



*Lenten Devotional
2018*

*Week 6
Palm Sunday—Easter Sunday*

*What's Your Story?
Joseph Finds a New Identity*



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LENTEN DEVOTIONAL WRITERS

2018

Palm Sunday—Rev. Brenda Wideman is our Associate Pastor of Congregational Care. She is a former teacher and IT administrator at the UofA and lives in Fayetteville. She received a calling to ministry in 2008 and has recently completed the ordination process. She will be ordained as a deacon on June 19, 2018 at our Annual Conference in Hot Springs.



Easter 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.



Nothing is as it seems.

Jesus, her Teacher, had warned his disciples many times over of the death he must die and how that he would not leave his followers alone, yet, when it truly happened, they panic. They are crushed. And they can't comprehend the reality of it all.

And neither can we. Really. We can't. It is the greatest mystery I have ever been told. The most unbelievable mystery I've ever been told. And it is the foundation of our faith. How will you react to it? Will you be like Simon Peter and the other disciple and walk away puzzled and scared? Will you be like Mary Magdalene who wept at the tomb but upon learning her Lord was indeed alive ran to announce it to the other disciples?

We are Easter People. We know the end of the story. And it is our mission to share this good news with all the world – just like Mary Magdalene, and eventually the other disciples.

EASTER PRAYER: Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!
Amen!

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she replied, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him."

Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabbouni" (which means Teacher).

Jesus said to her, "Don't hold on to me, for I haven't yet gone up to my Father. Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them, 'I'm going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, "I've seen the Lord." Then she told them what he said to her.

We know this passage. We read it, or another similar to it, every year on this day. The tomb is empty! He has risen! *WE* know this already when we read it, but think for a minute how Mary and the two disciples felt when this happened to them. Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb to see that the stone, the stone that takes several grown men to move, has been rolled away. She immediately runs back to Simon Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved to tell them that "they've" taken away their Lord and she doesn't know where they've taken him. The two disciples run – they don't just go – they RUN to the tomb. And they see exactly what Mary Magdalene told them: Jesus is gone. The burial linens are there, but Jesus is not. Simon Peter and the other disciple leave the tomb while Mary stays. Once they leave, she bends down into the tomb to see two angels sitting where Jesus' body had been laying.

So here's where I pause. Why didn't the angels show up for the other two disciples? Why did they only show up for Mary? These are the types of things that should make us pause and wonder. And it wasn't just the two angels that appeared for Mary, it was also Jesus. Why didn't he appear for the two other disciples, either? Were they just hanging out waiting for the right time? Were they busy talking to God the Father? Or is there a reason that Jesus wanted to reveal himself to Mary Magdalene first? We don't really have those answers. But isn't it awesome that we can even ask these questions of scripture!

Let's skip ahead a bit to where Jesus tells Mary to not hold on to him as he has yet to return to the Father in heaven. I can't imagine the heart-wrenching grief of seeing her beloved Teacher be killed in a most horrific way only to then find the tomb empty, run to her friends for help, who are just as perplexed as she is, and then to see Jesus – her beloved Teacher – alive. She must think at first she has gone crazy.

Thursday—Austin Curtis is our Director of Youth Ministries. Austin is no stranger to youth and church ministry. He graduated from Elkins High School in northwest Arkansas, earned his Bachelors in Sports Ministry at Campbellsville University, and received his Masters of Divinity from Liberty University. Austin has served in various capacities as a youth pastor and YMCA Site Director from 2003-2012. Currently, Austin also serves as the Associate Pastor of Sulphur City Baptist Church and is the chaplain for C. I. Solutions. He is married to Amber, and they have an adorable 3 year old daughter named Elizabeth. Austin brings a passion for youth ministry and an infectious love of Jesus Christ to his commitment to our youth and to our church family.



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.



What's Your Story? Joseph Finds a New Identity

Palm Sunday
Sunday, March 25, 2018

SCRIPTURE: SCRIPTURE: John 12:12-16 (NRSV)

The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting,

“Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!”

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written:

“Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him.

