

March is Women's History Month

Depending upon the calendar year March usually encompasses all or part of the 40 Day Season of Lent.

This year the Lenten Season encompasses all of March and celebrates St. Patrick's Day and the 1st Day of Spring!

In our Revised Common Lectionary, Psalm 121 is the first Psalter reading for March 5, 2023. This is one of my favorite Scripture verses because when I was surrounded by hopelessness and despair, I experienced help from the Lord. Verses 1 and 2 read...

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." KJV

Wow! So what does this all tell me?

That we are all to be mindful that our every need can be supplied by the Lord. The Lord who made all things can supply all things!

That we can celebrate the achievements of all, and the work women can do and have done can be celebrated.

That the history of St. Patrick's includes the concept of the Holy Trinity from a 3-leaf clover. It, also, reminds us that Lent is a time for self-reflection, self-denial, and discipline. It gives us the opportunity to draw closer to God. It is a time to make sacrifices so that we understand, are mindful, and always appreciative of the Sacrifice of Jesus, God's only Son, our Lord!

And did I mention... the 1st Sunday in the Lectionary for March includes John 3:16!

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." KJV

So in summary for March...

- **Revere, know, and lean on God**
- **Honor and learn of the achievements of women**
- **Celebrate Spring**
- **Be proud of our church name**
- **Remember God's sacrifice and**
- **Rejoice in the Lord always**

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Pastor Jessica



Order Your Easter Lilies!



The deadline to order lilies is March 12. The cost is \$8.00 a plant. Orders can be given in

honor or in memory of your loved ones and will be used to beautify our sanctuary on Easter Sunday. Place your money and wording you want in the Easter bulletin into the pew envelope (or similar) and put the envelope into the Easter flower box in the back of the sanctuary or send it to the church office with the designation "Easter Lilies". Also be sure to indicate whether you will be taking your flower home after the Easter Worship Service.



Daylight Saving Time begins **March 12 at 2:00 AM.** **Don't forget to set your clocks 1 hour ahead!**

The biggest team with the biggest score that emerged from the Super Bowl, at least in our area, were the 236 churches in the Eastern PA and Greater New Jersey conferences that together reported collecting over 74,000 pounds of food to help fight hunger in their communities. Here at Trinity, Souper Sunday netted 61 containers of soup for Lebanon County Christian Ministries!



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

02Joyce Dissinger 21.....Jim Allwein
 07.....Caroline Jacobs 21Carol Hollich
 11.....Barb Wallett 26.....Dave Wallett
 14.....Dea Kishpaugh



Welcome to Trinity's Lenten Challenge

40-DAY
 "LOVE BUILDS UP"
 CHURCH FAMILY
 CHALLENGE



Over the 40 days of Lent we invite you to be a part of our Church Family challenge & read **Love Builds Up...** an inspirational Lenten devotional, recommended by your Pastor, Jessica Lynn Ross and your Visitation Minister, Reverend Rick Clark.

Plan to make it a part of your 2023 Lenten season and join us as we come together as a Church Family to rise to this 40 Day Lenten Challenge from SALT. The reading material is available in a variety of formats – read the EBook version mailed on-line, download it to your Kindle, or pick-up a print copy at the Church!

Sometimes we need a little help with what we endeavor to “give up” for Lent. SALT teamed up with Rev. Quinn Caldwell to develop this resource for individual families and church families. The Journey we embark upon together will help us “grow in” our faith as we draw closer to God and one another.

Throughout the Lenten weekdays we will work on a weekly challenge and on Sunday include time to read the passage for that day as a part of our Sunday Worship Service. At the end of Worship, we will all join in the Parlor and take the opportunity to delve into each challenge as a church family. And together we will commit to taking on an action or practice for that week and then share our experiences during the next Sunday Fellowship time.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jessica

Date Liturgist

Mar. 5 - Barb Querry
 Mar. 12 - Dea Kishpaugh
 Mar. 19 - Karen Neblock
 Mar. 27 - Rev. Richard Clark



If you are unable to serve as lay reader, please call... 717-838-2812



Holy Week Worship

- Palm Sunday, April 2nd, Sticking with tradition we will sing the, **The Palms**.
- Tenebrae Service (Light to Dark) and Holy Communion on Thursday, April 6th (7:00 pm).
- Noon, Good Friday, April 7th - combined UMC service with a combined Choir at **Trinity**. Come and worship with the other UMC congregations who will be joining us.
- Easter Sunrise Service, April 9th (6:30 am) - Coleman's Park
- Easter Worship Service, April 9th (9:15 am). The church will be adorned with Easter lilies and an empty cross!

