

# the PARADOX of CHRISTIAN Life



Living in an  
UPSIDE DOWN  
world

DEVOTIONAL

September 9 - October 19, 2023

## **This week's devotions were written by our missionary in Armenia Beth Hedges**

### **Saturday, September 9, 2023**

Read Matthew 18:1-5 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon.

Can you imagine yourself as one of the parents? Perhaps as one of the children? Can you envision Jesus' welcome?

### **Sunday, September 10, 2023**

There is ONE service at 10:00 am today, followed by our Community Block Party.

All are welcome. Bring a friend or neighbor!

### **Matthew 18:1-5**

International Children's Bible

Matthew 18 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

2 He called a little child to him and placed the child among them. 3 And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

**Monday, September 11, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 18:1-5

**Reflect:** Who is the G.O.A.T (Greatest of All Time) is an ongoing debate. Who is the greatest basketball player: Jordan or Kobe? Who is the greatest actress: Streep or Katharine Hepburn? Make a statement about who is the G.O.A.T. and watch the debate begin. The disciples want to know “Who is the G.O.A.T. in God’s Kingdom?” Actually, to be great in God’s Kingdom is a great ambition. We usually have other things we want to be great at: work, parenting, learning, succeeding. But what about being great in the Kingdom? What would it take? How does it work?

**Prayer:** God I often have small ambitions for my relationship with You. I *hope* to pray and listen to Holy Spirit each day. I *hope* to be used for Your Kingdom in my work. I *hope* for this or that in my relationship with You. Instead give me grand ambition for Your Kingdom. Show me the amazing reality that is Your rule and reign in my life and in the world. Blow me away with all that is possible in Your world. Help me to have a brush with greatness in how I love and serve You and Your purposes in the world. May Your Kingdom Come!

**Song:** You Said (Ask and I'll give the nations to you)  
Hillsong Worship - You Said (Remastered) Lyric Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDyLlfOSgSo>

**Tuesday, September 12, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 18:1-2

**Reflect:** Jesus is a master of answering a question. He places a child among those awaiting His answer. Imagine their confusion. A child is almost never great. What do children know or have to offer? Mostly they need things like food, clothing, and guidance. I too am a child in my relationship with You God because I need God to help me, teach me, and guide me.

**Prayer:** God, you are my great Father who loves and cares for me. I thank You that I can be Your child. I don't need to know, I don't need to lead, I don't need to be in charge. You can do all that for me. Forgive me for the places and times when I refused to be Your child. Forgive me for the times I push You away and say, "I'll do it myself!" Show me how to trust You like a child.

**Song:** Good, Good Father

Good Good Father w/ Lyrics (Chris Tomlin)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ak0OoFBw3c>

**Wednesday, September 13, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 18:1-3

**Reflect:** Think of how a child gets something. They do not have money or power. They have to ask. The child who wants to see over the counter holds up their hands and says “Up.” The child who wants a treat says “Please.” As an adult I no longer ask like that. But Jesus says that it is when we ask like a child that we enter the Kingdom of heaven.

**Prayer:** God I need to be lifted deeper into Your Kingdom, so I lift my hands up and say “Up.” I want to succeed as part of Your Kingdom here on earth and in heaven to come so I say “Please.” You know what I need to walk in the ways of Your Kingdom, please provide for me, Your beloved child. Continue to teach me how to trust and rely on You. Thank you, Papa.

**Song:** Jesus Loves Me This I Know

Jesus Loves Me | Souvenirs Worship

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXrC\\_uzsnsg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXrC_uzsnsg)

**Thursday, September 14, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 18:1-4

**Reflect:** it is not enough to say “up” and “please” like a little child, but greatness comes in God’s Kingdom when I take the lower place. This is one of the paradoxes of God’s Kingdom. Every other kingdom runs on power and prestige. God’s Kingdom, modeled by Jesus, the ultimate Servant of All, honors those who take the low and dirty jobs. This paradox of lowliness leading to greatness is counter to the world’s ideas.

**Prayer:** God forgive me for honoring the wrong people. For believing that the high honor position are CEOs, pastors, leaders, Presidents and others high in the hierarchy. Jesus You did not grasp greatness but were a servant: give me Your Spirit. Show me who is really great in Your Kingdom and how to model my life on them. In the name of Jesus, the Suffering Servant.

