

Portraits of JESUS

DEVOTIONAL

February 19 - April 12

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.
And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'



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.



This week's devotions were written by Bill Brams

Matthew 4: 1-11 Portraits of Jesus

Monday, February 19, 2024

Read: Matthew 4: 1-2

Reflect: This passage is after the baptism of Jesus when he is filled with the Holy Spirit, a moment of exhilaration. The humanity of Jesus is apparent. First, to be baptized and then led immediately by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by the devil. Heaven and then hell. Jesus then fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. Forty is a familiar testing period in the Bible that recalls the days of Noah and the years for Israel. The brink of starvation for sure.

We are all subject to temptation. Are we up to these challenges? This is where our faith is tested. It is reassuring to see our Lord demonstrating his humanity by also being tested, yet not falling into sin.

Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for sending your son Jesus to us. His humanness speaks to me particularly in this passage. Help me, through prayer and fellowship with other Christians, to resist temptations and to grow in my faith.

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

Read: Matthew 4: 2-4

Reflect: Jesus, on the brink of starvation is tested directly by the devil. The question to Jesus could not have been more tempting. Your starvation could simply end by turning stones into bread. As Son of God, for sure this is within your power Jesus. Prove it through your miraculous works. We know you fed the 5000, why not make bread for your own benefit, Jesus?

For me the power of the Bible is often present in the measured responses of our Lord. Jesus' resource is the power of the scripture. His response to the devil is to rely on God to spiritually feed him from the scriptures.

"It is written, Man does not live by bread alone, but every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Prayer: Gracious God, I am so often tempted and fall short. Your son Jesus teaches me to use the resource of the scriptures to give me the spiritual strength to resist. Thanks be to God for your word and the gift of your son Jesus.

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

Read: Matthew 4: 5-7

Reflect: The devil again challenges Jesus. We often succumb to temptations but notice here that Jesus is tempted directly by Satan. Jesus is asked to perform a miracle which would be quite the spectacle as the pinnacle of the temple is estimated to be 200 feet from the valley floor.

We learn that Satan also knows the Bible as Psalm 91: 11-12 is quoted but leaves out a key phrase which makes it misleading. The phrase "To keep you in all your ways" is missing. Scholars point out that testing God is not Jesus' way, so the text is misrepresented. Jesus replies with scripture as well but accurately stated. "It is written, you shall not tempt the Lord your God."

It interests me that Jesus was so immersed in the scriptures that they come to Him at important moments as a primary resource. Such a teaching moment for each of us and a reminder of the importance of memorizing God's word. Also, I am struck that Satan would use the scripture to his own benefit to confuse Jesus.

Prayer: My gracious Lord Jesus, how well you teach us. As you were tested and resisted, so may I, by the power of your Holy Spirit. I pray that I can gain scripture wisdom so I can better use your Word to help sustain my faith.

Thursday, February 22, 202

Read: Matthew 4: 8-10

Reflect: Ah, the devil continues to offer Jesus his menu of temptations. This time it is “all the kingdoms in the world and their glory.” “Take a look Jesus, it is quite a view. Jesus, you can sidestep the cross and all this can be yours.” Of course, Satan ignores the sin in the world as he makes this offer to our Lord.

Each of us needs to recognize that temptations resisted are not sins. Here again, our Lord resists and quotes scripture.

The power of quoting scripture has not been a strength of mine. I recognize the power of the scripture memorization that our church has suggested. Jesus used scripture as a wonderful resource against temptation. Why not you and me?

Prayer: My dear Lord Jesus, I am so thankful that you are there for me to teach me and lead me away from my temptations. Help me be a student of your living Word.

Friday, February 23, 2024

Read: Matthew 4: 11

Reflect: “Then the devil left him, and the angels came and attended him.” Jesus prevailed; Victory over Satan was His. We must see Satan as the ultimate deceiver. Full of misinformation. I cannot help but shine a light on misinformation in our current world of hurt. We cannot agree on the truth. Each of us needs to think hard on how we consume information and how to filter truth from fiction.

In a reading this week, we note that Satan left out an important part of Psalm 91; 11-12 in trying to deceive Jesus. Jesus would have none of it and turned deception into truth. We need to emulate our teacher, Lord Jesus, and rely on the Holy Spirit to do the same.

We then hear “and Angels came and attended Him.” Should we not expect help from our Lord when we grapple with our imperfections and sins? Temptations can compromise our faith. Although we may not have an angel to attend to us, the Holy Spirit is with us.

Prayer: Gracious God, please attend to me in my times of need. When I am weak, stand with me in my need to resist temptations. Thank you for my ultimate teacher and savior, your Son Jesus.

Saturday, February 24, 2024

Read Matthew 5:17-26 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon.
Where are you challenged in this passage?
Where do you see your need for Jesus?

Sunday, February 25, 2024

You are invited!

