

Lenten Devotions



South Carolina Synod



South Carolina Synod Leaders have contributed brief reflections on various favorite Scripture passages as a gift for your Lenten journey.

Beginning on Ash Wednesday through Holy Week, on Monday through Friday, you will find those devotions here.

May our lives always be centered in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Blessings for your journey this Lenten season.

+ *Bishop Ginny*

Wednesday, March 5, 2025

Matthew 7:7

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.

I did not grow up in the church. At 17, a friend invited me to attend her church and after a few weeks I felt as if I were to answer my door because someone was knocking. It was Jesus. Most would look at this verse as something I had to do, but Jesus sought me, asked me to follow him, and the door to eternal life was opened for me.

Lord, may I do likewise for others who have not yet been found.

Bernie Lee, South Carolina Synod Council

Thursday, March 6, 2025

2 Timothy 1:6-7

For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

When fear creeps in, we lean on God and one another, rekindling the fire within us. This passage from 2 Timothy reminds us we are not meant to live in fear but in the deep, abiding love of the Holy Spirit. Marked by the cross and claimed in the waters of baptism, we carry the gifts of power, love, and self-discipline -- God-given (fiery!) strengths that overcome fear and renew our faith.

- Where in your life do you need to fan the flames again?
- What would it look like to trust that God has already equipped you for this moment?

Always know you are needed in your community. You are not alone and Thanks be to God we are vessels of the gifts of God! The spark of courage and love is with you!

Pastor Joanna Gragg, South Carolina Synod Council

Friday, March 7, 2025

Psalms 139:1-24 (7-12)

*⁷Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
⁸If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
⁹If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,*

¹⁰*even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.*
¹¹*If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,"*
¹²*even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.*

One of my favorites is Psalm 139:1-24, especially 7-12. I have loved this psalm since childhood. The concept of never being so far away that God can't find me is one that has helped me in many dark days. I have often felt that even if I tried to go away or flee, what would be the point? It's easier and better for me to stay close to God since God will find me anyway.

God, thank you for keeping us close to you. Help us remember that you are with us every day, in every way.

Nancy Appel, South Carolina Synod Council

Monday, March 10, 2025

John 10:10b

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

As I was younger, much of the religious instruction was about the future. What will happen to you in the future? How do you get there? What if you are short of the mark? Of course, we were all taught about eternal life in Heaven and how blissful that will be one day. But most of what I felt like I experienced was a rigorous laundry list of how not to spend eternity permanently separated from God and the myriad daily things that will get us in trouble.

If Heaven is the goal, and we are constantly reminded of what NOT to do, does our daily life here on Earth have any purpose? What should make us excited to even get up in the morning?

Here in John, the Good Shepherd tells us that he (Jesus) came so that the sheep could have abundant life...here....and now... We follow the Good Shepherd not so that one day we may have an abundant life, but so that we may have it also here on Earth...day by day...right now....as well as eternally in the future. The Good Shepherd shows us that life is worth living today...right now. God shows up in that abundant life. Where have you seen God today?

Dear God, we give thanks and stand in awe of the wonderful things you give us each and every day. Help us to always be mindful of them. Amen.

Pastor Eric Little, Dean, Amelia Conference



Tuesday, March 11, 2025

Micah 6:8

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Life is full of conundrums. We are surrounded by choices. Whom do we trust? What did we experience and what were we taught by our parents, our families, our schools, our churches?

One thing is for sure. Life changes. The world is changing at an ever-quickening speed and we are presented with decisions that neither we nor our community has had to face before and much of those decisions aren't easy to make.

Much of the world can't even communicate with each other now and have a thoughtful conversation about our differences without being ugly to each other. So how do we act when we have to make decisions about things that we have never encountered before, or things that may at first fly in the face of our community?

But I take heart in Micah's scripture as he presents a clear choice. What is the good choice? To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God. All else will take care of itself.

Dear God, we get confused daily over how to act and treat others. Help us to love you and to walk with you humbly according to your ways.

Pastor Eric Little, Dean, Amelia Conference

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Romans 10:14-15 (NRSVue)

But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

One reason I became interested in Church Communications is this passage in Romans 10.

