



*Lenten Devotional
2018*

*Week 1
February 18-24*

*What's Your Story?
A Great Story!*



First United Methodist Church of Bella Vista
20 Boyce Drive, Bella Vista, AR 72715
479-855-1158 fax 479-855-0850
fumcbv@lovelearnlead.com
www.lovelearnlead.com
facebook.com/fumcbv

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL WRITERS

2018

It surprised me to read that that was what Jesus said to Peter when Peter rebuked him for telling everyone he (Jesus) would die. Peter was often impetuous and the verse does not tell us what Peter said after Jesus chastised him. I believe Peter was just so shocked at the news, and it was the worst possible thing Jesus could have said to his disciples. However, Jesus was telling Peter that he was looking at the coming events as humans would instead of how God was. Peter is probably thinking, “Yeah, I am human, but that doesn’t help me understand it better.” However, Jesus went even further by explaining that God’s way of the cross may well be their future, too. Those who would follow him will “deny themselves, take up the cross and follow me.” And furthermore, to save their life, they would have to lose it for Jesus’ sake.

Are you willing to do this? If you were standing among the disciples and heard what Jesus was saying, would you be willing to continue to follow him? He told them again about his impending death and with even more graphic descriptions. Can you imagine how terrible those three days with Jesus must have been for his followers? This part of the chapter of Mark is truly a great story. We need to think about this during this Lenten season. How much are we willing to hear and to act upon?

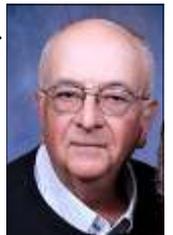
PRAYER: Father, during these 40 days, as you went into the mountains to pray, may we also take extra time to think and to pray about your upcoming death and resurrection. May we think and pray as not the humans we are, but as God’s way of thinking, however difficult that might be for us. **Amen**

Wanda Williams



Sunday—Rev. Jeanne Williams became our Senior Pastor in July of 2017. She comes to us directly from Walnut Ridge First UMC in Walnut Ridge, AR. She has been in ministry ever since her call in the 7th grade as a preacher’s kid. She loves being the mother of a kindergartner, the mountains of Northwest Arkansas, Arkansas football (even in disappointing seasons), chocolate and diet Dr. Pepper. She is excited to be able to share her Lenten inspirations with us in these devotional writings.

Monday—Alan Packard and his wife Judie moved to Bella Vista in 2007 from Wisconsin. They joined the church in September of that year. Alan has been a life-long Methodist having lived in many Midwest states from the time he was a young child. Most of the congregation knows him from his teaching the Disciple Bible Study classes and the Golden Links Sunday school class. He is past president of the United Methodist Men and currently serves as its secretary. He recently took on responsibility as Charter Organization Representative of the Boy Scouts, now that our church is a sponsor.



Tuesday—Amy Fulton (and Carole Boyd) moved to Bella Vista in December of 2002 and Amy currently works for Arvest Bank at Town Center. She’s the church photographer and is rarely seen without her camera in hand. She truly enjoys capturing the life and service of FUMCBV...a place she has called home since joining Easter of 2012. She sings on the Praise Team and enjoys cooking, reading, traveling, fishing, singing and playing musical instruments (saxophone and guitar) when she’s not busy taking pictures or involved with something having to do with photos. She has plenty of energy and has enjoyed writing since her early teens.



Wednesday—Lynn Prueitt moved to Bella Vista with husband Keith in October of 1995 from Des Moines, Iowa. They joined our church in January of 1996. In Des Moines she was a legal secretary for 29 years. After moving to Bella Vista she worked part-time for 9 years at the POA in the Membership Services Department. She sings in the choir, plays hand bells and is in the Bella Vista Women’s Chorus. She likes to walk on the Bella Vista Lake trail and she does water aerobics at the Kingsdale pool in the summer.



Lynn loves to read, cook, play Candy Crush, crochet, and visit their four children and grandchildren in Iowa, Oregon and Pittsburgh, PA.