Our worship times are at 9 am (traditional service)
and 10:30 am (contemporary service).

We livestream at FPCAmbler.org, on YouTube (FPC Ambler),
and Facebook (FPCA Connections)

You are welcome here!



Monday, February 26, 2024

Read: Matthew 5:17-26

Reflect: These words directly follow Jesus's statements to his hearers that they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We are called to be salt and light. Salt preserves food and adds flavor. Light shines in dark places. We lose our flavorful impact, ability to preserve life and faith, and our shine when we blend in with the culture around us. We are called to be different. This difference comes from transformed hearts. Hearts humble enough to give up having our own way, to apologize deeply to restore relationships, to love those we might rather label. Do the people around you know you are a follower of Jesus by the way you approach life? Resolve conflict? In which kingdom do we choose to live? The kingdom of the world, the US, the political party of your choice... Or the kingdom of God, now and forever.

Prayer: Dear Lord, I invite you to show me where I am falling in step with the world instead of the narrow path of love you call me to. Help me follow you in all my ways, even when it means being different. Help me to love others well, being the first to repent and urge reconciliation.

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

Read: Matthew 5:20

Reflect: We are quick to point out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, but let's remember that they excelled at following the law and teaching others to do the same. But, as NT Wright has said, "those who want to belong to the new world he (Jesus) is opening up must discover a way of covenant behavior that goes far, far beyond anything the scribes and Pharisees ever dreamed of." The change in behavior does not come from will power (how are you doing with those New Year's resolutions?) but from a change of heart and mind. We can't whip ourselves into obedience. We *can* invite God to melt us, transform us, empower us to love. We *can* spend time in God's Word, studying Jesus; in prayer, listening to Jesus; in confession and repentance, turning to Jesus; learning what it really means to love him and to love his people.

Prayer: Lord, help me to obey your law of love, even when it's difficult. *Especially* when it's difficult. Amen.

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Read: Matthew 5:20

Reflect: I have some terrible news for you. You will *never* be righteous enough to enter the kingdom of heaven. I have *great* news for you. You are invited into the kingdom anyway, even today, at this very moment, because Jesus covers you with his own righteousness. No one ever kept the law perfectly...except for Jesus. Jesus took your unrighteousness and mine to the cross and endured the shame and curse of sin so that we can experience life with our holy God, now and forever, just as if we are righteous. Does this make you want to sing and dance? Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for taking my sin to the cross and covering me with your own righteousness. How amazing that the Father sees us as pure and holy because of you. Help us to live our lives in gratitude and obedience. It was love that led you to the cross. Help us to love as you love, no matter the cost.

Thursday, February 29, 2025

Read: Matthew 5:21-22, Philippians 2:3-4

Reflect: It's easy to gloss over these words. We chuckle over our behavior behind the wheel and slap unloving labels on those with different political leanings. Is that really ok? Are we called to love selectively? Should Christians drive differently than those who don't know Jesus? How should we respond when conversations turn to politics? How far does considering others as better than ourselves go? Hopefully beyond the windshield of our cars and into our hearts.

Prayer: Lord, we invite you to so transform us that even our driving, our political discussions, and our relationship with that problematic relative are changed. Help us to have the humility to see our own need for forgiveness, and to extend grace to others.

Friday, March 1, 2024

Read: Matthew 5:23-26

Reflect: The “Therefore” at the beginning ties these verses to the warnings about anger and name-calling immediately prior. And then, if we are at the altar and remember someone has something against us, we are to leave our gift, go be reconciled, and then come back. This is likely hyperbole as leaving a live animal at the temple to travel 3 days back to Galilee to reconcile, and another 3 days to get back to the temple would be problematic, to say the least. But NT Wright points out that reconciliation takes precedence even over worship! I feel conviction creeping up my neck. Do I take harmony with others that seriously? Am I willing to apologize and perhaps wade through some very uncomfortable feelings? All for love’s sake.

Pray: Lord, help me to take my relationships as seriously as you do. To love with a sacrificial love. To love others as you love me...and as you love them. Even when it costs.

Saturday, March 2, 2024

Read Matthew 8:28-9:8 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon.

What feelings does this passage stir up in you?

Sunday, March 3, 2024

You are invited!

Come worship with us at 9 am (traditional service) or 10:30
(contemporary service)

Under the weather? Car in the shop?

Join us online at FPCAmbler.org, on YouTube, or Facebook.



This week's devotions were written by Bill Brams.

Monday, Monday, March 4, 2024

Read: Matthew 8: 28-29

Reflect: In this chapter Jesus encounters two demon possessed men. The men are considered unclean because of their close contact with the dead. Their “fierce” behavior would indicate a severe condition. They lived among the tombs after being ostracized from the community. The community must have been in fear of these men. The demons want nothing to do with our Lord. They likely knew they would be cast out and so challenged Jesus. “Have you come here to torment us before the time?”