‘Hero’ Jesus

As we watch another March Madness season, we faithfully follow those teams which we expect to be the winners in the NCAA Tournament. We hold pep rallies and parades to celebrate the greatness we expect will soon follow. They are our ‘heroes’, or at least they are until they don’t meet our expectations. After things don’t turn out as we thought they would, we turn away and look for different heroes who we feel are worthy of our loyalty. They just didn’t meet our expectations even if there had been predictions of greatness.

In the scripture above, it is the celebration of the Jewish Passover in Jerusalem. It was the custom for Jews to gather from far and wide to celebrate Passover together. Stories of the greatness of Jesus had spread throughout the land and the crowd heard that Jesus was coming. Jesus was expected to be the Messiah, the anointed one, the King who would come to save the Jewish people. The crowd spread palm branches as a symbol of triumph and victory.

Jesus entered into Jerusalem with all the pomp and circumstance of a hero. Or did he? Well there was a parade, but kings are expected to arrive on stallions amidst throngs of soldiers wearing armor and helmets and carrying swords – all symbols of their might and power. In this world, a king should be mighty in battle and show it. But Jesus entered on a donkey’s colt, a donkey’s colt, really? A donkey’s colt, a symbol of humility and meekness was his ride. Maybe this was not the hero, the ‘real’ king, he certainly did not meet the crowd’s expectations.

upon our present. This hope is the ultimate fulfillment of the claim that as we have died with Christ we will also live with him.

It appears that the overall question of the chapter is, “Shall we continue in sin?” Well, (as the kids say) “DUH!” We do not have to sin anymore. If we truly believe in Christ, in God and in our redemption, we can try (notice I said “try”) to live sin-free. Jesus was crucified to forgive our sins and we can continue to strive for that perfection God wants, but knowing we are human, he forgives us our imperfections.

PRAYER: Our Father, as your prayer teaches us, forgive us our sins as we forgive others theirs. Help us to try to be sin free and do what is good, right, and perfect. But since we are not perfect, give us the will and strength to continue to emulate you and live our lives as you would. **Amen.**

Wanda Williams

Easter Sunday
Sunday, April 1, 2018

SCRIPTURE: John 20:1-18 (CEB)

Early in the morning of the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. She ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they’ve put him.” Peter and the other disciple left to go to the tomb. They were running together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and was the first to arrive at the tomb. Bending down to take a look, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he didn’t go in. Following him, Simon Peter entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. He also saw the face cloth that had been on Jesus’ head. It wasn’t with the other clothes but was folded up in its own place. Then the other disciple, the one who arrived at the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. They didn’t yet understand the scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying.

Mary stood outside near the tomb, crying. As she cried, she bent down to look into the tomb. She saw two angels dressed in white, seated where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and one at the foot. The angels asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

She replied, “They have taken away my Lord, and I don’t know where they’ve put him.” As soon as she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn’t know it was Jesus.

PRAYER: Lord of Lords and King of Kings, here we are at the darkest day in all humankind. **You did it...**You broke our night into day. Heavenly Father, we wonder at Your patience...at Your grace...at the amazing plan You put into place at the onset of creation. You, and You only, provided the means of saving me...you...all others upon acceptance in the heart, admitting our sin(s) and accepting forgiveness. But You don't let us sit at the foot of the cross. You challenge us pick it up...to "change", to find the reason we are here on this earth, but especially to touch the lives of others in such a way...they, too, will take up the cross that leads to life eternal. **Amen**

Sonnie Andersen

Saturday, March 31, 2018

SCRIPTURE: Romans 6:1-11 (NIV)

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him, For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Well, Paul said a mouthful in these verses. Writing to the church in Rome, he summarizes what he has been preaching about sin, Christ, and the way of salvation. Everything we need to know about God's great plan for redemption is included in Romans. Chapter six depicts the power we have in our everyday life to live in ways that are faithful to God. But, do we?

I hate to lump myself in with all Christians, but I feel like even though I try to live a sin-free life, I fail every day, as most of us do. I may think I am sin free, but what about the things I think to myself every day about the drivers I am on the road with Monday through Friday to Springdale? I don't imagine Jesus would think the same thoughts. What about the irritations at my co-worker? WWJD? He for sure wouldn't act as frustrated as I do over her actions and language.