Too often, we don't speak of our faith. We don't want to stand out in a group of people. We don't want to offend someone. Whatever the reason, we choose silence as the best option. We imagine that our Christian witness will speak for itself, and people will see Jesus in us.

The problem with this is that we are both saint and sinner at the same time. Martin Luther's use of "simul justus et peccator" reminds us that we are human. We sin. We can't make ourselves good enough.

Also, Paul makes it clear that people need to hear the Gospel. People need to hear how the Gospel impacts us and those who came before us. *"How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?"* As a church, we are called to share the Good News!

O Lord, how can they call on and believe in You unless someone tells them? We thank You for those who have gone before us, carrying the Good News of Your love and grace. We pray for those who are
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sharing Your word today. And we ask that You would send us, Lord, send us to share Your love with those who have not yet heard. Please give us the courage to speak, the compassion to care, and the wisdom to know what to say. Amen.

Grace and peace, Neal F. Fischer, Director of Communications, South Carolina Synod

Thursday, March 13, 2025

Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt — a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.”

These words from Jeremiah are read on Reformation Sunday which is appropriate because God is calling us to a new thing, a new way in these words. I believe the way God calls us into is a close relationship with him, and by extension with one another as we live in God. I find it so powerful that God is the one who make the covenant, and when the people of God go astray or fail, God finds an even more intimate way to write this covenant.

I did a required summer of Clinical Pastoral Education at St. Luke’s Episcopal Hospital and Texas Heart Institute in Houston, Texas. I had the humbling opportunity to get to know many patients and medical leaders, and to observe some heart procedures, including heart catheterizations and even a heart transplant. It was beyond amazing to see the intricacies of these surgeries being carried out. As I watched the doctors complete the surgery on the heart transplant patient and make the final stitches to close up the chest, this passage from scripture came to my mind. These stitches were life changing!
AND LIFE GIVING!

A person doesn’t only get stitches when they have heart surgery. It is not hard to recognize that these procedures change the lives of these patients. Everything would be different because of the “writing on their heart”! In years since I was a student I have been a heart patient too. I survived a heart attack and have had two stents put in to help my blood flow more freely. I still think of these words from the Prophet and I give thanks to God for the gifts of medicine and medical personnel who can use their skills to write on people’s hearts and save lives every day. But I especially give thanks to our God who knows each of us and calls us by name, our God who writes a personal covenant with us and calls us to live out this covenant in love for one another. It’s a whole new life! And a whole new way of living because of God’s infinite love and grace! Thanks be to God.

Lord God, thank you for loving us and creating us for Covenant with you and with one another. Help us to live in that Covenant and to share your bold and amazing love with all the world. Help us to bear witness in our words and deeds to the love and grace we receive from you in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

+Bishop Ginny Aebischer



Friday, March 14, 2025

Esther 4:14b

Perhaps you were created for such a time as this.

This verse resonates with me. It suggests that there are moments in our lives when we are called to step up and fulfill a specific purpose where our actions can make a difference. It's a reminder that our lives are not just a bunch of random events but are linked to God's divine plan.

Each of us has a unique role to play in the world. Like Esther, we may be placed in specific situations or given certain talents for a reason. Her decision to approach the king was risky. In the same way, realizing our purpose may require us to face our fears and take bold steps. Our actions can have a ripple effect, affecting the lives of others in our community and in our world.

This story also reminds me to trust in God's timing and be patient, knowing that opportunities will happen when the time is right.

Deacon Deborah Poole, South Carolina Synod Children, Youth and Family Coordinator

Monday, March 17, 2025

Matthew 18:1-7

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?'²He called a child, whom he put among them,³and said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.⁵Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

This passage from Matthew is one of my favorites because in it, Jesus tells his disciples that all those who would follow him should aspire to the humility of a child, one of the "little ones" that our culture so often turns its back on. Jesus, in fact, identifies so strongly with the "least of these" in society that he goes so far as to say that when we care for those who, for any reason, find it hard to thrive in our society, we are caring for him. This is a stunning statement: not simply that Jesus is like one of these little ones, but that he is one of them. This passage helps me to remember that fact as I consider my Lenten practice during this season, and my discipleship all year round.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for Jesus' humble presence among us. Teach us to be humble too, and to be generous in welcoming with the most vulnerable among us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Pastor Mark Buchan, Cristo Rey & Sagrada Familia Mission Developer

Tuesday, March 18, 2025

John 15:1-9

1I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. 2He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. 3You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. 4Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 5I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. 6Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. 9As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.