You are invited to a Munchin' Methodists Luncheon on March 3



We will gather at the Vo Tech Center at 10:30 on Friday, March 3rd for a 50's themed lunch. Please let Sally DeJesus know if you wish to go. We have a reservation for 12 people. So it's first come, first served. You may order from the menu or pay \$14.00 for the buffet which includes a salad bar, soups, entrees, and dessert bar.



Keep saving those used postage stamps for the Brethren Home. Include the postmark, or better yet — just include ½ the envelope! They will then prep the stamps to sell! Thanks!

Our Church Prayer

Dear Lord,
We love you and we praise your Holy Name.
Help us to be an obedient church. Help us to love one another, reach out with love to the needy and oppressed. We pray for strength to continue the work you have called us to do. Help us to reach out as we reach up to you. By your mercy grant us healing, compassion, and strength to do your blessed will for ourselves, our families, our community, our conference, & our world. In the Name of Jesus our Lord and Savior we pray. Amen.



In Our Thoughts & Prayers

Jim & Betsy Allwein The Baron family
Jill Brickley Brossman family
Penny Brown Judy Derr
Gail Emerich Joan Groff
Kim Hollich Caroline Jacobs & family
Wilson Justiniano Steve Miller & family
Joshua Mullins Karen & Bob Neblock
Linda Perini Alissa Plant
Marilyn Smith Snyder family
Pat Swartz Brandi Tamayo
Joyce Twigg Reba Sterner family
Judith Wentzel Wire family
Carol Yeagley Dave Wease & family
George Wilkins family Walt & Kathy Zehring
Traveling mercies for all those on the road
Our Church, Community, Country, and World
Families & recovering victims of crime & abuse
All who are sick & shut in & their caretakers
All those devastated by natural disasters
Issues surrounding Turkey & the Ukraine
Our men and women in uniform

PASTOR'S DISCRETIONARY FUND



Each month the pastor is asked to help members of Trinity or the community as they go through difficult times. Gifts placed into a pew envelope and marked "Discretionary Fund" is one way you can support this special fund. Please consider helping those in need!



Add your Voice

Carol Hollich asks that anyone wishing to sing in the Combined Choir on Good Friday and/or the regular choir on Easter Sunday... please come to the rehearsals at the church on Tuesdays, March 28 and April 4 at 1:30 p.m. We moved rehearsals to daytime hours, so no one has to drive at night!



COME JOIN OUR
BIBLE Study
Rev. Rick Clark's Bible study takes place via zoom every Thursday at 10:30 am. The Lenten Study is "Luke: **Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outlaws**" by Adam Hamilton. If you wish to have this book for the sessions, please contact Rev. Rick at 717-272-0350 or capnrac@aol.com. Pastor Jessica leads our Wednesday evening Bible Study at 6:30. Her group is studying the Book of Revelation.

Altar Flowers



One of Trinity's on-going ministries is our Floral Ministry that takes care of beautifying the sanctuary throughout the year with flowers and plants. This ministry is headed by Donna Mease who arranges for the delivery and selection of altar flowers contributed by members of our church family and others wishing to place flowers in the sanctuary. To order altar flowers in honor or in memory of a loved one, contact Donna Mease at 717-865-2413. The cost is \$30.00 for the arrangements on both sides of the altar. You can also speak with Donna to order a basket, different arrangement, or bringing in your own flowers.