Thursday—Alec Gilmore is currently a freshman at Bentonville High School. He and his family—consisting of his younger sister, Jenna, his parents, Amy and James, and his grandmother, Wanda Williams—have lived in northwest Arkansas on two separate occasions. They joined FUMCBV in 2009, left for South Carolina in 2012, and returned in 2015. Wanting to serve the church as much as he can, Alec is active with the Youth ministry of our church and even has a role in the media ministry. He’s combining his ever-growing passion for

writing with his strengthening connection with God to write devotionals for this season of Lent.

Friday—Sonnie Andersen I was born on an Iowa farm where my roots seem to have been established in nature, justifying my being outside...even if it is "work". When less than five, our family moved to Muscatine, Iowa; and it was there I realized my love of singing...thus my involvement yet today. In spite of my BME degree at the U of Iowa, my position in the public schools was short-lived; while Dick was establishing his engineering career, my primary role was "keeping our home" and both of us raising our children. Directing church children's choirs became important; but I realized, I was happiest when I was a part in vocal singing, whatever form that took. Sometime later, I served in a number of positions in (what was then) Christian Women's Club, leading to a surge in my walk of faith. Realizing I wasn't really honoring Dick (scripture in mind), I took the risk of asking if we might go to a marriage enrichment program. Due to its lessons on Holy Matrimony and a gentle invitation to accept Christ not only into one's life but into our marriage, God worked in a mighty way by allowing us (through United Marriage Encounter) to share our lives with many...in the USA, England and many parts of Asia...something we never dreamed we would be doing for 26 years, until we permanently moved to Bella Vista ten years ago and FUMC became our home church.



Saturday—Wanda Williams was born and raised in Colorado but has lived in Montana, South Carolina and for the fourth time in Arkansas. She has been in Human Resources over twenty years and continues to work with the hopes of retiring before too long. She loves to read, do X-stitch, and has embroidered tea towels for the UMW bazaar every year she has been here. She also loves doing creative crafts, and her granddaughter Jenna can be found in her craft room joining her in alcohol ink and melted crayola projects. She is also the proud Grammy to Alec, and Craig who lives in New Jersey. Wanda attends the Well service with her daughter, Amy, and son-in-law, James, and Alec & Jenna.

On the "lighter side" dealing with righteousness, I was amused by the writing of Pastor Jeske via an e-mail just last week based on Proverbs 15:31 "The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness". Having reached my "vintage" years and in reading these words, at first I felt stunned...I am an oddity. For some reason, my hair has maintained its brown, mousey color. Does this mean God is telling me I am far away from being righteous, my faith being too shallow? Will I be enabled to have a crown of glory? Stay tuned, God is not done with me yet!

Sonnie Andersen

Saturday, February 24, 2018

SCRIPTURE: Mark 8: 31-38 (NIV)

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God but the things of man."

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, but forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my word in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

"Get behind me Satan" is a common part of the verse that I (and probably you) have heard many times. When confronted with something sinful, we can't help but say this admonishment. During this period of Lent when we are to give up something we like, want or enjoy, it might be said quite often. When that piece of chocolate, the decadent dessert or a bottle of cola is offered and tempting us to imbibe - and that is the very thing we have decided to give up for forty days - "Get behind me Satan....and quit tempting me!" is repeated many times.

ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Submitting to Christ

Following Peter's exhortation to submit to authorities and showing them respect, he talks of the example we are to impart into our lives. He implores us to do good and do what is right...even when suffering because of doing so. (My thought: When I yield to Christ, God will use my submission for His good purposes; if and when I bear suffering, in His time, He will serve justice.)

At all times, Jesus is the example of the type of conduct that should characterize each and every Christian. I recognize, if my walk of faith bears no fruit (an example I lately committed...that of lacking respect and gentle spirit in retaliation to my spouse's words), I am lacking love and am a "noisy gong". Upon my conviction, I ask for forgiveness, not only from Dick but also, the Holy Spirit.