If you look closely in Romans 6:1-11, you will see that the verbs referring to Christ are consistently past tense. But the verbs referring to our new life are regularly in the future tense (we shall be united, we will live with him). Thus, New Testament scholars will often argue that Paul is intentionally hedging here: we can only say that we have died with Christ, not that his resurrection intrudes

The scripture says, "The disciples did not understand these things ..." If anyone should have understood, it was the disciples; they had travelled with him and heard his teachings for three years. This was not the hero that even the disciples had expected, in spite of what the scriptures of old may have predicted.

And so today, what kind of hero do **we** expect Jesus should be? Will Jesus meet conventional definitions of a hero, a king? Or will he give us a new perspective, a perspective that turns the understanding of heroics upside down, a perspective that values the humble and the meek, a perspective that parades in the face of our worldly values of power and might and victory? Stayed tuned this week for the rest of the story...

PRAYER: Holy Jesus, you said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Help us to trust in you. Even though in our perspective we may not yet understand, help us to take heart knowing you have overcome this world. **Amen.**

Rev. Brenda Wideman

**Holy Week—6th Week in Lent
Monday, March 26, 2018**

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 41:46-57 (NKJV)

Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. Now in the seven plentiful years the ground brought forth abundantly. So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them. Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for it was immeasurable.

And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." ⁵² And the name of the second he called Ephraim: ¹"For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended, and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do." The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt. So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all lands.

Joseph's story – Part 3

Continuing Joseph's story, he is now thirty years of age (thirteen years have passed since he was sold by his brothers), and married to an Egyptian woman. He has interpreted a dream for Pharaoh and been placed in charge of all of Egypt in order that they may survive the seven years of famine that the dream predicts. The dream also predicted that there would be seven good years before the seven years of famine.

During the seven good years Joseph traveled the land and saw to the storage of the excesses that would provide for the people during the famine. He also fathered two sons with his Egyptian wife – Manasseh and Ephraim. You might recognize the names of the two boys, they became the leaders of two of the most powerful of the twelve tribes of Israel.

When the seven years of famine came, it affected the entire known world. Only Egypt had grain to sell and all peoples of the world came to Joseph to buy grain to save their lives. So Joseph had once again used God's help to better himself and his adopted people. Later in the story we will see Joseph help his people Israel also, and reunite with his family.

But that is the "rest of the story" to be told at a later time.

PRAYER: Grant O Lord, that we, like Joseph, may place our complete trust in You and seek always to do what is right in Your eyes, that we might reap the benefits of our faithfulness to You. That we might prosper in doing right for others and not thinking only of ourselves. **Amen.**

Alan Packard

Tuesday, March 27, 2018

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 41: 25-36 (TLB)

"Both dreams mean the same thing," Joseph told Pharaoh. "God was telling you what he is going to do here in the land of Egypt. The seven fat cows (and also the seven fat, well-formed heads of grain) mean that there are seven years of prosperity ahead. The seven skinny cows (and also the seven thin and withered heads of grain) indicate that there will be seven years of famine following the seven years of prosperity.

So God has showed you what he is about to do; The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout all the land of Egypt; but afterwards there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten and wiped out; famine will consume the land. The famine will be so terrible that even the memory of the good years will be erased. The double dream gives double impact, showing that what I have told you is certainly going to happen, for God has decreed it, and it is going to happen soon. My suggestion is that you find the wisest man in Egypt and put him in charge of administering a nation-wide farm program. Let Pharaoh divide Egypt into five administrative districts, and let the officials of these districts gather into the royal storehouses all the excel crops of the next seven years, so that there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come. Otherwise, disaster will surely strike."

"They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." Therefore the soldiers did these things.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

Of note in these scriptures: Crucified between two "others" (criminals or thieves) was perhaps meant as an insult, but it brings out one important truth that, in his death...**Jesus was identified with sinners!** The placard fastened to the cross, which those passing by, read, "Jesus of Nazareth, **The King of the Jews**" (in three languages). In spite of protesting by the Jewish high priests wanting a change in the wording, Pilate adamantly refused.

John's gospel includes many Old Testament prophesies...fulfilled by the death of Jesus, the Messiah. The one found here in John's text (verse 24) is quoted from Psalm 22, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing". Common practice for executioners to receive garments of a crucified man, the reason for the casting of lots is that the tunic was seamless, thus too valuable to be cut up.