In my ordinary life, I have found much to fear. Most fears have been conjured up in my own mind. Can you imagine facing these men coming to you from a graveyard? What is a more relevant experience for me was my youthful, immature reaction to people with serious afflictions. Particularly as a child we can be repulsed and fearful. Hopefully, we gain maturity and are sympathetic and drawn to help others in need. As adults, we must mentor impressionable children to change their uncomfortable mindset to the point of embracing an opportunity to be loving and to make a difference.

Prayer: Gracious God, I am thankful that you protect us when we are faced with evil in our midst. Teach me to trust you are always there for me to assuage my fears. Help me to appreciate the differences of all who live in your kingdom. To embrace differences and to reach out to those who are viewed unfairly. Teach me to love all your people.

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Read: Mathew 8: 30-34

Reflect: Jesus does a remarkable thing. He casts the demons from the men into swine. Jesus would not allow the demons to destroy men but allowed them to drive the pigs to destruction.

What happens next is remarkable and puzzling. Those who owned the swine went to the city to tell all what had happened. The city dwellers came out to meet Jesus and then, rather than to thank Him for casting out the demons from these men, they asked him to leave. What were they thinking? Were they upset that the owners of the swine lost their property? Was the power of Jesus to cast out demons frightening to them? It is hard to know for certain. We can ask this simple question. Do I sometimes question God? Of course. Don't we all sometimes? It is often said that God can operate in mysterious ways. Our faith is often tested. Clarity often comes later.

Prayer: Gracious God. Give me wisdom to understand your actions. To maintain my faith even in the times when what happens around me does not make sense. I ask all this in the name of your blessed son Jesus.

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Read: Matthew 9: 1-3

Reflect: A paralytic man is brought to Jesus by his friends. Jesus' actions are telling. He acknowledges the faith of the friends but does not focus on healing the man but rather offering forgiveness for his sins. We can infer that the paralytic man was not one of faith. Jesus' actions clearly show it was more important that his sins be forgiven than his body healed. This raises the same question for each of us. Do we have our priorities in the right order? Do I recognize the premier value of the forgiveness of my sins by our Lord?

The reaction of the religious leaders was to accuse Jesus of blasphemy. They did not recognize Jesus as God. The opposition to Jesus begins.

Prayer: Gracious God, your forgiveness of my many and recurring sins touches my heart. Let me see that this gift through the life of your son Jesus is paramount.

Thursday, March 7, 2024

Read: Matthew 9: 4-5

Reflect: This is a miracle of Jesus that can be overlooked. Jesus reads the minds of the scribes who are accusing him of blasphemy. Their thoughts had only been shared among themselves. He asks them; “Why do you think evil in your hearts?” It would seem this knowledge of their mindset by our Lord would have stunned them. Now we have Jesus making the fine point that while healing can be witnessed, forgiveness cannot be seen or proven. “For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you’, or to say, ‘Arise and walk’?”

We cannot over-emphasize the power and value to each of us for the forgiveness of our sins. This simple idea has enhanced meaning to us through this reading!

Prayer: Gracious God, the power of forgiveness is a supreme gift and one that I can bestow on others. In a world where we take offense so easily and harbor grudges help me to bring forgiveness to the forefront of my mind. As you have forgiven me, help me to forgive others.

Friday, March 8, 2024

Read: Matthew 9: 6-8

Reflect: This passage so beautifully brings together Jesus' authority over both sin and disease. It also focuses our attention on what is most important. What can be seen and proven or what is unseen and unproven? Jesus answers his own question to the scribes. The paralytic is first forgiven of his sins. Second, Jesus heals the man and says to him, "Arise, take up your bed and go to your house." Notice the understated manner of Jesus on the healing of the paralytic man. A simple, matter-of-fact statement.

"When the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God." They focused on the healing, not the forgiveness of sins. Don't we also give more thanks to our health being restored? Easy to understand why, as the visible is more appreciated than what is not seen.

Prayer: Gracious God, I am so thankful that you watch over me. Help me focus more on the power of forgiveness---both my own and that I need to extend to others.

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Read Matthew 9:9-13 in preparation for worship tomorrow. Consider how you might follow Jesus this week. Is it difficult for you to follow when called?

Sunday, March 10, 2024

Please join us in worship today. A 9:00 am traditional service or a 10:30 contemporary service awaits your presence.

Live streaming is available for both services at FPCAambler.org, Facebook or YouTube.



This week's devotions were written by Leslie Wise.