Though described in last week's sharing on righteousness, this scripture further says to me: We are brought to God through the righteousness we have acquired by way of Christ's death on the cross, (but, of course, conditional on asking forgiveness for our sin(s) and, in turn, accepting it).

Scripture 19 is "obscure", seeming to dwell on the supernatural...leading to various unsubstantiated interpretations which lead to a more substantial discussion on "saving water" (baptism). Peter talks about baptism symbolizing salvation, Christ's death, burial and resurrection...and our identification with Him in these experiences. A footnote (abbreviated from Romans) says: the symbol of Baptism is closely associated with faith; through faith we are united with Christ; we have now died and been raised again with Christ.

Thank You, Jesus, for convicting me of my sin and taking it with You on the cross...this very week.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, when we submit to your saving grace, we can be assured of eternal glory in Christ...thank you for Your promise! Help us to be self-controlled and alert to the call from our Savior...all the while being firm in our faith as we struggle with why we are here in "such a time as this" (at this time in history, on this earth). May we honor you by choosing to follow our Savior's footsteps. In His name we pray. **Amen.**

What's Your Story? A Great Story

**1st Sunday in Lent
Sunday, February 18, 2018**

SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:9-15 CEB

⁹ About that time, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. ¹⁰ While he was coming up out of the water, Jesus saw heaven splitting open and the Spirit, like a dove, coming down on him. ¹¹ And there was a voice from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness."

¹² At once the Spirit forced Jesus out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among the wild animals, and the angels took care of him.

¹⁴ After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God's good news,¹⁵ saying, "Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!"

Today is the first Sunday in Lent. That season where we journey with Christ to the end of his life and the beginning of ours. This scripture passage is where we find Jesus' ministry beginning. Jesus is baptized by John, is forced into the wilderness for forty days, and then goes into the streets of Galilee announcing himself.

He really did. If Jesus is God, and he's announcing God's good news, then he is announcing himself. Have you ever announced yourself as you walked into a room? "Now entering, Reverend Jeanne Williams! Listen to her!" (as I speak in the third person). It's just weird! But this is how Jesus begins his ministry.

He announces himself to the Galileans. But his announcement is more about God's kingdom arriving on earth. It's here! Now! Not in some distant future, but NOW! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!

How often do we not trust in the good news? How often do we forget that God's kingdom is here, right now? And how often do we forget that despite the daily news of terror, doom, and gloom; of exploits and immorality, the kingdom of God is here, right now? And, oh, how we need to remember that it is! Each of us has the power to remind others that there is love and goodness in this world. That the Good News has come – for all – and that we are deeply loved by God.

As we begin this Lenten season, Jesus implores you, "change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!" May it be so.

PRAYER:

God of the Universe, we thank you for the good news we received in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of your Son. May we not forget that this good news is with us here and now, every day, and that we have the power to share this good news to your people. Help us to recognize you and your work in our world. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Rev. Jeanne Williams

Monday, February 19, 2018

SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:16-20 (NKJV)

And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.

"Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

The Gospel of Mark was the first Gospel written and you will find many of Mark's stories in Matthew and Luke. The calling of the disciples is one of those stories, and all three of the synoptic gospels are quite similar. Jesus calls the fishermen to follow him and he will change their lives forever. Simon and Andrew had been followers of John, the Baptist and had known Jesus (see John 1:35-42); James and John, the sons of Zebedee, seemed to have been "new recruits".

Why did Jesus call these four men? He was a carpenter, they were fishermen – were the equals socially? Andrew and Peter had apparently been disciples of John the Baptist. James and John, accepting the call readily, seemed to have been looking for something that would change their lives. All four left their jobs and families to follow an itinerant preacher and healer not knowing where this would lead them or for how long they would be away.