While I have many favorite verses in the Bible, one that I return to regularly has been John 15:1-9. Jesus uses the image of a vine and its branches to describe our relationship with Him. I know that in order to truly flourish and bear fruit in my life, I must stay connected to Him – I must abide in Him. One of my favorite hymns is “Abide with Me” which resonates deeply with this image. Understanding my dependence on God for comfort, guidance, and strength, my plea for God to remain close, especially through the inevitable difficulties I have met in life, is vital to my very survival. This passage, as well as the hymn, highlight the importance of having a close, personal connection with God. Just as a branch withers and dies if it’s separated from the vine, I know that I cannot truly live or thrive apart from God’s ever faithful presence in my life.

God, I pray for your guidance and for strength to abide in you, to remain connected to the vine so that your love may flow through me, bearing fruit that glorifies your name. Help me to surrender my will to yours, to listen to your voice, and to follow your commands. Amen.

Wendy Davidson, South Carolina Synod Assembly Manager & Administrative Assistant

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world[a] but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

It is one of many verses in the Bible that I have stumbled upon when I have needed guidance and support. It has helped me to keep going even when there is no strength in me. And it has encouraged me to believe even when everything around says otherwise.

The direction we desire and the quality of life desired comes from the will of God. It is gestated in your heart where it is the source of all love, understanding and good will.

Today God provides for everyone a new beginning and transformation to those who place their hope in him for a better quality of life.



The relationship with God is essential for the quality of life that we desire. Let us calibrate our steps in the direction and heart of God and be taken along the path of life according to his design.

Thank you, Lord for you are everything that we need when our faith slowly fades away. We are thankful that when we are lost there you are to give us direction and strength to keep moving ahead.

Please renew our faith in you so we can achieve that we were called in Jesus. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Pastor Martín López, Parroquia El Mesías & Parroquia Nuestro Salvador, Mission Developer

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Romans 8:38-39

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This summation of God's love has always been a favorite, but when my son was taken from me in an automobile accident, these are the verses my older brother read to me in the wee hours of the morning to comfort and console me. We also read them at his funeral, and so often I hear them at other funeral services. They are definitely my "go to" verses!

Heavenly Father, keep me in your care today and always and never let me become separated from your love. Amen.

Sheila Caughman, South Carolina Synod Council

Friday, March 21, 2025

Leviticus 19:33-34

³³When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. ³⁴The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

For many years now our church has partnered with Lutheran Services Carolinas to dedicate our former parsonage as a transitional home for refugees as part of their New Americans program. We've welcomed families from all over the world and it has been a blessing to see children playing on our playground, occasionally attending church services, and participating in VBS. I've often marveled at what these folks went through to get to a new country with not much more than the clothes on their backs in order to begin a new life. By all accounts, though, it's worth it, and St. Andrew's is fortunate to have this opportunity before us.

This passage reminds me that our mission - indeed our directive - as Christians is to not only welcome the "foreigner" but to love them as we love ourselves. I am hopeful that we as a nation remember that

we were all once “foreigners,” and as such we have a responsibility to search for, explore, and facilitate all the ways we can faithfully fulfill our call to welcome these children of God to our land.

Dear God, Help us always to remember that we are called to embrace and care for all God’s children. Amen.

Beth Trump, South Carolina Synod Council

Monday, March 24, 2025

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

This verse gives me hope no matter what struggles or issues I am facing. I know that as long as I trust in God and believe in Him, He will never leave me -- He will get me through any and all challenging circumstances.

Lord, please grant us the strength and resilience amidst all the chaos in our daily lives.

