

First Sunday in Lent
February 28, 2021

Prelude

Christopher A. McCroskey

Centering Words:

Jesus said, if any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

From *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. Copyright 1992 The United Methodist Publishing House, 343.

Call to Worship:

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus

I have decided to follow Jesus. I have decided to follow Jesus.

I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back.

From *The Faith We Sing* Copyright 2000, Abingdon Press, 2129.

Prayer of the Day:

O Divine One, you call us to take up our cross and follow you. You tell us to set our mind on divine things, to focus on the call you have for each of us. But too often we have kept our minds on human things. We let the distractions of the world interfere with hearing your call. We become distracted, so we do not take up our cross and follow you. Forgive us, we pray. May your Holy Spirit remove all human things from our minds so we can take up our cross and follow the Son who taught us to pray:

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith: Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayer of Illumination:

Open our ears that we may hear and our hearts and minds that we may receive your word O Lord our rock and redeemer.

(After each reading take two to three minutes to reflect upon the meaning of the passage to you today.)

Old Testament Reading

Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16

Special Music
Psalm 22:23-31

"I Know the Lord's Laid His Hands On Me"

Kyland Gadson

New Testament Reading

Romans 4: 13-25

Special Music

"Ride On, King Jesus"

Kyland Gadson

Gospel Reading

Mark 8: 31-38

Sermon

Setting Our Minds on Divine Things

Hymn

Forth in Thy Name, O Lord

1. Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go,
my daily labor to pursue;
thee, only thee, resolved to know
in all I think or speak or do.

2. The task thy wisdom hath assigned,
O let me cheerfully fulfill;
in all my works thy presence find,
and prove thy good and perfect will.

3. Thee may I set at my right hand,
whose eyes mine inmost substance see,
and labor on at thy command,
and offer all my works to thee.

4. For thee delightfully employ
what e'er thy bounteous grace hath given;
and run my course with even joy,
and closely walk with thee to heaven.

From *The United Methodist Hymnal*, Copyright 1989, The United Methodist Publishing House, 438.

Benediction:

God be in your head, and in your understanding.

God be in your eyes, and in your looking.

God be in your mouth, and in your speaking.

God be in your heart, and in your thinking.

God be at your end, and at your departing.

From *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. Copyright 1992 The United Methodist Publishing House, 566.

Response:

God Be with You till We Meet Again

God be with you till we meet again;

by his counsels guide, uphold you,

with his sheep securely fold you;

God be with you till we meet again.

From *The United Methodist Hymnal*, Copyright 1989, The United Methodist Publishing House, 673.

Leading in Worship Today

Pastor: *John D. Jordan* AV Assistant: *K. C. Warble*
Choir Director: *Christopher A. McCroskey* Soloist: *Kyland Gadson*
Church Musician

Kyland Gadson is a soprano vocalist hailing from Lexington, SC. She began showing a desire to sing at the age of two, and joined her church choir at the age of four. At ten years old, Kyland started taking vocal lessons with CaBrailSong Studio and has since performed in local and national pageants, choral concerts as a guest soloist, and as a participant in various vocal competitions. She graduated summa cum laude with Honors in 2017 from Armstrong State University. Kyland is currently a student with Tom Brunson and has earned Certificates of Distinction in both Classical and Musical Theater from the National Association of Teachers of Singing organization. Bringing people hope, encouragement and joy through music is one of her most cherished callings. This young lady loves God and desires to live a life pleasing to the King who sacrificed his life for her. Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future," is the scripture that Kyland looks to for spiritual motivation and as a reminder of God's great love and plan for not only her life; but, for all of our lives.

“AS MEMBERS OF THIS CONGREGATION, WE WILL FAITHFULLY PARTICIPATE IN ITS MINISTRIES BY OUR PRAYERS...

Lynn Martin Pam Hook Oren Edwards Patsy Shuler John Ballentine
Steve White Latson Lewis George Taylor Steve Aiello

Shut-Ins: Shirley Butler; Esther Carter; Carolyn Hardee; Francis & Gillett Hipp; June Hutto; Georgeann Pace; Shirley Padgett; Jean Raynor; Claudia Sineath; Wayne Tallon; Irvin Wells

