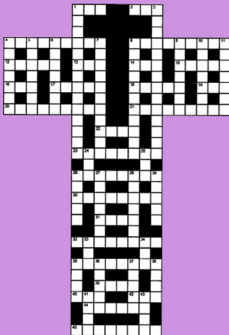


2020

Lenten Devotional Booklet
“Cross Words”



Written by Lutheran Campus Ministry Students at Arizona State University and the
community of University Lutheran Church

Preparing for Lent

Dear Travel Partner,

Thank you for your willingness to trek along with us in thought, prayer, and devotion this Lenten season. These devotions were written by members of our congregation, University Lutheran Church, and students in our Lutheran Campus Ministry attending Arizona State University.

It was especially touching to me to see several students on a Wednesday night after worship gathered around the fireplace in our Campus Center. Laptops were out and open and they were working together to write their devotions.

You have in your hand the end product of church members and students. We call this a devotional, yet it seems to me perhaps the greatest devotion here was the effort that went into writing these. In the midst of raising families, working, and running a household; in the midst of working, studying, attending class, and writing papers, these authors found the time and dedication to reflect upon a text and write a devotion.

Thank you for traveling with us this Lent. We look forward to seeing you in Jerusalem and beyond!

Gratefully in Christ,

Gary N. McCluskey
Campus Pastor, Arizona State University

**Thank you to Barb Harris for providing us with these local hunger facts.*

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Ash Wednesday: Psalm 51:1-7

Traditionally this Psalm has been said to have been written by King David after having been confronted by his friend, the prophet Nathan after he had gone to Bathsheba. Clearly it is the prayer of an individual for mercy and forgiveness from God for sin. Ash Wednesday and the journey called Lent is a time when God comes to us much like Nathan went to David. Like Nathan God addresses us out of concern, love, and disappointment. We are not as God intended us to be. We are not the image we work hard to put forth before all the world. Yet Ash Wednesday and Lent are not times of gloom and doom. This is a time of trust and confidence. We can face our sin trusting in God's love and forgiveness. We place our confidence in the claim and promises God made to us in our baptism.

So, Lenten pilgrims, we journey these 40 days. We journey as those whose burdens have been lightened by the grace of God.

Forgiving and loving God, we thank you for speaking your truth to us. We are grateful for your grace shown to us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ who travels with us on our Lenten path. Amen

Gary N. McCluskey
Pastor/Campus Pastor
University Lutheran Church & Lutheran Campus Ministry

Hunger Fact/Challenge: How you can help? Donate or volunteer with us, by visiting www.unitedfoodbank.org.

Thursday: Luke 9:51-56 - "Moving toward the Cross"

When you have an unpleasant or arduous task do you head straight to it regardless of the possible bumps in the road along the way? Saying, "Let's just get this done.". Do you get distracted by the bumps and make them a mountain to slay? Or do you chalk it up to a slight and move to the "Next!"?

Jesus *resolutely* set out to Jerusalem. He decided to travel through Samaritan territory, not around it as most Jews of his day would have. Jesus loves his disciples dearly and they are beyond excited, even zealous, for His cause. Yet they still have lessons to learn and miles to travel. Jesus is headed for what only He understands at the moment, while the disciples want to make more of the disruption than is necessary.

Lord, teach me, too, to temper my rashness for your purpose and keep heading toward your purpose. Amen

Lori Zurcher

Hunger Fact/Challenge: Food banks are now reporting a greater demand for their food. They are noticing that some people now in line to receive food once formerly donated and/or volunteered to those food banks.

Friday: Matthew 16:24-26 - “Take up your cross”

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross, and follow me. ²⁵ If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for me, you will find your true life. ²⁶ How do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul in the process? Is anything worth more than your soul?”