Charlene Fink, South Carolina Synod Accountant

Tuesday, March 25, 2025

Matthew 25:34-36

³⁴Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

In this passage Jesus tells us clearly how we should behave with our neighbor. His words are clear; they do not lend themselves to interpretation. In these times of change and uncertainty we must not be carried away by prejudices and propaganda that incite us to hate people who speak another language, people who were born in other countries, those who have a different skin color. Let us think that those whom we discriminate against, they and we were loved equally by our mothers against their breasts, if we all heard lullabies full of love even if they were in different languages. That we all share the same dreams, to care for and protect our families, to want our children to have a better future, to be able to live without fear in a place where we can work and progress. Where we are accepted and appreciated for who we are, for being able to express and live our faith freely.

Dear God, our loving father and mother in Heaven. Open our hearts to receive the stranger with love, make us put aside our fears and rejection and be able to embrace and share our gifts with those who have come from far away, those who have had their own exoduses, that we do not judge or bear false witness against those we do not know. May we be able to fulfill your mandate to help, feed and clothe

the needy and accompany the sick, no matter where they come from. May we share our pews in the church with them as equals. May we sit at the table with them and share the meal with them. Help us Lord. Amen.

Pastor Jorge Leone, Cristo Rey & Sagrada Familia Mission Developer

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

1 Peter 4:10-11

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

I believe that when we follow the Holy Spirit, when we respond to God's grace with the unique gifts that God has given each of us (and not necessarily the ones we wish we had) the light of Christ shines brilliantly.

Gracious Lord, help me and guide me in your way. Amplify all your people's unique and diverse gifts to bring peace, hope, reconciliation, and love to all creation.

Deacon Kimberly Heindl, South Carolina Synod Assistant to the Bishop

Thursday, March 27, 2025

Read: Luke 24:13-35

¹³Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" ¹⁹He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him." +Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.
²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

On the road to Emmaus, two disciples meet the risen Jesus without recognizing him. They walk with him and at the end of the day they invite him to share a meal with them. It's only when they break bread at the table that they finally realize that they've been with Jesus the whole time. We spend so much of our lives searching for Jesus and wondering where he might show up. Sometimes we are looking for something big and extraordinary. This story reminds us that sometimes Jesus shows up in the simple, everyday things like sharing a meal with friends.

Holy God, stay with us now as we move through the days of Lent. Make us aware of the ways that your presence is real for us. And give us courage and hope when we feel far from you. Amen.

Pastor Josh Kestner, South Carolina Synod Council

Friday, March 28, 2025

Isaiah 6:1-10

*I delight greatly in the LORD;
my soul rejoices in my God.*

*For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

Since my current season of life includes the excitement of planning for an upcoming family wedding, this scripture, randomly pulled from my box of daily blessing cards, seemed to speak to me directly because of the bride and bridegroom references.

Upon deeper reflection though, I'm struck by the reassuring words of grace from an uncommon source, the Old Testament. Even the 'grumpy' God of the Old Testament promises never-ending salvation and the assurance of being made righteous through faith. This challenges me today to look for grace in other not-to-be-expected places.

Today, may you be also be challenged, then blessed, because God's grace and goodness most assuredly will show up in unexpected ways. We just have to keep open eyes and hearts in order to see it.

Cindy Davis, South Carolina Synod Council

Monday, March 31, 2025

Psalm 40:1-3

¹I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

²He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

³He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.

Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD.

I first really noticed this passage over twenty years ago while I was discerning a call to ministry. It was a challenging time in my career and these words of promise were great encouragement to me. It is worth noting that the footnotes in the NRSV say that the pit in verse 2 is a 'pit of tumult.' That pretty much described the way my life felt at that time--and has sometimes felt since then, too.

This entire psalm, but especially these first three verses, reminds me that God is at work in our lives even when we feel overwhelmed by the muck, mire, and tumult of the world around us, from political upheaval to the aftermath of a natural disaster.

I continue to be reassured by this passage. Not only is God at work in my life in the midst of turmoil, but my faithful witness will also help others to recognize God at work in their lives! I think we can all appreciate that encouragement to keep sharing our stories with others.

Gracious God, help me to be patient as I wait and watch and work through difficult times. Help me trust that you will indeed lift me out of the muck and plant my feet on solid ground. And let me continue to sing praises for your faithfulness, so that others may see and hear and put their trust in you. Amen.