Monday, March 11, 2024

Read: Matthew 9:9-13; I Samuel 16:7

Reflect: In Matthew 9:9, we read that Jesus saw Matthew sitting in the tax collector's booth. What did He see? A lonely man dissatisfied with his life and job? Possibly a heart that was yearning for change and meaning? Jesus did not simply glance at Matthew and pass on by. He SAW him. How do we look at the people we meet? Do we take the time to actually see them or are we dismissive and impatient in our interactions? People may actually be drawn to the Lord simply by a kind look, unfeigned interest or a listening ear. Take the time to really look at the people you meet this week. Faces can tell a story if we're willing to listen. Bodies speak with no words.

Prayer: God, help us to see others as You do. Enable us to see the inner man and not be hasty or dismissive with others. Allow us to discern Your heart in all people.

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Read: Matthew 9:9

Reflect: In this passage, Jesus said two words to Matthew, “Follow Me.” Matthew responded by getting up and following Him. What was it that Matthew was leaving behind? Matthew was a tax collector for the Roman occupiers. Tax collectors were a despised group in biblical times. They were known for dishonest dealings and greed. By following Jesus, Matthew went from being an outcast to an apostle, from Levi to Matthew. Matthew is credited with the writing of the Apostle bearing his name, but not a lot is known about his life. What was it about Jesus that caused Matthew to follow Him? I was reminded of the words to the [song “There’s Something about That Name” by Bill and Gloria Gaither.](#)

*“Jesus, Jesus, Jesus; there’s just something about that name.
Master, Savior, Jesus, like the fragrance after the rain.
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, let all Heaven and earth proclaim,
Kings and kingdoms will pass away
but there’s something about that name.”*

Sing this song over the weeks to come. What was it about Jesus that caused you to follow him?

Pray: Spring will soon be here. Jesus, help us to be the fragrance of new life and rebirth in this new season. As You walk among us, let new life spring up in Your wake.

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

Read: Matthew 9:10-11

Reflect: In verse 10, Jesus was found to be reclining at the table. He was not mingling with the *creme de la crème* of society at this time. He was dining with sinners and tax collectors. They were societal outcasts. Jesus did not appear to be on edge. He was not inching toward the door, trying His best to escape the unsavory company. He seemed at ease, reclining for the meal, as was the custom at the time. He may have been enjoying a little wine, food, and conversation. Whose table was this? Some say it was Matthew's. But it could be yours! You can spread a table of invitation anywhere you are. Your home, work, the train, or the pew next to yours. Look for ways this week to "recline" with others, enjoying their company. And, maybe, someone will hear at last, the quiet invitation, a whisper that beckons, Follow Me....

Prayer: God, You prepare a feast for us every day. Help us to pull up a chair for others to join in. Enable us to be willing to share this banquet with openness and generosity.

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Read: Habakkuk 3:19

Reflect: In the mid 1970's I followed the call of God. The harvest was ripe in my life at that time. I was a dance major at college and often at the mercy of choreographers. I soon realized that I needed to honor God with how I was asked to dance. The 70's were a rather freewheeling time in the dance community! Some of my fellow dancers did not understand the change that had taken place in me, even though I did my best to explain. Some doubted my commitment to dance, others were curious. I knew that my life was forever changed. Jesus called and I followed. But God did not leave me lonely. A fellow dancer was going through the same questions regarding her faith. I still wrestle with this call and my response to follow. The Christian life can be rigorous and difficult, a daily, rocky climb. Matthew may have had times when he looked back on his old tax office with yearning. I don't dance as I once did. But the Lord has blessed my feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace and has made me walk on my high places.

Prayer: God, we are so used to leading. Following is not always easy for us. Give us courage to climb the cliffs ahead, the upward call of Christ Jesus to home.

Friday, March 15, 2024

Read: Matthew 9: 11-13; James 2:13

Reflect: So much is being shared today about achieving a healthy lifestyle. Social media, podcasts, books, talk shows, apps and magazines are brimming with information on how to improve health and fitness. While I try to stick to a Mediterranean diet and exercise plan, my palate can so quickly be assuaged by a Termini's cannoli or two; an exercise goal is forsaken for Netflix. By now, our New Year's resolutions may be just a piece of paper fluttering away in the wind. Jesus does not require us to be to be well and fit to sit with Him. He sets a plate for us despite our sin, frailty, and imperfection. The meal is served with loving mercy, leaving judgement at the door. It is in this place that I can finally be made whole.

Prayer: Thank You God that Your mercy triumphs over judgment. We try so hard to hide our weakness and sin before You. You saw our helpless estate and did not turn away. Help us to extend Your mercy to others.

Saturday, March 16, 2024

Read Matthew 15:21-31 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon. Parts of this passage are troubling. What do you make of Jesus' response to the Canaanite woman?

Sunday, March 17, 2024

We saved you a place!

We have a traditional service at 9 am and contemporary at 10:30. ***God attends both!***

Livestream at FPCAmbler.org, YouTube, and Facebook.



This week's devotions were written by Debra Lee.