They had questions but no answers. They were seeking a renewal of their faith that they could hold on to –they were seeking Messiah! In John's Gospel, Andrew (chapter 1:41) says to his brother Peter, "...we have found the Messiah", that thing which they were seeking.

move back that was supposed to be the best part of it all was actually causing me the most stress—suffering, so to speak—at one point. Somehow, somehow, though, God was telling me to be patient. I was hesitant to listen...but I did, and I'm glad I did. The reward I've been blessed with is an ever-growing connection with God through our church and congregation. It took suffering and hardship, but following the path God would have wanted me to take led to the reward, as this scripture passage explains.

The book of 1 Peter, while rather short, is all about how likely we will suffer in our Christian walk, no matter how faithful we are. These select verses—for all intents and purposes—pretty much summarize this book and this idea. We really have no reason to 'worry or be afraid' of the grief we may encounter as long as we stay fully committed to God, because he will eventually grant us a reward. I absolutely love the first verse—the question asking, "Who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good?" It's impossible to argue this because no one can really bring us down if we do the right thing. And this isn't to say we should boast about this or detest those that disagree with us. We must stay humble and respectful for our God will lead us to the right path, no matter what, and reward us for being faithful followers in Him.

PRAYER: Lord, we'd like to thank you for how committed you are to guiding us to a fruitful and prosperous life, even when we turn away in sin. Following your path isn't always the easiest for us, as it sometimes leads to pain and suffering. Help us to keep our sights on your guidance, to always appreciate Your love for us, and to lead us out of these challenges to further grow our connection with You.

In Your name we pray, **Amen.**

Alec Gilmore

Friday, February 23, 2018

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 3:18-22 (NRSV)

For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the

PRAYER: God, you have blessed us with your life-giving water. But you also remind us at times of the destruction that can be wrought by the water. You send the rainbow to remind us to appreciate the rain but also to remind us that you are in control; that you can send your wrath as well as your mercy. When we pray the prayer that your Son taught us we must remember that part of the prayer says "your will be done.". You may send mercy or wrath. We need to be prepared for either. **Amen.**

Lynn Prueitt

Thursday, February 22, 2018

SCRIPTURE: : 1 Peter 3:13-17 (NLT)

Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats. Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. Remember, it is better to suffer for doing, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong!

Doing the "right" thing can often be rather difficult, for various reasons. In a Christian context, doing the right thing often means suffering and/or some form of hardship, as this passage of scripture acknowledges. We've all definitely had those instances in which we're doing what we know is right—what God would want us to do—but we're still encountering suffering. That doesn't seem quite fair...does it?

Personally, I can align this with returning to northwest Arkansas from South Carolina. Even if it wasn't sudden or even unexpected, being uprooted to move hundreds of miles away (back to a place I had just gotten over and moved on from) was difficult, to say the least. But if there was one thing I was excited about, it was getting back into actively serving the church I had grown to love so much when we had lived here before. I was immediately getting involved once again, but something wasn't feeling quite right. While I was reconnecting with some old friends, it simply didn't seem like I was truly connecting with anyone or making an impact, despite how much I really cared about doing so. The church life element of the

How are we called to serve Christ? Are we also to be "fishers of men"? Are we called to leave everything and dedicate our lives to Jesus – or can we be "fishers of men" while staying in our normal everyday lives? Can we be "fishers of men" by serving the church? By living a Christ-like faith, following His example serving the poor, the widows and orphans, by teaching and exhibiting justice and righteousness for all not just the few, by placing God first in our lives and loving our neighbors (which includes every human who walks the earth)

Can we be "fishers of men"? YES! But it isn't easy. Think about it – what it cost Jesus, His Twelve Disciples and tens of thousands of martyrs ever since.

During this Lenten season don't just think about what you are willing to "give up". Think about what it means to be a committed follower of Jesus Christ like Andrew and Peter, and James and John.

PRAYER: Grant O Lord that Christ will call each of us to be fishers of men and that we will willingly follow. **Amen.**

Alan Packard

Tuesday, February 20, 2018

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 25: 1-10 (NKJV)

To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in You; Let me not be ashamed; Let not my enemies triumph over me. Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed; Let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause.