**Song:** The Servant King

The Servant King With Lyrics

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrQiLEO4D5s>

**Friday, September 15, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 18:1-5

**Reflect:** Children are not important in the power structures of our world. They do not vote and don't pay taxes so they can be ignored. Jesus, however, identifies with them, saying whoever welcomes them, welcomes me. This turns the power structure on its head; not to welcome the powerful and important, but to welcome the weak and lowly. Who are the weak and lowly around me whom I can welcome in Jesus' name?

**Prayer:** Jesus thank You that You identify with children, with the weak and lowly. You are the highest power, but you stoop down to us. I pray for those who are being abused because they are weak and lowly. Step in and protect them. You are the Servant King and greatness comes to Your Kingdom by serving and welcoming the weak and lowly. Show me how I can serve and welcome others today.

**Song:** The Cry of The Poor

The Cry of The Poor | John Foley | The Lord Hears | Choir & Piano with Lyrics | Sunday 7pm Choir

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w\\_Q0FjuAUZY&t=35s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_Q0FjuAUZY&t=35s)

## **Saturday, September 16, 2023**

Read Matthew 20:24-2 and I Corinthians 7:21-24 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon.

How do these two brief passages fit together?

What do they say to you?

## **Sunday, September 17, 2023**

Come, let's worship the Lord together!

It is good to be together to sing, pray, learn, and lean into each other as we lean on the Lord.

9 am traditional service and 10:30 contemporary service.

Participate online at [FPCAmbler.org](https://FPCAmbler.org), on Facebook, or YouTube.



**Monday, September 18, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 20:24-28

**Reflect:** Mom had a favor to ask Jesus while her boys hovered in the background. “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.” The audacity! But really, what parent wouldn’t go all out for their child’s success? We want the best for our kids. We tend to make career success the ultimate goal, and wouldn’t sitting at Jesus’ side as he takes the political victory they all expected be the pinnacle? But Jesus’ victory was not political. Perhaps a high achieving career does not define success. In Jesus’ upside-down economy, not sitting at his side but rather having her sons wash Jesus’ feet, one on the right and the other on the left, would have been a much better goal! The disciples had a lot to (un)learn...as do we.

**Prayer:** Jesus, in our culture we strive for greatness as measured by career ladders and 401Ks, the number of followers or fans. We plan our lives and the lives of our kids accordingly. And while having followers, a good job, and a retirement plan are not wrong in and of themselves they are of little value in the big picture. Show us what we need to release, re-think, and reconsider. Help us to align our values with yours.

**Tuesday, September 19, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 20:21-24

**Reflect:** Henri Nouwen, Catholic priest, prolific writer of such modern Christian classics as *The Return of the Prodigal Son* and *The Life of the Beloved*, and professor at Notre Dame, Harvard, and Yale, spent the last decade of his life at L'Arche Daybreak community in Canada, serving as pastor to the community for those with physical and intellectual disabilities. Did Nouwen “give up success” to humbly serve those so often marginalized by society? Or was his idea of success transformed by Jesus? Nouwen wrote, “When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives means the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand.” How does this influence your definition of success and the aspirations you have for yourself and for your children?

**Prayer:** Lord, I confess that I am too easily swayed by the world's definition of success. We build reputations, careers, and followers while you call us to build relationships, bridges, and your kingdom. Lord, God, open my eyes to all I hold as dear but is not of you. I give you permission to pry open the tight fist of my heart and have your way.

**Wednesday, September 20, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 20:21-24, Romans 11:36

**Reflect:** Romans 11:36 says, “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.” The Daily Prayer app from the PC-USA translates the verse to say that God is our *goal*. Does this ring true for us? Is God the goal of our lives and the goal we have for our children? If God---knowing him, loving him, serving him, is our goal, how does this shape the lives we’ve been given? God shows us in his word what is important to him: care for the poor, the stranger, the widow, and orphan. Acknowledging him always. Giving back to him the time, talents, and passions he has given to us. In return, we receive meaning and purpose, the comfort of God’s presence, and joy that is more profound than any worldly success can offer.

**Prayer:** Lord, we acknowledge that everything we have is from you and that through you and to you are all things. May YOU be our goal. To you be the glory forever in all the earth...and in my heart today. Amen.