Monday, March 18, 2024

Read: Matthew 15: 21-31

Reflect: The Gospel reading of Matthew 15:21–31 shows that God's salvation plan is unlimited. Jesus withdrew into Gentile country because of earlier conflicts with the Pharisees, where he turned His attention to the Gentiles. Despite the rivalry and conflict between the Jews and the Canaanite woman's people, she cried out to Jesus for mercy to heal her daughter and recognized him as the "Son of David" – the Messiah. At first Jesus was silent, but she persevered. The disciples wanted him to send her away (perhaps by healing her first); Jesus then responded, saying that His primary focus during his Earthly ministry was on the covenant made with the Jews. But ultimately, Jesus' acknowledges her faith and heals her daughter, demonstrating that He came for ALL people and nations!!

Prayer: Lord, Thank you for this lesson of perseverance in our walk with you, and the assurance of our salvation through our faith in Jesus.

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Read: Matthew 15: 25-28

Reflect: The timing and ethnic controversy of the story is most significant - Jesus was being rejected by Jewish leaders who demanded signs and wanted to kill him, yet a Gentile woman was not put off and kept pleading. The Old Testament conflict between Israel and the Canaanites gives insight into the imagery of “dogs” used in the conversation. Her great faith must have been gratifying to the Savior. Her request for grace was freely given and her daughter was healed in that moment.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that is freely given, and help us to reflect your grace in our actions and attitudes towards others.

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Read: Matthew 15: 25-28

Reflect: At the conclusion of Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman, we see He honors a faith that seeks mercy. Even though His life mission was to present Himself to the Jewish people as Israel's Messiah, He demonstrates that God's grace is for everyone, no matter their nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, or standing in society. She knew who Jesus was, the Jewish Messiah. The story makes clear that God's desire is for all people to come to Salvation.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for your plan of Salvation for all people and for teaching us about Your grace. Lead us in helping those in need of your mercy and grace, and in advancing your kingdom with the Gospel of Jesus to where it is most needed.

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Read: Matthew 15: 29-31

Reflect: After healing the Canaanite woman's daughter, Jesus continued travelling in Gentile territory. His popularity had increased, and the Gentiles continually brought those who were lame, crippled, blind, and in need of healing. Matthew tells us that he healed them all, and that the Gentiles marveled and glorified the God of Israel. This story further demonstrates God's grace and plan for salvation for all people.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, my heart is filled with praise, marveling at the revelation of your plan to bring all humanity into your Kingdom. As Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven." The cross has revealed the mystery that all people can receive mercy, grace, and salvation. Help me to be a disciple of your message and plan.

Friday, March 22, 2024

Read: Matthew 15:21-31

Reflect: This passage demonstrates the importance of being bold in faith and humble before God, and to persevere in our requests to God with pure motives. It makes clear that God shows mercy to all people, and He desires them to be part of His kingdom. We see how faith is applauded, a quality that Jesus spoke highly of in his ministry. Hebrews tells us that “faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” Faith is powerful and without it, it is impossible to please God. Faith looks to God as the center of all things.

Prayer: Lord, as I spend time in your Word and make You the center of all things, I grow in faith. May your will be done through me to reflect your mercy and grace and make me an effective messenger in sharing the Gospel with others.

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Read Matthew 21:1-17 in preparation for tomorrow's Palm Sunday celebration.

Can you place yourself in both scenes?
What do you hear? See? Smell? Feel?

Sunday, March 24, 2024



**Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes
in the name of the Lord!
Join the celebration as we commemorate
Palm Sunday.**

9:00 am traditional service

10:30 am contemporary service

Both livestreamed at [FPCambler.org](https://www.fpcambler.org), YouTube, and Facebook.

**LIVESTREAM
SCAN
ME** 

Monday, March 25, 2024

Read: Matthew 21:1-11

Reflect: There is a story in which Sir Walter Raleigh was walking with Queen Elizabeth I when they encountered mud. According to the story, Sir Walter immediately removed his cloak and put it on the ground so the Queen's feet would not hit the mud. Imagine the crowds of Jerusalem who likely owned just one cloak placing their garments on the ground to honor Jesus, the man they thought would become king. The royal chants of "Blessed is the Son of David," also indicated their belief that Jesus would free them from Roman rule and be the long-awaited king to set them free. Indeed, he IS the King that sets us free, but not in the way they anticipated. God's plan was so much bigger, richer, deeper. Do you find that in your own life God often acts in ways that are so big, so grand, so far-reaching you would never have thought to ask? Or perhaps he answers in a way that causes temporary pain, a pruning, that later results in growth, fruit, and joy. NT Wright says, "Once you invite Jesus to help, he will do so more thoroughly than you imagined, more deeply than perhaps you wanted." Thankfully, we can trust God's unwavering, unconditional love and faithfulness.

Prayer: Lord, our view is so limited. Help us to trust your grand plan, your redemption and salvation. You are the King of all kings. Help us to be faithful citizens in your kingdom.