Further reading proves John to be near the cross when he names four women, Jesus's mother Mary, her sister (probably Salome), Mary wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene as being there also. Not in our passage, verse 26 provides additional proof of his location where he identifies himself only by, "the disciple whom He (Jesus) loved" standing beside her (Jesus' mother).

(Personal poem, surely divinely inspired, by Sonnie years ago, never shared nor corrected until recently, but I think great for this devotional.)

For meditation:

I've no great understanding of what You've done, might be.
I only know Your blessed Son hung there, on Calv'ry's tree...
To dash the power of Satan's reign, to live in liberty,
To grant the grace of pardoning, so I might dwell with Thee.

I do not know the suffering done...such pain...such agony.
I only know Your gracious love was loosed so bounteously...
To rouse the mind to consciousness, to live in purity,
To stay mankind from sin's offense and live eternally.

I have no way of knowing...just trusting faithfully,
With, but a sense of magnitude, of what You've done for me...
To bear the weight of man's disgrace, to die so valiantly,
To pave the way to heaven's gate...Christ's road to victory.

I do not know, I cannot tell Your plan of mystery.
I only sense Your mighty power, t'was done on Calvary...
To bind us all from Satan's power, to live in loyalty,
To stir the hearts of humankind...for all eternity.

giving his disciples a teaching moment at the time of not only how to be a servant but what was also to come, His death. His disciples were perplexed and did not understand what their Master was doing. This one act of Servanthood would open the eyes of His disciples then and the ones to come.

You see Christ was showing His disciples that no matter how dirty their SOULS were He would make them clean with an act of servanthood and sacrifice. The soles their feet represented the SOULS inside them. They were dirty, tainted with sin. Just as Jesus washed their feet clean, He would also wipe their sins away with His death. The disciples were so confused and embarrassed as well. Christ told them, you will not understand now, but you will.

Take a moment to try and put this into perspective, here you have a group of men that have been traveling with Jesus daily. They follow Him everywhere He went. He was their Master and they were His servants, but now the roles were switched. Think of it this way. As a child your parents take care of you because you don't know how to truly take care of yourself, but as your parents get much older and weak the roles reverse. It is one of the most humbling responsibilities in life. Christ in this moment was putting himself lower than low, but to show two things. One that you are never in such a role you can't serve, but more importantly All things can be new with sacrifice.

PRAYER: Savior Jesus, Easter Sunday is approaching. As we celebrate the day where you conquered the grave, let us not forget also the lessons taught to Your disciples. That no matter how dirty the "SOUL" is, it can always be made clean, as long as a YOU are present. **Amen.**

Austin Curtis

Good Friday Friday, March 30, 2018

SCRIPTURE: John 19:16-25 The Crucifixion (NKJV)

Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was:

JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS

Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'He said, "I am the King of the Jews."'"

Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be," that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says:

God is about to do a mighty thing in Joseph's life and we know that God is about to do something miraculous in Jesus' life too. Today is Tuesday and Friday is surely coming too, but Sunday is on the way. As we are immersed and witness the events of Holy Week and we watch them unfold, maybe we will do so with a little more personal awareness as we've been hearing some of our stories of faith this Lenten series. Let us not forget that we are "Easter and Resurrection People" too. God is still in the miracle making business. He can still take what seems like a hopeless situation (as the disciples, His mother and others watch in horror the scene of the crucifixion) and transform it into what seems impossible. Nothing really compares to that pain He suffered for us. And, when we find ourselves in the deepest valleys and trust me, we will find ourselves in some very low spots in life, and feel as though God has abandoned us - He is still there.

We must keep looking up to the cross and beyond that so that we can experience the triumphant power of Christ's resurrection. God can take the weak and the willing and make our lives victorious. We've seen this in both Joseph's and Jesus' lives. He is in the transformation business. When we experience bondage, shackles and prisons, God is there ready to transform and resurrect and shape us into the persons He is calling us to be. Are you ready for the transformation? I pray you can say "Yes"!!!

PRAYER: God, help us to look up to You...the source of all comfort, love, peace, joy, solace, compassion, transformation, trust and the list goes on and on...as you write our stories individually and collectively at FUMCBV. Praise God!