Pastor Ruth Ann Sipe, Lutheran Disaster Relief Carolinas

Tuesday, April 1, 2025

The story of Job is important to my faith. Job loses everything, through no fault of his own; he is devastated. And he will not be silent about his despair. Job shouts at God, demanding answers, insisting on justice. While Job is angry, he trusts God to be faithful. And God is. God can handle Job's anger, his demands for justice, his pain and his despair. Job can come to God as his full self, and God loves him. God does remind Job that Job is not God, that only God is creator, and only God can know all things. And still, this is good news--there are things that mortals cannot understand, but God does, things that mortals cannot do, but God can. This story brings good news for us--God is more mighty than we can imagine. God is more powerful than we can conceive. There is more going on than we will ever know. And still, God has space and love for each of us, with all of our feelings, and God welcomes us to bring our full selves forward. God can handle whatever we bring.

May God bless us all, in all our feelings, as we dare to share our whole selves with God.

Pastor Rachel Hoffman, South Carolina Synod Council

Wednesday, April 2, 2025

Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

During many of my Lenten journeys as of late, I have focused upon adding something into my daily discipline that reminds me of God's active and positive presence in my life, instead of what many are used to which is removing something that they really like, for example, chocolate or coffee (which I think brings up negative feelings that could turn me away from God!). So it is where I have chosen as a Lenten discipline to read to elementary children, add in a new Baptismal devotional booklet, or donate time and talents to a non-profit. This year I chose to focus upon Romans 8:38-39 during these ambiguous times because with all the political noise I was losing some hope, losing joy and losing sight of God's reign over ALL of the cosmos. This passage reminds me that I am never alone and that God has and has had ultimate control since the beginning. And somehow this amazing God that creates humans in God's image and is abounding in steadfast LOVE will never separate any of us from this faithful, unconditional love. Nothing, no-thing or human or ruler or insidious evil, not one thing will separate us from GOD'S LOVE. This grounds me and gives me hope to make positive steps towards becoming the gentle, caring, faithful, joyful, kind, at peace child of God that God created me to be.

Dear God, thank you for loving us even when we think we are unlovable. Thank you for forgiving us even when we can't forgive ourselves. Thank you for reminding us in your Word that your grace is sufficient, even in these ambiguous, uncertain times. Amen.

Deacon Lexanne Graves, Vice President, South Carolina Synod Council

Thursday, April 3, 2025

Psalms 40:1-3b

¹I waited patiently for the LORD;

he inclined to me and heard my cry.

²He drew me up from the desolate pit,

out of the miry bog,

and set my feet upon a rock,

making my steps secure.

³He put a new song in my mouth,

a song of praise to our God.

I was in my second call with a senior pastor who treated me like an intern. He decided we did not work well together and said he was planning to terminate my call within two months if I had not found a new position. (The bishop informed him later that he could not terminate my call, but I was already halfway out the door.)

I was in such a deep funk that I could barely get up in the morning. This psalm became my mantra, which I paraphrased under my breath all day long. And God lifted me up, set my feet on a secure rock, and gave me a new song to sing.

Pastor Michele Fischer, Dean, Heartland Conference

Friday, April 4, 2025

1 Peter 5:6-7

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5:6 resonates deeply with me because it reminds me to let go of my need for control and trust in God's timing. There have been moments in my life when I've struggled with impatience, with my family, my life circumstances, my work, you name it.

This Lent is teaching me to breathe, pause and be pleasantly surprised in God's sovereignty. I want things to happen on my time schedule. Whether it's personal growth, career opportunities, or relationships, I sometimes feel the urge to push ahead instead of waiting on God. When I pray with impatience, God says kindly, "Don't rush me."

This verse reassures me that humility is key. Not just in my actions, but in my heart. When I surrender my worries, ambitions, and even my fears to God, I acknowledge that God's plan is greater than mine. It's a challenge to trust when I don't see immediate results, but this verse encourages me to stay faithful, knowing that He will lift me up in His perfect time.

It's a daily reminder that I don't have to strive for validation or success in my own strength. Instead, I can rest in God's hands, knowing that when the time is right, God will be with me all the ways I could never have imagined, or orchestrated.