Adult Sunday School – March



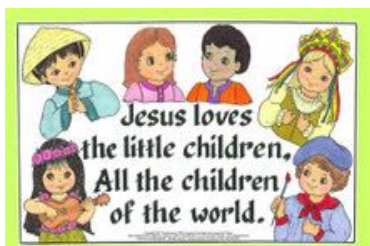
The theme of our adult Sunday School lessons this Spring is **JESUS CALLS US**. This month we will talk about topics that focus on those **“Called from the Margins of Society”**. In our time together we will explore some of the most basic principles of the Christian faith: 1) That Christ’s invitation is open to *all* people; 2) That his resurrection changed everything; 3) And that those who put their faith in Jesus and anticipate their own resurrections are Jesus’ chosen community. These truths should influence our daily life and what it means to live as a Christian in a world focused on material wealth. Our March discussions will question whether or not we are showing these principles to all those we meet.

March 5
March 12
March 19
March 26

The Prodigal Son
The Greatest in the Kingdom
Jesus Talks with a Samaritan
Jesus Overpowers Legion

Luke 15:11–24
Matthew 18:1–9
John 4:7–15, 28–30, 39–41
Mark 5:1–13, 18–20

How often are we unable to hear God’s call, to perceive God’s choice, because we are blinded by our own incomplete knowledge and dependence on self? Our March lessons encourage us to examine our hearts and motives to see who we are excluding from the kingdom. In our discussions we will look at scriptures in which Jesus disregarded artificial societal barriers, and chose instead to include people on the margins.



Emotions, biases, and ignorance often stand in the way of accepting people as Jesus did; but the welcome of the prodigal son in Jesus’ parable sets the scene for all sorts of surprising people who can find their place in the kingdom of Heaven. Humble children, foreigners, women, and even the formerly demon-possessed are accepted in Jesus’ community.

Jesus had a particular concern for the little people, for the so-called nobodies in the world. Luke records Jesus’s love for those who are neglected by the rich and the powerful. The influential are identified by C. S. Lewis as “the inner ring”—those who walk in the corridors of power. But Jesus was concerned about the “outer ring”—those who lack social prestige and influence. We, however, are often inclined to give our attention to those with influence and power, to praise those who wield influence in the world and to follow those who are celebrated in society.

Throughout the Gospels Jesus shows concern for those who were excluded by Jewish society. Jesus tells us that the poor are blessed and at the end time blessings will belong to Lazarus, rather than the rich man who lived a life fit for kings. Similarly, the birth of Jesus was revealed by angels to shepherds who weren’t from the elite in Israelite society. Believers throughout history have often reflected on how unexpected it was that humble shepherds were told about the birth of the king of the world.

Jesus had mercy on the lowest of the low in Jewish society, casting out demons from the demonized and healing lepers and the blind. The demonized were avoided by all since they were anti-social, troubled, and disturbing. People probably thought they were forsaken by God and that there was no hope for them. But Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. During his ministry, Jesus saw every person and every person mattered to him, and they should matter to us as well. So, join us in March as we discuss those **“Called from the Margins of Society”**.



March 5

1. Which son asked for a portion of the father’s estate? (older son, younger son, stepson) *Luke 15:12*
2. When the son returned to his father’s house, the father ran to him. T/F *Luke 15:20*

March 12

1. The disciples asked, “Who is the _____ in the kingdom of heaven?” *Matthew 18:1*
2. Jesus told the disciples that unless they became like little children, they would never enter the kingdom of Heaven. T/F *Matthew 18:3*

March 19

1. The Samaritan woman asked if Jesus was “greater than” whom? (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob?) *John 4:12*
2. Jesus promised that he gave water “welling up to _____ life.” *John 4:14*

March 26

1. The man with an impure spirit lived “in the _____.” *Mark 5:3*
2. The spirits left the man and went into a herd of goats. T/F *Mark 5:13*

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL MEETING *Minutes – February 13, 2023 via ZOOM*



Facilitator - George Hollich

Minutes - Carol Hollich (*summary to appear in the March Trinity Times*)

Attendance - Gloria Clark, Sally DeJesus, Joyce Dissinger, Keith Earle, Elmer Fair, Kitty Fair, Carol Hollich, George Hollich, Dea Kishpaugh, Jack Kishpaugh, Barb Querry, Pastor Jessica Ross, Marilyn Smith, Reba Sterner, Dave Wallett, and Barb Wallett

Housekeeping – Attendance, Approval of Past Minutes & Agenda

Devotions & Prayer – Discerning What Discipleship Means by Karoline Lewis
“Sir,” the woman said, “Where can you get this living water?”