**Thursday, September 21, 2023**

**Read:** I Corinthians 7:21-24

**Reflect:** Fred was one of my dearest friends at Pennsylvania Hospital. He delivered boxes from the receiving dock to the medical units. Fred worked hard, even as he struggled with Parkinson's disease. He worked as unto the Lord and walked with the Lord as he worked. We prayed for each other's children regularly and shared hope and encouragement as fellow believers. This man actually prayed and fasted when one of *my* kids was in crisis! It is tempting to think that as Christians we are called to work in "Christian Ministry," but I see nothing in the Bible that calls most of us to a different profession. (There are a few exceptions...I remember reading *Loving God* by Charles Colson and he was asked by an inmate if he could keep his profession as a bank robber once giving his life to Christ!) What *does* God ask of us? That we "abide in him and he in us (John 15:4), that we acknowledge him in all our ways (Proverbs 3:6), and that whatever is our job or task we put ourselves into it as if we are doing it for the Lord (Colossians 3:23.) Retired, as students, or at work, we are called to do all we do as if we are doing it for God himself. And what a privilege that is.

**Prayer:** Lord, what a privilege it is to be invited into the restoring work of your kingdom. May we live each day you give us as unto you, surrendering our thoughts and attitudes, our relationships, and actions. Wherever you have placed us, we are yours and you are ours. Use us, we pray.

**Friday, September 22, 2023**

**Read:** I Corinthians 7:21-24

**Reflect:** Once again drawing on my time at Pennsylvania Hospital, I am reminded of a webinar over which Penn Health System CEO Kevin Mahoney presided. In the middle of his speech, a Medevac helicopter could be heard growing near. Kevin stopped mid-phrase and asked us all to have a moment of silence, lifting up those in the helicopter and the team that would be receiving the patient. He did not ask us to pray, per se, but it was clear that was his intent. As CEO, Kevin has led Penn to open a behavioral health clinic in an impoverished area of the city and is currently bringing a struggling Chester County hospital serving migrant workers into the fold. I recall listening to Kevin speak of his roots of faith when he first joined Penn. Whether called to lead a team of thousands or just to listen to a lonely brother or sister, God uses us faithful people to further his kingdom right here, right now. How will he use you today?

**Prayer:** Lord, I love your upside-down kingdom. I am inspired by your care for the lowly and honored that you have chosen me as your own. May I use all you have given me to bless your people and bring glory to you.

## **Saturday, September 23, 2023**

Read Luke 7:36-50 and Matthew 17:20 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you read.

## **Sunday, September 24, 2023**

Come worship the Lord in gladness! All are welcome.

9 am traditional service

and 10:30 contemporary South Ridge service.

Join us online at [FPCAmbler.org](http://FPCAmbler.org), on Facebook, or YouTube.

## **This week's devotions come to us from Debra Lee**

### **Monday, September 25, 2023**

**Read:** Luke 7:36-38

**Reflect:** Simon, a Pharisee and religious leader who was very strict about following a set of moral rules, invited Jesus to dinner at his house. Because of Jesus' growing popularity, news spread rapidly that he would be a guest of honor there. It was common for anyone in the town to slip into the great room where the meal was served and listen to the discussion between the host and the guest of honor. Among the people was a woman of the city, known to all for her immorality,

The host did not extend to Jesus normal courtesies of greeting a guest with a kiss, washing feet, and anointing the head with oil. The woman took the opportunity to serve Jesus. She kissed and washed his feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair and anointed them with fragrant oil. Her actions captured the attention of everyone. Do you long to be nearer to Jesus and to show Him your love?

**Prayer:** Lord, open my eyes and ears that I may be closer to you and worship you from my heart.

**Tuesday, September 26, 2023**

**Read:** Luke 7:39-40

In the riveting display of the woman's love for Jesus, Simon thought he had found the evidence of Jesus' character and formed an opinion in his mind - that if Jesus was a prophet, He would not allow the sinful woman to touch him. Jesus displayed his prophetic office by disclosing the secrets of both Simon's mind and of the woman's heart. Have you ever rebuked yourself for a heart which is too cold toward Jesus?

**Prayer:** Lord, I confess where my heart has been cold. Soften my heart and teach me to love the way you love me.

**Wednesday, September 27, 2023**

**Read:** Luke 7:41-47

**Reflect:** Jesus told a parable that appealed to a Pharisee in the world of moneylending that came with important lessons about sin and forgiveness, where one person borrowed fifty days' wages; another borrowed ten times that. When the loan came due neither had the ability to pay. This is the case with all sinners. No sinner can pay their debt.