May the Lord bless you with a heart of humility and a spirit of patience. May God grant you peace as you trust in God's perfect timing, and may God lift you up in ways beyond your imagination. May God's mighty hand cover you with protection, may God's love surround you with comfort, and may God's wisdom guide your every step and bless you now and forever. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Pastor Christina Johnson, Dean, Epiphany Conference

Monday, April 7, 2025

Ruth 1:6-18

⁶Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had considered his people and given them food. ⁷So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. ⁸But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. ⁹The Lord grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband." Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. ¹⁰They said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." ¹¹But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters. Why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? ¹²Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, ¹³would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has turned against me." ¹⁴Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

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¹⁵So she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." ¹⁶But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you, to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!" ¹⁸When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

For me the story of Ruth is a story of grief but also dedication and chosen family. Ultimately Ruth's journey was a faith walk; her choice to stay with Naomi led to blessings but she didn't know this at the beginning. Her dedication to her mother-in-law was noble and generous. It is similar to the dedication of the women to Jesus in the New Testament.

Dear Lord we humbly come to you asking you to guide us and our faith and dedication this Lenten season. May we be a blessing to those who need us. In your son Jesus' name. Amen.

Joyce M. Rose-Harris, South Carolina Synod Council

Tuesday, April 8, 2025

Psalm 139:7

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths of Sheol, you are there.

Psalm 139 reminds me that there is no place God is not willing to go for me, even hell. It's a powerful thought. So, whether my day is full of peaches and roses or is the darkest day of despair, my God accompanies me there.

May you sense God's presence accompanying you in whatever today brings you. And may we be that sign of God's loving presence to those who are hurting today.

Pastor Mary Finklea, South Carolina Synod Council

Wednesday, April 9, 2025

John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease.

This simple verse is spoken by John the Baptist, answering his disciples who appear concerned that their crowd size may be dwindling, that people are starting to flock to Jesus instead. Far from being defensive, John is overjoyed. His life's purpose was to point people to Jesus; that they should find their way to him is the opposite of failure.

This verse is meaningful to me because of the way this faithful leader is willing to be de-centered from the narrative. He does not try to preserve a place of importance. He still matters to God and to his friends, and he is clear that he is not the main character of the story being written.

In Lent, we get introspective. We look within, remembering those times when we were a little too much at the center of our own decision-making. We acknowledge that we have made ourselves the primary concern, sometimes to the detriment of our neighbors. Our paths look quite a bit different when Jesus increases in our lives. We care more about those whom he loved (the ones he shows us we can love, too). We serve those whom he served. We become more like him and draw nearer to him for the strength we need for the living of these days.

We pray during this season that Christ would increase in us--individually and collectively--trusting the endless life he provides.

Pastor Gregg Hoffman, Dean, Upstate Conference

Thursday, April 10, 2025

Ruth 1:16

Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.

We admire the loyalty of Ruth to Naomi. In the midst of all that is happening in our country and world, the book of Ruth is a powerful reminder of the inclusivity and compassion throughout the Bible. There was risk in this relocation for Ruth as she was an outsider in ethnicity and religion. Still, God worked through Naomi and Ruth's relationship bringing healing in grief, and through Boaz bringing radical welcome of the foreigner and stranger. This story is a reminder that God has always been urging us to welcome the "outsider" and love our neighbors.

Pastor Megan Lineberger, South Carolina Synod Council

Friday, April 11, 2025

Isaiah 55: 10-13

¹⁰*For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,*

*giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
¹¹so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

¹²*For you shall go out in joy,
and be led back in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall burst into song,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*

¹³*Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall be to the LORD for a memorial,
for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.*

These words fill me with peace as I contemplate Christ's great trial and joyous resurrection. God's word is sure and his promises are true. The Word of God through Jesus Christ invites me to participate in joy that is so great that even mountains and hills sing and trees clap their hands. I am amazed and humbled to be part of this story.

A favorite prayer from Thomas Merton:

*My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going
I do not see the road ahead of me.*

*Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I
am actually doing so.*

But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.

And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing.

I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I'm may know nothing about it.

Therefore will I trust in you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.

I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen.

Randy Fellers, South Carolina Synod Council