Tuesday, March 26, 2024

Read: Matthew 21:12-13

Reflect: We often think that Jesus is protesting the exchange of money and selling of animals for sacrifice, but that is likely not the case. People *needed* to buy animals for sacrifice---could you imagine keeping an animal perfect and unblemished during an arduous 3-day journey? They needed to change money for their purchase. Then what *does* this story teach us? In the text Jesus said, “You are making it (the Temple) a den of robbers.” The word for “robbers” referred to brigands who were intent on a forceful revolution to bring God’s kingdom. Look at the life of Jesus. Force and violence are not his way. As NT Wright put it, “The ideology that had sustained Jerusalem, that of military might and conquest, would suffice no longer.” The Temple was no longer serving as a place of worship, but rather as a center to foment revolution. Can you think of contemporary institutions founded to promote worship of the living God but no longer functioning in that capacity?

Prayer: Lord, help us to follow the way of Jesus, staying on the path of love, grace, and mercy. Especially in this time of political upheaval, when people are doing and saying ungodly things in the name of Christianity, may we model the love of Christ and the strength of his peace.

Wednesday, March 27, 2024

Read: Matthew 21:14-17

Reflect: Ever since the time of David, the blind and lame were excluded from the Temple. But in this passage, the blind and lame came to Jesus in the Temple, and he healed them! Jesus was truly revolutionary in his way of inclusivity and care for outcasts. With Jesus, those on the outside were invited in. And in his power and mercy, Jesus healed them, freeing them from the physical barriers that made them outcasts. His ways were unexpected, even revolutionary, and always cut to the heart of the matter. Following Jesus *today* is revolutionary. How can we follow Jesus' example of love?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for the surprising ways you demonstrate your love. Help us to live as you taught us, welcoming all, bringing those in the margins into the fold, responding to anger with gentleness. We can only do this by the power of your Holy Spirit living in us. We surrender to you.

Thursday, March 28, 2024

Read: Matthew 26:26-56

Reflect: So much pathos packed into these few paragraphs. I suggest reading it slowly, prayerfully, several times. Put yourself into the scene with Jesus at the table, sharing the Passover meal, eating the bread and sipping from the cup. Hear Peter's emotional declaration that he will never desert Jesus and Jesus' prescient response that Peter would thrice deny him that very night. Feel your eyelids become heavy as you strive to stay awake with Jesus, but oh, you are so very sleepy. Can you hear Jesus' impassioned cries to his Father? "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." How do you feel when Jesus, tear-stained face strong with resolve, asks you, "Are you still sleeping? ...Get up...My betrayer is at hand." And then, his betrayer breaks into the scene, leading a mob, and Jesus gently says, "Friend, do what you are here to do." Jesus called him friend. Let that sink in.

Prayer: I pray I will never deny you, but I know I am weak. Help me to stay awake with those who are suffering, to follow you faithfully always, and to surrender to your will. Jesus, you are friend to sinners, and I am one. I need you.

Friday, March 29, 2024

Read: Matthew 27:45-56

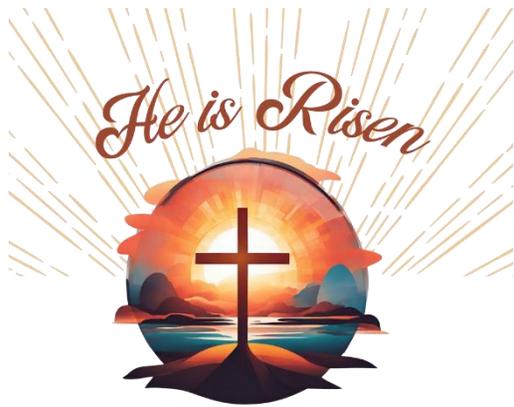
Reflect: The Gospel has been marching, marching, marching toward this conclusion. Jesus' very human body nailed to a very real cross, mocked by the priests, scribes and elders, abandoned by his own followers, helpless between two thieves. Jesus the Son, who from the beginning had been intertwined with the Father and Spirit found himself cut off, a solitary strand separated and alone to die. And still...he gave up his spirit, willingly. Darkness fell over the earth as the Light of the world was crucified. The breath of life gave up his breath. The earth itself trembled at the magnitude; an earthquake split the ground and the curtain of the temple was rent in two. Can you picture all of this? Close your eyes and feel the darkness.

Prayer: Jesus, we are humbled and thankful. We cannot begin to grasp the enormity of your sacrifice. Forgive us for being casual about the crucifixion. We are so very thankful that you paid the ransom for us, the undeserving. And we look forward to what is to come on the third day.

Saturday, March 30, 2024

Read Matthew 28:1-10 in preparation for tomorrow's Easter Sunday's celebration.