Show me Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all day. Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies and loving kindnesses, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions;

According to Your mercy remember me, For Your goodness sake, O Lord. Good and upright is the Lord; Therefore He teaches sinners in the way. The humble He guides in justice and humble He teaches His way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.

Wednesday, February 21, 2018

In the last 2 days, we've recounted Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist and how He began to call ordinary men (who are really no different than you and I) to come join/be with Him (trust Him). He will then help them over the course of His 3 year ministry to grow in their Faith by guiding them and teaching them (the path to follow). As they spend time with Jesus, He then prepares and equips them to do all that He did and more.

As I read this Psalm, it brought to mind a song that we use to sing from the Glory and Praise series titled, "To You, Yahweh". It is portions of this Psalm put to music. I grew up Catholic and sang in the church choir. It was then that I began to learn about the Word of God (through music). I really like(d) to read! Once a poem or lyrics are put to music, it becomes so much easier for me to remember. It is amazing the number of songs that I know (Christian and secular) and it really began with my time in the church choir. This is where I began to learn about the stories in the bible. And, this still holds true today. As I continue to use the gift of music that God gave me, I can't help but look out among the congregation and notice many folks and especially the younger kids as they sing praises to God. Whether we are aware of it or not, we are learning the Word of God and those Words of life that we sing have the power to transform us. They have the potential to mold us and make us more into the creation that God intended us to be. The same holds true for all of us. Jesus is calling us to look to Him and trust Him more and more on this Lenten journey and our earthly journey as well.

PRAYER:

God, please help us to lift our souls to You not only during this Lenten journey, but always. Help us to be mindful of the words we are singing as we worship You and even the words that we speak daily to those around us. Help us to truly learn from Your example in how to love ourselves and others. As we come to hear more about "Our Stories", I pray that we are the Body of Christ who encourages others to look to You as they live their lives. Please allow Your Holy Spirit to mold us and continue to transform us. Help us to get to know Your "Great Story" so that we can follow Your lead and example in all that we are, all that we say and all that we do. In Christ's name we pray. **Amen!**

Amy O. Fulton

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 9:8-17 (Contemporary English Version)

Again, God said to Noah and his sons: I am going to make a solemn promise to you and to everyone who will live after you. This includes the birds and the animals that came out of the boat. I promise every living creature that the earth and those living on it will never again be destroyed by a flood. The rainbow that I have put in the sky will be my sign to you and to every living creature on earth. It will remind you that I will keep this promise forever. When I send clouds over the earth, and a rainbow appears in the sky, I will remember my promise to you and to all other living creatures. Never again will I let floodwaters destroy all life. When I see the rainbow in the sky I will always remember the promise that I have made to every living creature. The rainbow will be the sign of that solemn promise.

God made an amazing covenant with every living creature. God sent a flood to destroy the world because of the wickedness of the world. Matthew Henry's Commentary says "But God, by flowing seas and sweeping rains, shows what he could do in wrath; and yet, by preserving the earth from being deluged between both, shows what he can do in mercy and will do in truth." God showed his mercy in the midst of his wrath by sending the rainbow as a covenant with man.

I have often wondered about the covenant of the rainbow. Because there are floods and people and animals still die. As I re-read the scripture it does not say he will never bring another flood. He says "never again will I let floodwaters destroy all life." We do not always see a rainbow after a rain, but when we do we are in awe. "Look, a rainbow!" God is saying to us that he loves us and we are safe and secure because of his covenant.

Water is used throughout the Bible, not just as a force of destruction but as life giving water to sustain us. We lived in Des Moines in 1993 when flood waters destroyed the water works and flooded the metro area. We were not able to go to work for a week because there was no water in the area to drink, bathe, flush toilets, wash clothes or dishes. We received our drinking water at the HyVee Grocery Store parking lot. We had to be conservative with our water and imaginative. I actually stood on the back deck and washed my hair in heavy rainwater that was still falling because my mother always told me rainwater was good for my hair. We appreciated clean drinking water even more after experiencing the flood of '93. We were also more aware of the destruction that came about from flood waters.