Calendar Dates that Reflect our Ministry - other than the 9:15 In-Person Worship - the 9:15 Streamed Worship Service & Committee meetings will be held via ZOOM, unless other arrangements are announced.

February 22 - Ash Wednesday Service at Good Shepherd UMC (7:00)

March 1, 8, 15, 22, & 29 – Lunch and Lenten services has been changed to a Lenten booklet that will be mailed to our congregation either by email or regular mail. That will include readings for each day instead of weekly Wednesday worship services at the Church. It was suggested that we have discussion about the readings on Sunday mornings during the Sunday School time.

March 3 – Lunch at Vo Tech (Fabulous 50's) (10:30) (12 people)

March 29 – Staff Parish (7:00)

March 30 – Worship Team (7:00)

April 2 - Palm Sunday

April 6 - Tenebrae Service (7:00)

April 7 – Good Friday Community Service at Trinity (12:00)

April 9 - Sunrise service at Coleman's Park (6:30) (last pavilion near large parking lot) Breakfast at McDonald's afterwards

April 9 - Easter Service at Trinity (9:15)

April 10 – Ad Board (7:00)

April 12 – Fellowship Lunch at Revive Café, 65 W. Main Street, Lebanon (in Quentin near Quentin Tavern (12:00)

April 30 – Free Lunch for our Congregation and the Community (11:00 to 1:00) – Working on the details



Discussion - Current or Emerging Projects that Clarify Our Ministry

- **Bible Studies** – Rev. Rick Clark's Lenten Bible Study will begin on Thursday, February 23, at 10:30. We will be studying the Adam Hamilton book entitled *Luke: Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outlaws*. Pastor Jessica's Bible Studies will continue Wednesday evenings at 6:30 on the book of Revelation. Sunday School will be at 10:30 each Sunday and is entitled "Jesus Calls Us" but will be supplemented with discussions on the Lenten Devotional Booklet.
- **Church Statistical Report** – This report is in the church office and will be pretty much the same as last year since we have had our new pastor for about a half a year. We will update all numbers for the year 2023. It was noted that the amount given to UMC requests last year was \$645 and our Mission giving to non-UMC charities was \$1408. This was an increase of \$564 over last year! Praise the Lord!
- **Communications** – Gloria Clark reported on the January visits to the website and face book page. We had approximately 58 visits to the website and 190 views from 13 states. We need to update our "Ministry Team" information since this is one of the pages that received the most views. People, also, looked at the newsletter, the history, and Sunday School information. On Facebook, there were 59 views, mostly looking at the worship service, bulletin, or Bible Study. Pastor Jessica suggested that the Trinity congregation visit our Facebook page and check the "like us" box. It was, also, felt that we should send the weekly worship service YouTube link to the congregation so they could see the service, if they were not able to be with us on a Sunday morning..
- **Clothes-to-Go** – Barb Querry is getting a group of women together to pack up the clothes to give to Jubilee and Salvation Army. We have already given to LCCM a lot of their needed items of clothes. There may be a few items kept for people coming into the church for help.
- **Flood Buckets** – Dea Kishpaugh will put a list of items needed to finish filling two flood buckets for the relief in the US. We are also asked to give donations to Trinity marked for UMCOR (relief outside of the US, especially the earthquake victims in Turkey and Syria).
- **Ladies' (& Men's) Fellowship Luncheons** – The February "Tailgate" Lunch at the Vo Tech was well received. The March 3 gathering will again be at the Vo Tech at 10:30. On April 12 the group will meet at 12:00 at the Revive Café in Quentin. Parking is limited, so Dave Wallett has offered additional parking in the area in front of his garage. See Dave for details.
- **LINKS** – Currently this continues to be a meeting of the pastors. Pastor Jessica hopes to encourage more discussions about how the combined churches can do more things in the community beyond worship services. The bulletin for the Good Friday service at Trinity has been sent to the **Link** churches. The pastor will also send each pastor a note inviting them to our Easter Sunrise Service
- **Use of Church Spaces** – Narcotics Anonymous continues to meet at Trinity on Tuesdays and Saturdays.