Angels and earthquakes, fears, and reassurances. There is much to unpack. Much that inspires worship. Much Good News to tell our brothers and sisters.



Easter Sunday, March 31, 2024

Come celebrate with us!

- 7 am (sunrise in the Memorial Garden),
- 8:45 am (traditional)
- 10:45 am (contemporary)

Livestreamed at FPCAmbler.org, YouTube, and Facebook

**LIVESTREAM
SCAN
ME**



Monday, April 1, 2024

Read: Matthew 28:1-2

Reflect: The two Marys, drawn by their hearts' grief, made their way to the tomb at the first light after Sabbath's end. They fully expected that Jesus' body was lifeless in the tomb. But God had other plans. He sent an angel to roll back the stone and there he was, his appearance "like lightning," ready to greet and reassure Jesus' friends. The stone did not need to be rolled away for Jesus' sake. We learn later that he could move through physical barriers. But rolling the stone away allowed the women *in* to see! Have you ever felt a nudge to do something, but the thought of obstacles kept you from acting? Have you ever found that when called by God to do a certain thing, obstacles have been miraculously removed?

Prayer: Lord God, we thank you that when you call us to do something, you provide the way. Help us to be bold in obedience, trusting you to make possible what you call us to do. And may we give you thanks and praise as we see you at work.

Tuesday, April 2, 2024

Read: Matthew 28:4

Reflect: Had these been “normal” times, Jesus’ body would be dead and the soldiers tasked with guarding the tomb very much alive. But the resurrection of our Lord Jesus is anything but normal. Jesus was and is risen, alive!, and it is the guards who “became like dead men.” Could this be both literal and figurative? Later in Matt 28 we read that some of the guards went to the chief priests to report and took money to tell people that Jesus’ body was stolen. Rather than leaning into what they saw, they went to human authorities and agreed to promote a lie for money and likely for protection. The truth was dangerous! Sometimes, doing the right thing carries a cost. But “what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?” (Mark 8:36). The text tells us “some” of the soldiers went to the chief priests. Can we hope that others believed?

Prayer: Lord, help us to choose the way of life, the way of light, the way of love, every time. To be willing to live in faith even when it costs, understanding that the cost may be financial, emotional, or relational. We don’t want to become “like dead men,” but rather fully alive in Christ.

Wednesday, April 3, 2024

Read: Matthew 28:5-7

Reflect: The angel's first words were, "Do not be afraid for I know that you are looking for Jesus..." The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom, but those who are looking for Jesus need not fear. Looking for Jesus in every situation is an antidote to fear, for he is with us and for us and will never leave us. The angel then reminded the women that Jesus had told them he would rise. Did they begin to understand what their minds could not previously process? The heavenly messenger told the women to come and see, then to go and tell. We are exhorted to "taste and see" (Psalm 34:8) and to go and tell others. We have Good News to share. God loves us with sacrificial love and invites us to eternal life with the resurrected Jesus in his kingdom...starting even now.

Prayer: Lord, help me to come and see, then go and tell. May my faith and joy be contagious. Thank you for your reassurance that we need not fear.

Thursday, April 4, 2024

Read: Matthew 28:8-10

Reflect: Right away the women rushed from the tomb to tell the disciples what they had seen and heard, afraid but filled with joy. Seeing Jesus, the women ran to him, held on to him, and worshiped. Jesus met them right where they were, increasing their joy and erasing their fear with his presence. Can you imagine the relief they felt? Their crucified Rabbi was alive! They were bursting to tell the disciples. Take a moment to feel with them. Amazement, astonishment, deep joy, hope restored, a desire to hold on to him, as well as their urgent need to tell the others.

Prayer: Oh Lord, may we see you, run to you, and worship you alone! May we never lose the wonder of you. Perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18,) and you love perfectly. You *are* perfect love. Help us to love you more perfectly, without fear, and to love others with sacrificial love.

Friday, March 5, 2024

Read: Matthew 28:10

Reflect: Our God always seems to turn local customs and mores upside down. Jewish practice required two **men** to be witnesses. Yet he chose women to be the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. And what did Jesus tell the women to do? To go and tell his *brothers* to go to Galilee where he would meet them. Why is this significant? First, Jesus referred to his disciples as brothers, a relationship more intimate than that of disciple and rabbi...and this after they had all run from him in fear! Such forgiveness, mercy and grace. Secondly, Galilee was known as Galilee of the Gentiles. From the Magi at the time of his birth, to the healing of a Centurion's servant and a Canaanite woman's daughter, and now by choosing to meet his disciples in Galilee, we learn that Jesus, a Jew, is for all people, men and women, Jews and Gentiles. This truly is good news.

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for pouring your extravagant love on people of all genders, all nationalities, all stages of life. Please show us any dark place in our hearts where we may harbor false or prideful notions of worthiness or value that are not aligned with your heart. Help us to love as you love.