You’re probably very familiar with this scripture. Can you identify the word *missing* from this translation of it? It’s the word “**deny**”. Many folks choose to “*deny*” themselves something during Lent: sweets, sodas, meat, or dairy. Others choose to “add” something to their Lenten pilgrimage: Bible reading, daily devotions, prayer, service, etc. Either spiritual tradition “works” when it acts as a doorway to a deeper spiritual walk with Jesus. My favorite phrase in this text is: “*you will find your true life.*” Jesus seems to say that spending time and energy with and for others, and working to make their lives better (and our own as well!) is a good path, while spending our lives focused on pursuits that primarily benefit ourselves is *not* his path. This text in Matthew is sandwiched between Peter’s declaration that Jesus is the Messiah (16:13-20) and the Transfiguration (17:1-9)—between a personal confession of faith, and a glorious mountain-top revelation of Jesus’ true self. As we make our way through this season, we’re invited to join Him in his journey to Jerusalem, and to discover our best life—a *servant life*—along the way.

Bless us, Loving Lord, as we lay aside our selfishness and self-centeredness in order to focus on the path of discipleship. Help us to serve this world as You did—in kindness and compassion. May we discover our true selves in lives spent in serving the people whom You love. Amen.

Val Rehrer

Hunger Fact/Challenge: United Food Bank’s history is deeply-rooted in the East Valley and dates back to July of 1983 when it began operations as United Food Distribution Center, Inc.

Saturday: I Corinthians 1:18-25 - "We preach Christ crucified"

Foolishness. This faith we call Christian, Paul tells us is based on foolishness. Indeed, it is. It is foolish to try to love one's enemies. It is foolish to try to solve the horror of poverty and hunger. It is foolish to even attempt to love the neighbor as one loves oneself. Absolute foolishness! Yet this foolishness has done much to impact the world. It has done much to impact us. It is also foolish for a God to love those and work for those who sin against that God. Foolishness. Yet just enough foolishness to change the world . . . and us.

God of Jesus, God of the cross, we thank you for your love poured out on the cross of Jesus. we thank you for your foolishness to invest your very divinity in us. Amen

Anika Lehnhardt

Hunger Fact/Challenge: Follow us on social media and help us fight hunger by sharing our story. We are on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. Just search United Food Bank and #wefeedAZ.

Sunday: 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 - "Walk by faith"

6" Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7 For we live by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

My Reflection

There is this famous song by Newsboys called "God's Not Dead" and this lent devotional reminds me exactly of what the song's message represents. There are many who refuse to believe in the Lord's existence because they aren't able to physically see and witness his power.

I personally have never believed I had to physically witness the Lord in order to accept his existence. In my faith, God lives in my conscience and soul and leads me in becoming a better person. As soon as I live by my own rules and expectations, that's when I lose touch with whose more important, God. I've learned over the years that the center of my happiness and hope for a better future is, and has always been, in the hands of my creator who steers me for success.

There are ways we can blend faith and sight together. Next time you're around to witness a situation where someone needs assistance, instead of assuming their problem will resolve, why not use the body your God gave you, to help them. The moment you choose to reach out your hand to one of God's children, your confidence and state of being is redeemed. We were made to love and help one another.

So, I'll leave you with these closing questions. Would you prefer to live your life away from the body? Or at home with the Lord?

Jeffrey Hack

Hunger Fact/Challenge: Arizona is tied as the 5th worst state in the United States for overall food insecurity.

Monday: Ephesians 2:8-10 “Saved by faith”

Our lives are filled with “works” of all kinds for which we are rewarded in some way, and for which we can take credit. But we don’t, and can’t, work to receive grace from God, or take credit for having earned it. Grace is His gift, freely given for our salvation without regard to whether we have “done enough” to deserve it, and which we receive through our faith in Him and His promises. In return, it is up to us to act on that gift of salvation by walking in His ways and doing good works in His name.

Lord God, we are thankful each day for the gifts and blessings you have given us. Help us to love what you command and desire what you promise, in Jesus’ name,

Amen.

Layna Taylor

Hunger Fact/Challenge: United Food Bank started as a nonprofit joint venture among East Valley cities and their respective United Ways to gather and distribute food to East Valley organizations that were helping feed those in need.