Highlights from Reports that Support Our Ministry

- **Worship Team – Carol Hollich** – The Ash Wednesday service on Wednesday, February 22 will be at Good Shepherd UMC. Five of our choir members will sing with the combined choir. Pastor Jessica, Gloria and Rev. Rick Clark have decided to send out Lenten daily readings instead of having the “Lunch and Lenten services” every Wednesday in Lent. The title of the series is “Love Builds UP” and talks about family, either your personal family or your church family. Caroline Jacobs will ask for the organ to be tuned in mid-March. Palms will be ordered for Palm Sunday and Caroline Jacobs has agreed to show people how to make them into crosses. Carol Hollich is checking with liturgists and camera operators for the Holy Thursday service and the community Good Friday service at Trinity. Carol is, also, looking for 8 readers for the Holy Thursday/Tenebrae service. We will have a dedicated greeter on Good Friday plus ushers. Pastor and Dave Wallett are working out the candles to be used for Good Friday and Holy Thursday. Lily orders have started. The cost is \$8.00 each and we will order 35 unless we find another way to order less. Deadline to order lilies is March 12. They will be arranged after the Good Friday service and stored in the 8th Street hallway when they arrive to not conflict with Good Friday Worship Service. Sally DeJesus, Tina Washington, and Barb Querry are planning the Easter Sunrise service at Coleman’s Park at 6:30. The regular service will be at 9:15.



- **Education – Sally DeJesus** – The next Sunday School craft project is 680 treats for the Lebanon School District employees and teachers (made with tootsie rolls). Confirmation class finishes up their studies on Sunday, February 19. They will be confirmed in March, date to be decided.



- **Finance – Keith Earle** – The Finance Team prepared the 2023 budget, and it was \$20,000 less than the 2022 budget. Unfortunately, based on current giving, it appears that there will still be a deficit of \$20,000 by the end of the year. We need to increase our membership to help with the overall expenses by advertising what Trinity has to offer. Among several suggestions was the need to increase visibility with fliers to the high-rise units in the area and increased usage of other media. Also, we need to keep our congregation aware of this shortfall.

- **Missions – Dea Kishpaugh** – UMCOR sent a thank you for our \$150 contribution in December. In January we collected 133 pounds of food, toiletries, and clothes for LCCM and this month there were 61 containers of soup brought in for Souper Bowl Sunday. We also collected winter hats and scarves. In March we are asking our congregation people to earmark their mission giving for the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) assistance with those affected by the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. Checks made out to “Trinity UMC” with UMCOR in the memo will be forwarded to them at the end of the month. In April we usually help with the Cornwall Manor birthday party, but we are not sure about our status for this year. More info later!

- **Staff Parish – Keith Earle** – It was reported that SPRC has met individually with all but one of the staff members to have a conversation and review of their responsibilities and concerns.

- **Trustees – Jack Kishpaugh** – The trustees reported that we purchased an electric snow blower that is much more efficient and eliminates the need to have gasoline stored in the church building. They are investigating a new lighted remote sign for the corner of our church. They need to check with City Hall as to what restrictions and regulations surround the installation of LED displays. The plumber will be coming on Wednesday to remedy some plumbing concerns.

- **Parish Visitor - Gloria Clark reporting** – Rev. Richard Clark continues to visit the Trinity homebound and hospital patients and took poinsettias to some of our shut-ins. He saw 19 people in January and visited a few other non-Trinity people who needed a pastor’s care. Jessica has been coordinating her visits with Rick so they don’t visit the same people each month.