In the parable, the creditor cancelled both debts. When Jesus posed the question as to which of the two debtors loved the creditor more, Simon gave the correct answer: *'The one for whom he cancelled the larger debt'*

Jesus shattered the religious idea that those who obeyed the law had no need of forgiveness. The parable impressed the truth of the woman's great love, and the little love of the Pharisee who didn't realize his sin or inability to pay the debt.

Have you imagined that complete obedience to Jesus would increase your love for him and his for you? Do you see your need for a big forgiveness?

**Prayer:** Lord, I know that it is only by the price you paid on the cross that my sin is forgiven, and not through my own works or acts of righteousness. I have been forgiven much. Help me to forgive that way!



**Thursday, September 28, 2023**

**Read:** Luke 7: 48-50

**Reflect:** Through Jesus, the woman realized her great sin and knew the consequences of it. Jesus gripped her heart and turned it with a special devotion to Him. She saw that the forgiveness of her sin was her only hope. But the Pharisees had an attitude of condemnation toward Jesus, asking, *'Who is this who even forgives sins?'* They believed that people worked their way into the Kingdom of God by strict observation of the Law.

The question deserves an answer! It is Jesus, who offered himself under the curse of the Law to redeem them, and whom God made to be sin for others so that they might become the righteousness of God in Him. No other religion in the world has a substitute for sinners to satisfy divine justice properly due to their sins.

**Prayer:** Lord, I turn my heart toward you in gratitude and humility that I may follow you in a way that serves and pleases you.

**Friday, September 29, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 17:20-21

**Reflect:** These verses where Jesus compares faith to a grain of mustard seed sum up how just a small amount of faith can accomplish great things. His disciples had asked Jesus why they weren't able to rebuke and cast a demon from a boy. He said it was because of their little faith and went on to explain that even just a little faith, compared to the tiniest of seeds, can move a mountain.

The message is simple: Faith is the key to successfully serve Christ, and cannot be done on our strength alone, but is reliant on the strength of Christ, through faith, where we can stand up to whatever comes against us, in His power alone. Apart from Christ, we can do nothing, and is a lesson to remember as we go throughout our lives.

Prayer: Lord, Many times in your Word you demonstrate the importance of faith. Strengthen my faith that I may serve and obey by your power alone.

## **Saturday, September 30, 2023**

Read Mark 9:1-27 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon. Andy Root will be our guest preacher at both services. Make plans to attend at 9 am or 10:30.

## **Sunday, October 1, 2023**

Join us as we worship at 9 am and 10:30 am.

Andy Root will be our guest preacher at both services.

Participate online at [FPCAmbler.org](https://FPCAmbler.org), on Facebook, or YouTube

**Monday, October 2, 2023**

**Read:** Mark 9:1

**Reflect:** Matthew, Mark, and Luke all precede the story of the transfiguration with the statement that some standing there would not taste death until they see the kingdom of God come with power. For this reason, many believe that Jesus was predicting his transfiguration and that some of those present, specifically James, John, and Peter, would see the kingdom of God at that time. There is some agreement among scholars that this is not the *exhaustive* fulfillment of the prophecy. Can it be that some of *us* will see the kingdom of God come with power before we taste death? Perhaps when we step out in faith and love to restore the brokenness of the world, comfort the grieving, feed the hungry, worship with others, and share the Good News, we see the kingdom of God. But note that Jesus also said “*some*” would not taste death before seeing. Pray for eyes to see.

**Prayer:** Jesus, we thank you for your challenging words of life. Please give us eyes to see your kingdom come in power and to step into the kingdom work you have for each of us. We thank you, giver of every good gift, for the gifts of faith, limitless love, and for our salvation.

**Tuesday, October 3, 2023**

**Read:** Mark 9:2-8

**Reflect:** In Exodus, the pillar of cloud represented the presence of God. Moses asked God to show him his glory and afterward, his face shone as he reflected God's glory, much as the moon reflects the light of the sun. There are echoes of Exodus here but in the transfiguration, the shining came from *within* Jesus, radiating outward, illuminating his face and clothing. Jesus is the reflection of God's glory and the *exact imprint* of God's very being (Hebrews 1:3.) A cloud overshadowed those on the mountaintop with Jesus and a voice from the cloud spoke, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Mark tells us the disciples were terrified. No wonder. They were well acquainted with Exodus and knew that no one could get close to the glory of God and live! How could they be enveloped by the glory of God and live? Only because they were with Jesus.