Tuesday: John 3:16-17 – “For God so loved”

(world)

In these verses, "world" is used four times. God so loved (loves) the world that he sent his son for us. God sent his son to us, not to condemn but to save the world. To me, that means that God sent our Lord to save EVERY man and woman of EVERY race, color, identification, as well as EVERY plant, animal, and being on and in this world.

Heavenly Father, forgive me for I know not how to love this world and everything you have placed in it. Expand my mind to understand this world in its entirety that you have given me, to appreciate it and see it through your eyes.

Keith Cornell

Hunger Fact/Challenge: The Food Bank assisted 28 different community partners their first year in 1983, and some are still partners today like the Mesa Senior Center, The Apache Junction Food Bank and the Chandler Christian Community Center.

Wednesday: Galatians 2:15-16 – “Justified by Faith”

Justified

“We ourselves are Jews by birth and Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

As redundant as this passage is, a strong message is nonetheless delivered here: we are justified by the grace of God through our faith in Him and not our works. Our culture puts a heavy emphasis on placing our value in our works and what we do such as our job profession, how we contribute to society, etc. Sometimes, this can leak over into our churches and our personal faith journeys. We start to fret over what we have done or not done instead of the core message of what it is all about—grace and faith. Through our belief in Jesus Christ, we are justified, and we are forgiven. Therefore, we alone are worthy in the eyes of God and do not need to place all of our value and our identity into our works but instead into our identity as God's child. Only from there may our works come out more as a response of gratefulness instead of just merely “going through the motions” or doing a chore.

Sophie Lott

Hunger Fact/Challenge: In 1985, United Food Bank’s service geography expanded to its current area of Gila, Pinal and southern Apache and Navajo Counties along with the original service area in the East Valley of Maricopa County.

Thursday: Romans 5:1-5 – “Peace through faith”

Rejoice, what exactly does this mean? Here Paul brings up the idea of rejoicing no matter what is going on in one’s life. Paul is writing to the Christian Romans, who at the time were not welcome and heavily persecuted. In this reading, Paul was telling them to rejoice even when it seemed everything was going wrong. The idea of rejoicing while being persecuted may seem like a strange concept, especially in a world where it seems like everything is going wrong and society is hung up on superficial concepts. It is important to find the good that comes out of persecution or suffering, while it may be hard to see in the moment. Taking a step back from a situation and looking to the future for the growth that God is providing through hardships is key to finding a way to rejoice.

Dear Lord, please help me to rejoice in my suffering and to know that growth will come from it. Be with those who are going through hardship and give them comfort in the knowledge that you are with them. Amen.

Joshua Burgett

Hunger Fact/Challenge: United Food Bank’s service area is more than 19,600 square miles and includes some of the most remote areas in the state. Places like Sanders, Arizona, where there are only a couple places to purchase food, and the next town is 40 miles away.

Friday: Philippians 1:27-30

“Stand Firm”

²⁷ Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God’s doing. ²⁹ For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well— ³⁰ since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. Philippians 1:27-30 (NRSV)

Key Words: Suffering: A Privilege

Our world can be a selfish one: “It’s all about me.” We might aspire to ‘rugged individualism,’ but isn’t that just a nice way of saying, “everyone for his or herself?” Is that the example Jesus set for us in his dealings with the people he encountered when he walked this earth?

Although Paul urged them to be of one spirit and one mind, I bet the community of individuals in Philippi were never all on the same page. I seriously doubt they held beliefs that were identical in every detail. And yet when Paul writes from prison, he urges that community to provide a strong, unified front by pulling together, despite their differences. But Paul takes it much further than that. He insists that suffering in order to do Christ’s work is a **privilege**. Not just something to be endured, but a right, a peculiar benefit, an advantage.

When I lived in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, there was one local Christian community: about eight of us. We sometimes had a place to worship, after cleaning up cigarette butts and coffee cups strewn about by the theatre group that had priority use of the ancient church. Sometimes we met in a restaurant, sometimes in someone’s flat. It didn’t matter who was Lutheran or Anglican back home, or even where ‘back home’ was. We were all Christian expats in Famagusta. What mattered was that we found and supported each other, providing a united front. I can’t claim that I suffered for my faith, but I was privileged to see my faith grow in vital ways as a result of the challenge.