- **Pastor Jessica** – Some highlights that were included in the Pastor’s report: She feels blessed to be at Trinity and appreciates all the work everyone is doing. She is working on Trinity brochures and welcome packets and has been attending community meetings on neighborhood services to help the community. She takes monthly communion to Willow Terrace and will be providing a worship service every 4th Sunday at American House. (Someone suggested also visiting Market House where Betty Wentzel lives. She prepares a prayer booklet each month and is thankful for the prayer/communication chain that includes all those involved in our active ministry. She thanked those who helped with the confirmation class for Natalina and Lilianna Harrison. Pastor hopes that we can provide coffee and snacks every Sunday after church so there is always something there for visitors. It was decided to make the first 3 spots in our parking lot for the handicapped since Calvary Church is sometimes using our Willow Street spots. It was suggested that we have a donation bottle for pennies or other amounts for our discretionary fund. Pastor also feels the need for a plan to address any emergencies that might arise during a Sunday Worship Service. You can request a complete copy of the January/February Pastor’s report that is on file in the Church Office.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50.

Next Regularly Scheduled Meeting: Monday, April 10 – 7pm via Zoom
(Ad Board Meeting Schedule – February, April, June, August, October, December)

Trinity United Methodist Church

757 Willow Street, Lebanon, Pa. 17046

Where "Faith, Hope and Love abide to encourage all to respond to the call of Christ."

1st Sunday in Lent – February 26, 2023

(The service begins at 9:15 with the fellowship area opening at 9:00.)

To be a part of 9:15 worship on the computer go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89404422045>
or join by phone by dialing 1-646-876-9923 and entering 894 0442 2045 when prompted.

The flowers on the altar are for all the people we love and adore by Tina Washington

Gathering Music

Prelude

A Lenten Psalm – Hutson

Organist: Caroline Jacobs

Welcome & Announcements

Rev. Richard Clark

Call to Worship

Psalm 32: 1-11



L: Blessed are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

P: Blessed are those whom the Lord does not hold guilty, and in whose spirit, there is no deceit.

L: When I did not declare my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long.

P: For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up by the heat of summer.

L: I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity.

P: I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," then you forgave the guilt of my sin.

L: Therefore let those who are godly offer prayer to you;

P: at a time of distress, the rush of great waters shall not reach them.

L: You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you encompass me with deliverance.

P: I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

L: Do not be like an unruly horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle,

P: Many are the pangs of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.

L: Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous,

P: Shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

Hymn #269

Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days

Lord, who throughout these forty days, for us did fast and pray,
Teach us with thee to mourn our sins, and close by thee to stay.

As thou with Satan didst contend, and didst the victory win,
O give us strength in thee to fight, in thee to conquer sin.

As thou didst hunger bear and thirst, so teach us, gracious Lord,
To die to self, and chiefly live by thy most holy word.

And through these days of penitence, and through thy Passion-tide,
Yea evermore, in life and death, Jesus, with us abide.

Abide with us that so this life of suffering over past,
An Easter of unending joy we may attain at last!



Opening Prayer

O God, just as we look into a mirror to see any soiled spots on our face, so let us look to you in order to understand the things that we have done amiss. We are like a reed shaken in the wind; we are inexpressibly weak. Leave us not to ourselves, but dwell in our hearts and guide our thoughts and actions. Amen

Old Testament Reading *Genesis 2: 15-17 & 3: 1-7*

O.T. page 2

Gospel Reading *Matthew 4: 1-11*

N.T. page 3

Special Music *Solo*

Caroline Jacobs

Doxology & Prayer of Dedication

Hymn #365 *Grace Greater Than Our Sin*

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!
Yonder on Calvary's mount out-poured, there where the blood
of the Lamb was spilt.



Refrain: Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that is greater than all our sin!
Sin and despair, like the sea-waves cold, threaten the soul with infinite loss;
Grace that is greater, yes, grace untold, points to the refuge, the mighty cross. **(Refrain)**
Dark is the stain that we cannot hide. What can avail to wash it away?
Look, there is flowing a crimson tide, brighter than snow you may be today **(Refrain)**
Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace, freely bestowed on all who believe!
You that are longing to see His face, will you this moment His grace receive? **(Refrain)**

Sermon *It's All About That Grace!*

Pastor Jessica Ross

Prayers of the People & the Lord's Prayer

Pastor Jessica Ross

Song: *Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley*

Insert

Jesus walked this lonesome valley; He had to walk it by himself.
Oh, nobody else could walk it for him; He had to walk it by himself.
We must walk this lonesome valley; We have to walk it by ourselves.
Oh, nobody else can walk it for us; We have to walk it by ourselves.
You must go and stand your trial; You have to stand it by yourself.
Oh, nobody else can stand it for you; You have to stand it by yourself.