Saturday, March 6, 2024

Read Matthew 28:16-20 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon.
Which words give you the most challenge? The most comfort?

Sunday, March 7, 2024

First Presbyterian Church of Ambler worship services meet at
9 am for a traditional worship service
and at 10:30 for a contemporary service

All are welcome!

We also live-stream our services at FPCAmbler.org, on YouTube,
and Facebook.



Monday, April 8, 2024

Read: Matthew 28:16-17

Reflect: The disciples went where Jesus told them to go and Jesus came to them as promised. When most of his disciples saw him, they worshiped him. Yet, some doubted. It seems amazing that disciples of Jesus could see their resurrected Rabbi and doubt. But why are we surprised? Do we sometimes think it was easier to believe back then? I find comfort in the account we read in John 20 of Jesus' relationship with Thomas. How gracious he was to invite Thomas to touch the wounds made by doubts, scorn, and all manner of sin. The wounds that purchased our eternal life.

Prayer: Lord, please open our hearts and our eyes to see you and believe. We want to worship you! Forgive our doubts and fill us with your presence, we pray.

Tuesday, April 9, 2024

Read: Matthew 28:18-20

Reflect: Many voices compete for our attention, yet we tend to live in echo chambers, choosing news feeds, websites, and friends who have values similar to our own. Yet all authority has been given to Jesus, not to any political figure or cultural super star. Jesus says all authority has been given to him and “*Therefore...*” because all authority is his, we are to go and make disciples. Disciples are followers, students, apprentices. Jesus has all authority, and so let us learn from him, follow him, do what he commands us to do, and pass it on. Jesus has all authority, let’s look to him, study him, spend time with him, so that our priorities, values, thoughts, and actions are aligned with his. What does he command? That we love him wholeheartedly and love fellow humans well. Pass it on.

Prayer: Lord, forgive me for looking to anyone else as the authority for my thoughts, my words, my life. Help me to spend time in your Word and in prayer so that I can know you, follow you, be your disciple. May we, your people, obey everything you command, loving you and loving one another, and teaching others to do the same.

Wednesday, April 10, 2024

Read: Matthew 28:18-20

Reflect: In Jesus' day, disciples would live with their rabbi, drinking in his words, following his actions. The goal was to become like their teacher and continue the mission by sharing with others. We are disciples of our Rabbi Jesus as we intentionally walk with him, meditate on his Word, keep company with him in prayer, and do what he calls us to do. As we spend time with the resurrected Jesus, we become more and more like him. We are transformed by his sacrificial love and grow in gratitude as we see the depth of our sin and the cost of our forgiveness. Sharing this good news and obeying Jesus by demonstrating love is how we make disciples. To make disciples of all nations we can start right where we are, as most people we encounter have yet to encounter the risen Christ.

Prayer: Lord, help us to grow more and more like you and to share with others along the way. May we boldly demonstrate and humbly teach all you have commanded us. We pray for "divine encounters" with neighbors, co-workers, and extended family, in which your Holy Spirit uses us to make disciples.

Thursday, April 11, 2024

Read: Matthew 28:19

Reflect: Did you know that baptizing predates John the Baptist, dating back to the ritual cleansing first mentioned in Leviticus? John's baptism continued the theme of cleansing as he urged followers to repent, or turn away from sinful ways, and be cleansed, foreshadowing the soul cleansing made possible through the cross. Now, we are baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection and have new life in Christ---something too wonderful to keep to ourselves! Having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we enjoy the favor of God the Father, the Son who paid our ransom, and the Holy Spirit who guides and empowers us. We are made clean by Jesus, not by anything we do or say, and out of gratitude we live our lives in love.

Prayer: We thank you that there is ONE baptism for the forgiveness of sins. ONE baptism regardless of social status, ethnicity, or age. ONE baptism that sets us apart from the world and unites us as one family under God. We thank you for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Friday, April 12, 2024

Read: Matthew 28:18-20

Reflect: Unlike baptism, discipleship is not a one and done phenomenon. Christian discipleship or spiritual formation is a lifetime of following Jesus, letting him transform us to be more like him. The process can seem excruciatingly slow in a culture that worships the speed of a click. Jesus gave the Great Commission not to an individual, but to the disciples gathered on the mountain in Galilee. We grow as disciples *together*, as we listen to teaching, read God's Word, and pray. We grow together as we hold one another accountable to obeying everything Jesus commanded us. We grow together through discipleship groups and Christian friends who sharing deeply. Living as disciples is not meant to be a solitary pursuit, but rather a community adventure. Let's live this out together.

Prayer: Jesus, we thank you for the gift of your church and for opportunities to share deeply with one another. May we encourage one another to obey your commands, to forgive as we are forgiven, and love as you love. Help us to be disciples and to make disciples in Ambler and in all the world.



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.