Family and Friends: *Lisa Baghdady (a friend of Edwa Meek); Joyce Richards (wife of Boots Morgan's cousin); Chip Hooker (Wayne Hooker's father); Robert Bradley (Business Associate of Simon Ross); Mildred Hart (mother of Dee Senn); Dave Burrell (Business Associate of Tommy Gleaton); Gene Odom (grandfather of Mark Branham); Gary Becton (friend of Mark Branham); Audrey Cassidy (sister-in-law of Mary Louise Robinson); Rusty Browning (friend of Erin Derrick); Monnie Tiller, Mrs. Miles, Jerry Fowler (friends of Chris Derrick); Donna Walker (coworker of Jack Stevens); Gil Merrick (friend of Laurie Knapp); Kelly Knapp (wife of Laurie Knapp's nephew); Paul Kidney (son-in-law of Charles & Jackie McNeill); Ruby Pennington (friend of Laurie Knapp); Sara Krisnow (niece of Marty Johnson); Rick Baldwin (nephew of Tommy Johnson); Judy Bauer (cousin of Marty Johnson); Iris Turlington (aunt of John Zeigler); Betty Jean Newton (sister-in-law of Mary Kamoroff); Tonya Spires (friend of the Derricks); Vivian Almendinger (great-niece of Christopher McCroskey); J. B. & Stephanie Martindale (cousins of Christopher McCroskey); Linda Hargett (stepmom of Christopher McCroskey); Ollie Shelly (friend of the Derricks); Brenlee Carnes; Danielle Spotts (co-worker of Kathy White); Vickie Edwards (neighbor of Kathy White); Greg Ammer, George Duke, Debbie Ranck, Vicki Beatty, Connie Mason, Brenda Grier (friends of Lynn Martin); Diane Kelsey, Erma Ruff, David Price & Family, Mark Leonhart, Ty Moore, Julie Stroud, Fran Huck, George Dorn (friends of Kay Jordan); Teddy Derrick (uncle of Arvan Derrick); Haidee Baehr (friends of Ruth Frady); Dianne Schmotzer (sister-in-law of Gale Frady); Dan Connor, Denise Paul (cousin of Gale Frady); Billy Johnson, Max Johnson (friends of Gale Frady); Ray Culbreth's Group House; Nellie Gantt (mother of friend of Ray Culbreth); Amelia Zinski (great-niece of Linda Maloch); Wayne Blair (son of Dot Johnson); Xavier Crane (grandnephew of John Ballentine); Janet Beck (friend of Jo Ann Heiting); Vera Von Glahn (sister-in-law of Jo Ann Heiting); Michael Carter (son of Esther Carter); Adam Lavender (son of Phil Lavender)*

OUR PRESENCE ...

In-Person Attendance 02/21 Worship: 16

OUR GIFTS ...

General Fund 02/21 \$ 5,580.00

OUR SERVICE ...

OUR WITNESS."



Ministers	The Congregation
Pastor	John D. Jordan
Resident Bishop	Jonathan Holston
District Superintendent	Rev. Dr. Cathy Jamieson

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Our vision is to Connect, Nurture, Inspire and Transform

Second Sunday
in
Lent

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Mark 8:31-38

Jesus begins teaching the disciples that he will undergo great suffering, be rejected, killed, then rise from the dead. This is right after Jesus had asked the disciples who they think he is and Peter answered that Jesus is the Messiah.

Wait a minute! Jesus has been identified as the Messiah, the one anointed by God to restore Israel, and now he is saying that he will suffer, be rejected and killed. That can't be right. That is not what is supposed to happen to the Messiah. The Messiah is supposed to kick all those gentile oppressors out of Israel and make Israel the power it was back when David was king. He is supposed to make Israel a great nation again.

Peter, who correctly identified Jesus as the Messiah, takes him aside and rebukes him. What you talking about, Jesus? Peter, who had identified Jesus as the one who was to make Israel a great nation again, couldn't wrap his head around Jesus talking about suffering, rejection, death and rising again. That is not how this Messiah thing was supposed to work. The Messiah is supposed to ride into town and everybody recognize him as the Messiah. Then he is going to use his divine power to chase the Romans and all other gentile oppressors out for good. It is not supposed to happen the way Jesus is talking about, so Peter has to set him straight.

Now for a disciple to rebuke a master was pretty scandalous, but look at how Jesus comes back to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan!" Peter who identified Jesus as the Messiah is now Satan! Then Jesus tells Peter what his problem is. He is not setting his mind on divine things but on human things.

Now the human conceptualization of the Messiah would be aligned with what Peter probably thought. The Messiah was going to rise up and bring his or her people to power and make things right for his or her people. Jesus was not the only one who proclaimed to be the messiah during that time. There was about a 300-year period from 200 BCE to 100 CE where there were at least five other documented claimants to being the messiah. They were all going to overthrow Rome and make Israel great once more. They all met violent ends, the last being the uprising that led to the destruction of the temple and the siege at Masada. That was the human concept of messiahship.

Jesus presents a different image of the Messiah. The Messiah is to suffer, be rejected, killed, and rise again; no army marching or armed insurrection. Then look at what he says it takes to be his disciple: deny yourself, take up your cross, to save your life you must lose it and you lose your life to save it. What is all that about?