Benediction

Benediction Response *We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder*

Postlude *Lamento - Knecht*

Organist: Caroline Jacobs



Discussion of our Lenten Study
"Love Builds Up"

Study Text: Luke 15:11–32

KEY VERSE: *The son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. —Luke 15:21*

Family Reunions

Did you look forward to your most recent family reunion, or did the thought of attending bring dread? For many families, these occasions are joyous as multiple generations assemble for conversation, celebration, and recollection, frequently over a cherished family meal. However, other family situations are more complicated and painful. At best, the relationships within those families might feel cold or be difficult to tolerate. At worst, those relationships might be characterized by cruelty, mean-spiritedness, or even abuse. In such a family system, whole and harmonious relationships seem unattainable. Shame or selfishness is often at the root of broken families. Scripture describes families who experienced conflict for these reasons. Would Jesus' depiction of a broken family repeat these themes? Could he use these themes to change the hearts of his audience?



All-Encompassing Forgiveness

John watched his life spiral out of control. He had rebelled against his parents and disregarded the commitments that he had made as a believer. Because of anger, neglect of relationships, and substance abuse, John squandered his life and ignored his relationship with God. However, John reconnected with a Christian friend who treated him with compassion and gentleness. Through this patient friendship, John realized the importance of showing repentance—to God and other people—for his previous misdeeds. John trusted that God would forgive him, and he recommitted his life to being a disciple of Jesus. John's account and the example of the younger son in today's parable should encourage you to trust the all-encompassing nature of God's forgiveness. There is no situation too shameful for God to forgive. Can the same be said of how you react to others who have wronged you?

Plotlines

After watching numerous romantic comedy movies, I've noticed that many of these films have similar plotlines. These plotlines include a blossoming romance, mistaken motivations, the return of a former lover, conflict between all parties, and a "happily ever after" ending. I'm now at the point where I can almost always predict the plot. The original audience of today's parable likely thought that they could predict its plot. The son had brought shame and dishonor to his father. The audience was prepared to hear that the son received harsh consequences from his father, just as the law had prescribed. The parable's plot appeared so predictable. However, Jesus inverted such expectations. The father's demonstration of kindness and generosity toward his lost son went beyond what was expected. Today's parable invites all people to embrace the upside-down nature of the family of God. In this family, God offers and desires reunion where broken relationships exist. Such actions give testimony to all people of God's generosity and faithfulness. God welcomes all people to become his beloved children in his family. In what other ways do Jesus' teachings upend your expectations?

Thoughts to Consider

1. In what ways is biblical repentance more than saying "I'm sorry"?
2. How should believers respond when they are insulted or dishonored?
3. How do feelings of shame or sorrow lead a person to repentance?

The Prodigal Son

Lesson 1, Luke 15:11-24, NIV

Would You Rather?

Read each pair of options. Following your first inclination, write A or B on each line for which you would rather do.

- | | | |
|----------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| _____ 1. | A. Eat pickle-flavored ice cream | B. Eat chocolate-covered crickets |
| _____ 2. | A. Be famous | B. Be invisible |
| _____ 3. | A. Spend a week with extended family | B. Go to your high school reunion |
| _____ 4. | A. Have a pet hippopotamus | B. Care for six cats for a month |
| _____ 5. | A. Sing karaoke in front of coworkers | B. Give an impromptu speech at work |
| _____ 6. | A. Live at the North Pole | B. Live in the desert |

If You Ask Me

Read Luke 15:11-24. Briefly describe how you would ideally respond, how you would likely actually respond, and why there might be a difference between the two answers.

1. If one of my children demanded I give him or her an inheritance today, I would . . .

2. If I received a great inheritance today, I would . . .

3. If I suddenly lost everything I had, I would . . .

4. If I made a bad decision that hurt someone else, I would . . .

5. If I feel guilty and a loved one throws a party for me, I would . . .

6. If one of my children wronged and shamed me, but returned and apologized, I would . . .