Amy O. Fulton

Wednesday, March 28, 2018

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 41:37-45 (CEV)

The king and his officials liked this plan. So the king said to them, "Who could possibly handle this better than Joseph? After all, the Spirit of God is with him."

The king told Joseph, "God is the one who has shown you these things. No one else is as wise as you are or knows as much as you do. I'm putting you in charge of my palace, and everybody will have to obey you. No one will be over you except me. You are now governor of all Egypt!"

Then the king took off his royal ring and put it on Joseph's finger. He gave him fine clothes to wear and placed a gold chain around his neck. He also let him ride in the chariot next to his own, and people shouted, "Make way for Joseph!" So Joseph was governor of Egypt.

The king told Joseph, "Although I'm king, no one in Egypt is to do anything without your permission." He gave Joseph the Egyptian name Zaphenath Paneah. And he let him marry Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, a priest in the city of Heliopolis. Joseph traveled all over Egypt.

Joseph is made Governor over Egypt

Joseph's story is amazing for the fact that he went from a slave to Governor of Egypt. Of course he wasn't born into slavery but his slavery was the dirty work of his older brothers. Pharaoh gave Joseph a great honor. Joseph had suffered for many years but was now being honored for his long suffering. Pharaoh was good to Joseph, but God was the ultimate giver of good gifts, just as he is today.

There are people throughout our history who have risen to greatness from humble beginnings, poverty, mistreatment, abandonment and many other depravities in their early lives. We say, how can one person who has lived through such a horrible early life rise to such great achievements? And how can another person who was raised in the same way not achieve greatness? Or how can another person who has been raised with all the comforts end up in such a lowly state?

Joseph was a rather brazen and self-centered young man, bragging to his brothers I'm sure on more than one occasion. But Joseph was greatly humbled during his years of slavery and imprisonment. He had to cast off his self-centeredness to become a servant. What a comeuppance! But God saw through the brazen young man, staying by his side and giving him wisdom in his dreams. Being able to interpret dreams is not a gift that we encounter often and not one we would consider for greatness. But Joseph lived in a different time.

The story of Joseph is a reminder to all of us that we can achieve greatness with God by our side. Perhaps we will not become a Governor, but we can become great in small ways within our families and friends and in our churches. All we need is God by our side and in our hearts because God is good, and we can be good because of our belief in Him.

PRAYER: God of goodness and mercy, stand beside us, walk with us, surround us with your presence. We ask for humbleness so that we can achieve greatness. Entwine our lives with yours and may your spirit be in us. **Amen**

Lynn Prueitt

Maundy Thursday
Thursday, March 29, 2018

SCRIPTURE: John 13:1-17 31b-35 (CEB)

Before the Festival of Passover, Jesus knew that his time had come to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them fully.

Jesus and his disciples were sharing the evening meal. The devil had already provoked Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew the Father had given everything into his hands and that he had come from God and was returning to God. So he got up from the table and took off his robes. Picking up a linen towel, he tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he was wearing. When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You don't understand what I'm doing now, but you will understand later."

"No!" Peter said. "You will never wash my feet!"

Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't have a place with me."

Simon Peter said, "Lord, not only my feet but also my hands and my head!"

Jesus responded, "Those who have bathed need only to have their feet washed, because they are completely clean. You disciples are clean, but not every one of you."

He knew who would betray him. That's why he said, "Not every one of you is clean."

After he washed the disciples' feet, he put on his robes and returned to his place at the table. He said to them, "Do you know what I've done for you? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you speak correctly, because I am. If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example: Just as I have done, you also must do. I assure you, servants aren't greater than their master, nor are those who are sent greater than the one who sent them. Since you know these things, you will be happy if you do them.

Jesus said, "Now the Human One has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify the Human One in himself and will glorify him immediately. Little children, I'm with you for a little while longer. You will look for me—but, just as I told the Jewish leaders, I also tell you now—'Where I'm going, you can't come.'

"I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other."

One of the greatest acts of service ever known is portrayed in this passage. You see back then the dirtiest place on a person was their feet. Every one for the most part walked everywhere. The sole of a persons' foot were worn, cracked, dirty, and just down right gross to be honest. Christ at this point was