**Prayer:** Jesus, only in your presence can we come before God and live. We know we all will face judgment. We are thankful that we can say, "I'm with him," pointing to You, our Savior.

**Wednesday, October 4, 2023**

**Read:** Mark 9:2

**Reflect:** Jesus took Peter, James, and John to a high mountain, apart from the others. We see both the model of stepping away from the crowds for encounters with God and the model of sharing divine experience with others. On the mountaintop with Jesus, the disciples were free from distractions as together they shared this remarkable experience. This is a model we seek to follow today as we set aside time to focus on what God has to say to us and share with one another in small groups. From the cloud, God exhorted the disciples, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” With whom do you step away from daily tasks to listen to Jesus?

**Prayer:** Thank you for the believers with whom I listen and learn from you. If I am not regularly meeting with other believers, please give me that desire. Help me to carve out time. Lead me to those with whom I can experience your presence and grow in faith, wisdom, and love.

**Thursday, October 5, 2023**

**Read:** Mark 9:1-10

**Reflect:** The transfiguration was not just another day in the life of the trio of disciples. They talked about it among themselves, as would we, had we been there. Imagine! Suddenly they saw their Teacher with ancient heroes of the faith Moses and Elijah, ablaze in light. Put yourself in their position. Here we see evidence that the kingdom of God is not timebound as Moses and Elijah were right there with them. They heard God declare that Jesus is his Son (v. 7.) And we have Jesus predicting his death and resurrection (v. 9.) Let's lose the complacency that comes from familiarity and wonder anew at the supernatural, transcendent truths of the Gospel.

**Prayer:** Lord, God, forgive us for missing the wonder of your Word, the reality of your presence, the timelessness of your being. Your Word is astonishing, hope-filled, life-giving. And help us to listen to Jesus, the Beloved Son, and do what he tells us to do.

**Friday, October 6, 2023**

**Read:** Mark 9:14-29

**Reflect:** Imagine the desperation of the father whose son had suffered from convulsions his entire life. We can't blame him for saying, "*If you are able* to do anything, have pity on us and help us." We can be sure bringing the boy wasn't his first resort. Jesus was nowhere to be found, the contingent of disciples present were unable to free the boy from the spirit, and there was chaos in the crowd...Until Jesus. Jesus' arrival brought order out of chaos and healing for the boy. The boy's father cried out, "I believe; help my unbelief!" That is often my prayer; is it yours too?

I have always been perplexed by the disciples asking Jesus why they couldn't cast out the demon and Jesus responding that this kind only comes out through prayer. Is it possible that they tried to cast out the demon without prayer? That they parroted words of Jesus, but did not seek the power of God to do the work? Which made me consider that I, too, sometimes attempt "right" things without relying on the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells us that apart from him we can do nothing (John 15:5.) This should give us pause.

**Prayer:** Lord, forgive me for relying on my own strength, my own influence, my own ideas to accomplish what only you can. Help me, help us, to rely on you each and every day in each and every way, for your kingdom to come and your will be done in Ambler, on earth, as it is in heaven.



## **Saturday, October 7, 2023**

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 12: 1-10

Have you considered weakness to be a strength? How has your faith impacted your perspective on weakness?

## **Sunday, October 8, 2023**

Please join us in worship today. You are welcome to attend the 9:00 am traditional or the 10:30 am contemporary South Ridge service. Livestreaming is available for both services on Facebook, YouTube and at [FPCAmbler.org](https://www.FPCAmbler.org)

**This week's devotions are the gift of Leslie Wise.**

**Monday, October 9, 2023**

**Reread:** 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

**Reflect:** When I was younger, I used to love to spend time standing on my head. It gave me a different view of my daily life. I enjoyed my upside-down perspective! In our Christian walk, we don't have to stand on our heads to gain this vista. Jesus provides a new angle on our narrow perspectives. He widens our horizons to give a broader view and breaks through the constraints of our tightly constricted lives. Loving enemies, turning the cheek, walking the extra mile, rejoicing in weakness are all part of His inverted commands to us. Consider widening your outlook through the eyes of Jesus. Pray that the world will not obstruct your vision. BTW: I did try standing on my head recently. As my head touched the floor, I realized this old body would collapse like an accordion! I will content myself with praying right-side up for an upside-down faith.