Kim Savage

Dear God, let us not be intimidated by hatred, fear, or our differences. Instead, unite us in Christ. May we gladly accept the privilege of whatever suffering may come when we follow Jesus’ example of how to treat one another. Amen.

Hunger Fact/Challenge: To serve the most people possible, United Food Bank collaborates with more than 200 partner agencies that operate more than 260 separate programs helping feed families, children and seniors.

Saturday: Hebrews 11:1-3 – “The assurance of faith”

The word in this passage that stood out to me was “faith.” This passage is all about having faith in God, a God we can’t see, but who formed the entire universe. I don’t know about you, but I have always had many questions about God and a lot of the stories in the Bible. The stories seemed questionable and God’s unconditional love for ALL of humanity seemed the most unbelievable! These questions and doubts felt like a nullification of my faith. However, as I have grown, I learned the opposite of faith was not doubt, it is certainty. I am not searching for proof that I have the “right” set of beliefs or that my religion is the “capital T” truth; I simply have faith in God and God’s unending love for us.

Dear God, thank you for giving us the ability to question, discuss, and doubt. Help us to accept our faith where it is and know you are with us along the way. Amen

Amy Gauthier

Hunger Fact/Challenge: In 2015/2016 fiscal year, United Food Bank distributed 26,047,312 pounds of food totaling 21,706,093 meals to hungry people.

Sunday: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 – “Strength in weakness”

“Strength in Weakness”

²⁶ Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no one might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ in order that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 (NRSV)

Key Word: Weakness

She is usually in the park when I take my early morning walk. Is she homeless? At first, I try to avoid her. A small woman, bent with age and slowly pushing a walker. Will she make it across the street without being hit by a car? Baseball cap with a pink flamingo on it. Wrinkled face and missing teeth. But always a smile. She feeds the birds and pets every leashed dog that comes near. She says the same thing to all who pass by: “God bless you. Have a good day.” With her Eastern European accent, I wonder if she knows much English. If I get up the nerve to speak to her, will she even understand what I say? Over time, she works her way into my heart. Now I miss her when she’s not in the park. I cross the street to say hello to her, not to avoid her. Her priceless greeting makes my day. Her broad smile makes me smile. To myself, I now call her “The Face of God.” I ask myself, if Jesus came to earth today, would he be the nameless lady in the park?

Then, a Bible study points out that learning someone’s name conveys a level of respect not present otherwise. I strongly believe getting to know, or ‘naming’ one individual member of a group can help deter misunderstanding and hatred for that group. After all this time, I should find out her name.

Her name is Marie Claire. She doesn’t know this, but I am about to fly cross-country for my Mom’s memorial service. I’m totally stressed out. For once, Marie Claire says more than, “God bless you. Have a good day.” For the first time, she follows me down the sidewalk and shouts, “Don’t worry ‘bout nothin’. One day at a time. I like praying, and I pray for you.” When I most need it, she becomes “The Voice of God” as well as “The Face of God” for me.

Kim Savage

Beloved Lord, how can we presume to distinguish between weakness and true strength? Thank you for all the personal, creative ways you communicate with us. May we recognize your face and your voice in each encounter with the weak and the strong. Amen.

Hunger Fact/Challenge: 888,100 unduplicated Arizonans received emergency food assistance in 2009, an 85% increase from the 2006 study.

Monday: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 – “Christ’s strength in you”**Weak**

“For when I am weak then I am strong.”

In this verse Paul shares he has been pierced with a thorn in his flesh. He pleads with the Lord, begging him to remove it, but is told “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” This is something I’m sure we can all relate to on some level. I have certainly hoped and prayed for hard times to pass, but Paul exemplifies to us that these times of weakness are not always obstacles, but rather opportunities along our life’s path. This story shows that God’s help does not always come in the form of removing the hardships from our path. Paul prayed for the thorn to be removed, but instead God gave him what he needed to persist: the strength to deal with the thorn. As a result, Paul was humbled and delighted by his weakness and hardships.