It is because Jesus has his mind on divine things. Jesus does not have his mind on what humans expect from the messiah; his mind is on what God wants from the Messiah. His mind is attuned to the Father's will for him. He is participating in God's plan to reconcile and restore humanity. He is not going to make Israel great, he is going to restore all humanity into a right relationship with God.

You see, Jesus was what God wanted in a Messiah, while Peter wanted a messiah like he, a human, wanted. Peter's mind was set on the human concept of a messiah while Jesus' mind was on being the divine Messiah. Peter's mind was on following human will while Jesus' mind was on following God's will.

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ means that we set our minds on divine things. We seek to do the will of God for our lives. It means denying our will and taking up our cross, God's will. We lose our temporal life to God's eternal life. Following God's will can lead us to suffering and pain, maybe not in terms of persecution like the early Christians, but in terms of things like quitting a very good paying job with benefits and taking a job that pays less when God wants you in that less paying job. Believe me there is much more joy in the lower paying job where God wants you than in that higher paying job you may think you want.

As Christians we strive to place our minds on divine things but all too often, we let our minds get distracted by human things. I believe two of the main culprits that get our minds off the divine and onto human things is the 24/7 news feeds and social media. I am not saying that either of these are necessarily bad but they are distractions that keep us focused on human things.

First let's look at the 24/7 newsfeeds. There are so many of them and we can't get away from them. We carry them around in our pocket on our phones and they let us know when there is something new. How many of us reach for our phones when it pings? In many public spaces where there is a TV it is often on a 24/7 news station. Plus, news is defined as an event or information about an event; therefore, much of what is on 24/7 newsfeeds is not news but opinions about the news. In these ways the 24/7 newsfeeds keep our mind on human things and off divine things.

A few months ago, I heard a comedian who said he was asked why he was so happy amid all that was going on in the world. Didn't he watch the news? He replied, "No, I watch Rugrats on Hulu. Everything is fine in the world of Tommy Pickles." We need to turn off the 24/7 newsfeeds and enter into God's good news for the world.

The second major distraction is social media. Again, social media is not necessarily bad. It is a great way to keep up with family and friends you may not see very often. I love looking at the pictures of my new great and great-great nieces and nephews. (Did I just say great- great? No wonder I feel old at times.) But many times, we read posts from people that make our blood boil, so we spend time ranting and raving with people we don't even know or care about. Also, we get that infamous ping that lets us know that some "friend" has just posted something in the past three seconds and we need to check it out immediately. We need to limit the amount of time spent on social media. We may need to "unfriend" those people that post things that cause distress. We may need to just scroll through until we see the pictures of new babies or other things that bring joy.

Then, if we take our mind off human things, how do we set our minds on divine things? How do we seek and discern God's will for our lives?

Discerning God's will is not easy, it takes discipline. It takes turning off the 24/7 newsfeed, ignoring the ping and focusing on God. Two ways in which we focus on God is through reading our Bibles and prayer.

When I talk about reading the Bible, I do not mean just flipping it open and reading a few random verses, but reading intentionally. When I was at Shiloh, we began a practice of reading a chapter a day, which is a practice I continue. There are many good guides that lead one through the Bible. We all have our "go to" version that speaks more clearly to us, but we need to have other versions available which might shed a different light on a passage. Also, separate this Bible reading from the reading one may have as a devotional reading. Don't just read the passage from the *Upper Room*, focus strictly on the Bible passage alone, not as part of a devotional. That is another discipline.

Begin your Bible reading by asking, “What is God revealing to me today?” You may read a passage that you read three years ago but you receive a different message today. Even a familiar passage may have a different message and sometimes you may notice a word you did not pick up on before. Be open to what God is saying to you today in the passage(s) you are reading.

In regard to prayer, I know there are many different forms of prayer and all are valid. We need to pray for others. We need to turn things over to God. Too often our prayers become litanies, long lists of what we want to say to God, which is setting our mind on human things rather than the divine.

If we want to set our mind on divine things we need to listen to God. Nikos Kazantzakis in *The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises* likens prayer to a soldier giving his report to his commanding officer. He reports what he did today to accomplish the mission. He reports any obstacles or difficulties he had in accomplishing the mission. Then he waits to receive his orders for tomorrow. When the next day arrives at the assigned time, he carries out the orders given him by the CO. Prayer is us reporting to God what we did, then receiving our orders for how God wants to use us in accomplishing God’s mission to restore humanity to God.

During this remaining time of Lent, let us turn our minds from human things. Turn off the 24/7 newsfeeds, limit our time and what we read on social media. Look at the baby pictures and not the political posts. Turn away from all that keeps our minds distracted and on human things rather than divine. Let us increase our discipline. Increase our time in Bible reading, study and prayer so we may more easily hear and understand our orders from God. Thus, we give up our lives to God so that in losing our temporal lives we gain eternal life.