**Prayer:** Help us to consider our weaknesses to be our greatest strength. Deliver us from the burden of always having to appear strong. We present our weaknesses to You with courage and hope. Help us to do those things You ask that are contrary to our human nature.

**Tuesday, October 10, 2023**

**Read:** Luke 23:33-38

**Reflect:** In preparing for these devotions, I often come across interesting facts. At least twenty-seven languages have a translation for the word vendetta. Vendetta is a form of revenge that involves hurting someone who has hurt you. Vendettas can be long standing and violent. How sweet the thought of revenge may seem at first; it goes down like candy on the boardwalk. But it can settle there, an undigested lump of fury and constant discomfort. The unforgiven may walk blithely away but revenge can leave us trapped like a fly in amber, stuck, frozen in a position of anger. Jesus, of all people, could have carried a vendetta against us right to the cross. He could have included the two thieves in a plot for retaliation. Instead, Jesus offered no malediction, no judgment rained down from heaven. His soul of compassion never uttered a curse upon the crowd. He spoke the words, "Forgive them Father for they know not what they do." Jesus died upright on a cross but turned the world upside down.

**Prayer:** Help us to delight in blessing. (Psalm 109:17) Free us from the closed places of unforgiveness and the bitter taste of savoring revenge.

**Wednesday, October 11, 2023**

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 11:30 and 2 Corinthians 12:5-10

**Reflect:** I am sure that most of us have received the ubiquitous Christmas letter folded neatly inside a holiday card. The front and back pages extoll the wonders of children, vacations, job promotions, athletic achievements, and glowing personal highlights. Please consider just a few words gleaned from Paul's Christmas letter this year . . .

*Dear Saints, 2023 has seen me weak, insulted, distressed, persecuted and imprisoned. I'm still recovering from past lashes, hunger, stonings, shipwrecks and many dangers.  
Yet, I am well content with them all!*

Paul exhorts us not to boast except in weakness. Consider the impact that boasting has on the lives of others. Check your social media feeds. Is boasting a regular part of your posts? Consider boasting about a weakness at your next small group. How would that feel to you?

**Pray:** Father, we hide our weaknesses from others. Enable us to be bolder in sharing our frailties and deliver us from pride in our strength.

**Thursday October 12, 2023**

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 12: 1-4 and Colossians 2:2-3

**Reflect:** These verses describe the visions of Paul's conversion experience. They seem so other-worldly and mysterious. Many of the beliefs of our faith involve mysteries. Consider the Annunciation, the virgin birth, Christ's death and resurrection. The elements of communion are considered by some to be the actual body and blood of Christ. In Deuteronomy 29:29, it is written "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of the law." Paul may have been caught up in paradise during his conversion, but our lives can seem so solidly earthbound. Make room for a little mystery in your life. Mysteries can engage our imaginations and senses. Our faith is not completely known right now; we see through a mirror darkly. Take time to enjoy music, art, or creation. It is there that mysteries can come alive and breathe joy into our present known situations.

**Pray:** We pray that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened to see beyond our earthly path. Help us to discern the hope of our salvation even though we are mortals waiting for eternity. Listen to "Behold, I Tell You a Mystery" from Handel's Messiah.

**Friday, October 13, 2023**

**Read:** I Samuel 16:7

**Reflect:** One of the things I enjoy doing when I'm at the shore is collecting the broken pieces of clam shells laying in the sand. On the outside, they are rough and ridged from time spent in the sea. The edges are imperfect. But once you turn them over, another story emerges. The inside is smooth, striated with beautiful colors. There is a soft pearlescent shine unique to each one. The outside of our lives may appear course and weather-beaten. We may feel unimportant, broken, and unnoticed. But God sees the flip side. He is aware of the patterns, colors and beauty that define us. He sees the person He created before it was roughened by the world. The Gospel is upside-down but also inside-out. Our exteriors often reflect the world's effect on us but underneath, our souls reflect unimaginable beauty.

**Prayer:** Help us to notice the unnoticeable, to see beauty in all your creation, especially the people You have made. We see the outward appearance of a man, but You look on the heart. Give us eyes to see beyond appearance and look with care into the heart of others.

## **Saturday, October 14, 2023**

Read I Corinthians 1:18-25 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon.

Read this brief passage once again, noticing what stands out to you.

Read it a third time and think about wisdom and foolishness.

## **Sunday, October 15, 2023**

First Presbyterian Church of Ambler welcomes all to worship with us!