Lord, in times of weakness, show us your strength. In times where we are lost, guide us along the path. Please help us to grow and learn from the hardships in our way so that we may be closer to you and one another.

Rachel Knoche

Hunger Fact/Challenge: 1 in 4 children will go to bed hungry in Arizona.

Tuesday: Ephesians 6:10-18 – “Put on the armor of God”

Power: When someone says something is powerful, how powerful is it? Can you see it? Can you feel it? Is it like gravity pulling us all down to Earth? Is it like a painting with a very striking message? Power can be interpreted in many ways. When I think of something having power or being powerful, I think of someone standing up to a bully for another person. You are that person's knight in shining armor. That's what someone with power does; they save those in need. And the most powerful thing in this world is the love of God. It's nourishing, it's all-encompassing, it's hopeful, and it's grace. When people need it the most, it's there. So, whenever you are lost or afraid, turn to God. His love will embrace you.

I pray for those who need comfort, are lost, and for those who don't have anywhere else to turn, to open their hearts to the Lord above and receive comfort and joy through the troubling times.

Patric Bjotvedt

Hunger Fact/Challenge: 1 in 5 adults struggle with hunger in your community.

Wednesday: Psalm 27:1-4 – “The Lord is my salvation”

“The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? ... Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.” (NIV)

Fear is one of our most basic emotions. It’s a common response to danger, pain, or new and threatening situations. How many times do we feel scared, anxious, unease, worry, or dread? Yet, in these passages there is no fear. How is that possible? Verse 4 says, “One thing I say of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.”

God and God’s word is our protector. If we “dwell in the house of the Lord,” we need not worry or feel anxious.

Prayer: Lord, please calm our hearts. Ease our fears and worries. Let us remember that you, Lord, are our light and salvation.

Katherine Stevens

Hunger Fact/Challenge: 1 in 7 seniors are food insecure in Arizona.

Thursday: Exodus 15: 1-6 - “The Lord is mighty”

Even during, or maybe even especially during dark personal times, we love to praise and thank the Lord for all He does-he is a mighty God-bigger than any of our issues.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for understanding my dark personal times and being there for me through all of the messiness of it. Giving you praise and thanks is what you show me will get me through, nothing is bigger than you are.

Lori Zurcher

Hunger Fact/Challenge: In 2017, we distributed 22.5 million meals to 431,000 individuals.

Friday, Ephesians 3:14-21 – “A prayer for strength”

-rooted

The word rooted really stands out to me due to the complexity that this word implies. Rooted is a way to symbolize stability, growth, and to be established. In this text, the word rooted is a way to show that God’s love is instilled in each and every one of us. His love is a part of us, it is a part of who we were, who we are, and who we are to become. It uses the word rooted in relation to love to show that God’s love will always be stable and present in our lives, His love will allow us to grow in our faith, our personality, and in our relationships. His love has established a basis to which we have base our morals off of, how we treat others, and how we treat ourselves. The word rooted represents that God is the basis of our lives and faith; he has provided for us since the very beginning. Without God’s presence, we would lack in nutrients such as love, compassion, and strength, just as a flower lacks in growth and water without its roots. We are all members of God’s holy garden. He has chosen and helped raise us from our roots, he has never left us in despair or sorrow, and impacts in ways that cannot be seen. A person does not see the roots of a flower, just like we do not see the love of God physically, but without it, we would perish. The word rooted represents how much we rely on God’s presence and how God will not leave us to our own defense, he will support us no matter what.

Prayer: Father in Heaven, today we pray that you offer us guidance, comfort, and love. Without it we cannot grow or spread your word. Please continue to instill us with your holy word and praise. Without our roots that you have given us, we would perish. Continue to push us into the person we are meant to become, do not lose faith in us, and above all teach us to share your unconditional love. Amen

Rebecca Knoche

Hunger Fact/Challenge: SNAP (aka Food Stamps)—49.4% of households receiving these benefits have children.

