John 21). And would Jesus say that Friday was "good"? The scene at Gethsemane the night before was agonizing, as Jesus begged his Father to spare him from his awful mission. Maybe later, back in heaven with God, he could finally say, "Yes, Father, that was a good day. "The term "Good Friday" first occurred in the fourth century. Some think it was originally called "God's Friday." Today we can call it "good" if we appreciate the fact that Jesus' trial, punishment, and death brought our salvation. These truths are seen through the spiritual spectacles of faith. So, in that sense it truly is

"Good Friday"!

Good Friday Prayer

SPLITTAKENTHOUGHTS@GMAIL.COM

My Lord, your son has suffered
so much, shed so much blood.

I was born with so many faults
and my nature is so full of weakness,
and yet your son Jesus has died
on the cross for me.

I know your grace has the power
to cleanse me of my many sins
and to make me more like your Son.

Thank you for your goodness and love for me.

I ask you, Father, to watch over me - always.

Amen.



Jesus is silent on Saturday.

The women have anointed his body and placed it in Joseph's tomb. The cadaver of Christ is as mute as the stone which guards it.

He spoke much on Friday. He will liberate the slaves of death on Sunday. But on Saturday, Jesus is silent.

So is God. He made himself heard on Friday. He tore the curtains of the temple, opened the graves of the dead, rocked the earth, blocked the sun of the sky, and sacrificed the Son of Heaven. Earth heard much of God on Friday.

Nothing on Saturday.

Jesus is silent.

God is silent.

Saturday is silent.

Easter weekend discussions tend to skip Saturday. Friday and Sunday get the press. The crucifixion and resurrection command our thoughts.

But don't ignore Saturday. You have them, too.

Silent Saturdays.

The day between the struggle and the solution; the question and the answer; the offered prayer and the answer thereof.

Saturday's silence torments us. Is God angry? Did I disappoint him? God knows Jesus is in the tomb, why doesn't He do something? Or, in your case God knows your career is in the tank, your finances are in the pit, your marriage is in a mess.

Why doesn't He act?

What are you supposed to do until He does?

You do what Jesus did.

Lie still. Stay silent. Trust God.

Jesus died with this conviction: "You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay"

Max Lucado



He is Risen!
He is Risen Indeed!

There are few more wonderful words to be said.

**I love the story of the minister that asks the kids:
"Who is the white fluffy one that has a cotton tail and
brings you chocolate?"**

**To which the kid replies to his friend:
"I know he is talking about Jesus, but it sure sounds like the
Easter bunny to me."**

**We've commercialized Easter and there are many that
speak to that horror.**

But consider this...

**On Easter, families that have never darkened the doorstep
of a church suddenly find themselves sitting in Edna's pew.**

**Hollow chocolate Easter eggs are devoured by kids and
when they ask where the chocolate on the inside is... it's a
great opportunity to speak of the empty tomb.**

Maybe, just maybe, Jesus has a plan for this as well.

**Happy Easter my dear friends.
He is Risen. He is Risen Indeed.**