Join us in person at 9 am for a traditional service or 10:30 for contemporary.

Find us online at [FPCAmbler.org](https://FPCAmbler.org), on Facebook or YouTube.

**This week's devotions were written by Bill Brams**

**Monday, October 16, 2023**

**Reflect:** The message from the cross through the lens of the crucifixion has been with us for over 2,000 years. It is central to our religious experience. However, for many at that time and even today his death on the cross would have no spiritual basis in their lives but seem foolish to give a special meaning.

But as believers in Christ, the message is the power of God speaking to us through his son Jesus and is everything. Are we perishing or being saved through the death of our Lord on the cross? The gospel is all about the cross and was central to Paul's teaching.

**Prayer:** The cost of our Lord's life on the cross keeps us from perishing and instead offers us eternal life. This gift to us at the expense of your son Jesus is everything to me. Help me to experience daily gratitude for this gift as I endeavor to be his disciple to further the kingdom today and every tomorrow.



**Tuesday, October 17, 2023**

**Read: 1 Corinthians 1:19**

**Reflect:** This passage and Paul's reference to Isaiah 29:14 challenges the wisdom of the world that does not know God. The intelligent among us frequently take pride in their rejection of God. God rejects this wisdom of the wise; knowing Him is a spiritual dimension not based on simple intelligence or human wisdom. Our Lord Jesus has superseded wisdom. The world did not come to know God through wisdom alone.

When I reflect on my own experience, my faith can waver at an intellectual level. God speaks to us at a spiritual level and the life of Jesus is the guide that focuses my faith. Yes, at times it is a leap; a spiritual one.

**Prayer:** Gracious God, I have been blessed with a good mind. I am thankful for all that my mental acuity has given me. I am thankful that I do have wisdom gained from a long life. I am indeed blessed by the message of the cross and the gift of the Holy Spirit that allows me to know You. The Holy Spirit is in me and I am thankful.

**Wednesday, October 18, 2023**

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 1:20-21

**Reflect:** Paul goes further. Where is the wise man, the scribe, the philosopher of his age? Wisdom and human reason were held in high regard. Even today some “men or women of letters” can reject religion and God. The pursuit of wisdom does not necessarily lead to knowing God. A key point: none of these learned teachers can do what Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross. For me, the Holy Spirit and the message of the cross have led me to know Christ as God. God’s wisdom is often beyond our comprehension.

**Prayer:** Gracious God, your wisdom given to me through the message of the cross and Jesus is wisdom of a higher order. The miracles culminating in the resurrection are beyond “simple” understanding of wisdom. Continue to speak to me through the Bible and your Holy Spirit in the name of your precious son Jesus.

**Thursday, October 19, 2023**

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 1: 22-24

**Reflect:** The Jews were expecting a triumphant messiah, not a humiliated and crucified man. The Greeks and Romans could not fathom a reputable man being crucified. How could the savior be such a man? Paul preached the power of the cross which turned conventional wisdom and what seemed to some a foolish view of Christ as the Messiah upside-down. Christian thought after 2000 years does not seem radical to believers, but it did to many during Paul's ministry and still for many of those who reject our faith today. The power and wisdom of God has elevated the message of the cross! We are the beneficiaries and the deliverers of this message today.

**Prayer:** Dear God, your power and wisdom speak volumes to me in this moment. The message of the cross is in me as I bow before you and the risen Christ. The paradox of the cross and Christ's suffering, though appalling, is made clear to me by the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

**Friday, October 20, 2023**

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 1:25

**Reflect:** So now we come to it. This verse on the surface makes no sense. Our mindset is turned upside- down. Can the “foolishness of God” be “wiser than man’s wisdom” and the “weakness of God” be “stronger than man’s strength?” The paradox of the cross is in our face. When Christ was at his weakest and viewed by many as a foolish messiah on the cross, God’s love was at its pinnacle. Salvation was ours.

**Prayer:** Gracious God, my mind is often overwhelmed when I think of the message of the cross. My logical mind can find a way to question. Your gift to us at great cost is free to us as believers. By studying your word and being part of a Christian community, the Holy Spirit speaks to me with clarity about your promise to us through your son Jesus.



**First Presbyterian Church of Ambler**  
**4 South Ridge Avenue • Ambler, PA 19002**  
**215.646.3030      fpcambler.org**

A place where lives are changed by Christ  
and we live out our faith together.