Saturday: Psalm 28: 8-9 – “The Lord is my strength”

"Save your people, God!" So says the psalmist in this text. People. Not me, not individuals, but people. We were not created to be hermits. We were created to be something larger than ourselves. We were created to be humans in relationship to other humans. As Christians we believe we were created to also live for one another. Much of life would be simpler on our own. Yet much of life would be less full on our own. Following the path of Jesus in Lent and in all our discipleship can be hard. That cross we bear can be heavy. Yet when others help us lift it or when we help others lift that cross it can be far more bearable.

Giving God, we thank you for the gift of others in our life. We thank you that through others we often receive a glimpse of you reaching out to us. In Jesus' loving name we pray. Amen

Isaak Lehnhardt

Hunger Fact/Challenge: We distribute 59,000 meals daily in Arizona.

Sunday: I John 4:7-10 – “This is love”

The word in this passage that stood out to me was “love.” Love can take on many forms. In fact, Ancient Greeks had six words for love. Eros means desire which involved a loss of control that frightened the Greeks (like when people are “madly” in love). Philia means a love for friends. Friends that you show loyalty to, that you sacrifice for, and share emotions with. Ludas is a playful love. Playful love is fun like dancing with your friends or playing with a child. Pragma is a longstanding love. Longstanding love is learning how to stand with your partner together by showing tolerance, patience, understanding, and compromise to make love work. Philautia is self-love. Don’t worry, not the variety associated with narcissism! This love is giving grace and love to yourself. The most familiar one is agape. Agape is the highest form of love, God’s love for humanity. So, take time today to reflect on the types of love you give and receive every day.

Dear God, thank you for the countless opportunities to love one another. Amen

Amy Gauthier

Hunger Fact/Challenge: 40 United Food Bank staff members and 20 Board of Directors.

Monday: John 13:1-5 – “Love to the end”

End

“Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world”

This verse seems to me to be the beginning of the end. Knowing he will soon have to leave this world, Jesus chooses to use this time to wash the feet of his disciples. This act of service is a powerful demonstration of Jesus’s love for the people of the world, truly proving that “he loved them to the end”. Even though he knew that Judas would betray him, Jesus chose to use these last moments as a way to express his love unconditionally and with humility. It provides a lesson that we should in turn love and serve each other whenever we can.

Lord, thank you for your love. Thank you for showing us what it is to love another. Please help us to love and serve each other as you have loved and served us.

Rachel Knoche

Hunger Fact/Challenge: Nearly 2,000 volunteers in 2017 that gave more than 25,000 hours of service. That is equivalent to 11 full time employees.

Tuesday: I Corinthians 13:4-7 – “Love bears all things”

The word in this passage that stood out to me was “love.” These verses are often read at weddings. These verses try to name all the things love is, but I would like to add a few. Love is sharing a treat, especially if it’s your favorite. Love is waving to a classmate. Love is helping a neighbor with their trash. Love is doing a chore your roommate or partner hates. Love is taking care of yourself. Love is learning a new skill from a friend. Love is sharing a cup of coffee or tea. Love is sharing your memories with others. Love is truly asking “how are you?” Love is found in the ordinary and extraordinary! Love is for all!

Loving God, thank you for all the different things love can be. Amen

Amy Gauthier

Hunger Fact/Challenge: 220,000 people in United Food Bank’s service area are food insecure, including more than 85,000 children.

Wednesday: Romans 5:6-9

In life, it is easy to feel powerless and as if we are not doing the right things. Christ died for us when we were still powerless. This passage is a good reminder that even when we feel that we are powerless, God still loves us, and his love can overcome that. Through following Christ, we no longer have to feel powerless.

Dear God, remind us that through you we have power even when we are feeling powerless.

Amen

Kaitlin Webber

Hunger Fact/Challenge: Our mission is to stabilize the lives of hungry, low-income people within Eastern Maricopa, Gila and Pinal, and Southern Navajo and Apache Counties of Arizona by actively acquiring, storing and distributing large quantities of wholesome and nutritious foods to our network of community and strategic partners, combined with advocacy and educational initiatives that enhance lives.

Thursday, 1 John 4:18-21 – “He first loved us” Good News Translation (GNT)

18 There is no fear in love; perfect love drives out all fear. So then, love has not been made perfect in anyone who is afraid, because fear has to do with punishment.

19 We love because God first loved us. **20** If we say we love God, but hate others, we are liars. For we cannot love God, whom we have not seen, if we do not love others, whom we have seen. **21** The command that Christ has given us is this: whoever loves God must love others also.

The word that spoke to me is LOVE. It is a fundamental requirement of Christians because, as verse 21 states, ...whoever loves God must love others also. There are many ways to LOVE others: helping, feeding, clothing, praying with, sitting with, hugging, discussing, singing, walking with.... Doing anything that lets someone know that you are with them in their concerns, even if you are miles away from them physically. A verse that I remember from childhood: Love is of God and when you love, you are like Him. Be loving to others because you are already loved.

Gracious and Loving God: Thank you for sharing your love with us and showing us how to be loving to others. Help us to recognize those in need and to identify ways to use our gifts to uplift those who are ill, frightened, hungry, tired, alone, cold, and marginalized. Amen.

Deb Hull

Hunger Fact/Challenge: Food comes to United Food Bank from many sources. It comes from the Federal Government through The Emergency Food Assistance Program, a Federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans, by providing them with emergency food and nutrition assistance at no cost.

Friday: I John 3:1-3 – “Called children of God”

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! ... Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.” (NIV)

We are children of God, though our faith in Christ and through God’s love for us. Some people have told me that verses like bother them, because they grew up in abusive homes without a loving father. Regardless of our childhood experiences, God’s love for us is expansive, more than we can comprehend, and he lavishes it on us. And, through our faith in Jesus, when he appears, we will see him as he is—without sin.

Prayer: God help us recognize and rejoice in the love that you have for us. And, help us to share that joy and love.

Katherine Stevens

Hunger Fact/Challenge: Economists estimate that every dollar an Arizona household redeems through SNAP generates about \$1.70 in economic activity.

Saturday: Psalm 6: 1-5 – “God’s steadfast love”**Me**

In this verse King David prays to God because he is injured and ill. This prayer shows David giving all of his fears and worries up to God. This Psalm serves as a reminder that when we feel alone or lost, we can lift those troubles up to the Lord. David expresses his fear that in death he will be alone and reminds us that we must praise God while we are alive. David’s song reinforces that we are not alone in life and we will not be alone in death.

Dear Heavenly Father, please hear our prayers and help us to trust in you and have faith in your presence in our lives.

Rachel Knoche

Hunger Fact/Challenge: United Food Bank receives millions of pounds of food each year through our retail partnerships that allow us to rescue food from grocery retail stores and distribute it to our community partners.

Sunday: John 14:27 – “Jesus give us peace” Good News Translation (Good News Translation)

27 “Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid.”

PEACE is the word that called to me in this verse. “It is my own peace that I give you.”

When we help others in their own sorrows, fears, and worries, do we not share our peace with them? To be “at peace” is not easy for many people. There’s always something to be done or cared for: caring for children and other family members/in-laws, laundry, paying bills, vacuuming, committees, classes, taxes, house payments, social events. We get overwhelmed by the commitments we have and the people we love. Finding one’s own peace – of mind, of body, of soul – is something to pray about and consider the tasks and commitments that will lead to peace.

Loving God: Thank you for sharing your peace with us. Help us to identify the people, places, things, and ideas that keep us from having peace in our daily lives. Give us the courage to stand in our own peace of mind, body, and soul to better serve You and others. Amen.

Deb Hull

Hunger Fact/Challenge: Through our partnership with [Feeding America](#), we have access to donations from corporations like ConAgra, Kraft, and General Mills & Kelloggs.

Monday: John 16:33 – “Peace in Times of Trouble”

“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.” (NIV)

Trouble. I read that word, and internally I hear the main character from the 1957 musical, “The Music Man” singing “Trouble, oh we got trouble ... With a capital "T.” While the song has an upbeat tempo, real-life troubles can be overwhelming, like trouble with a capital T.

God doesn’t promise us a trouble-free life. This verse is quite clear: Jesus knows we will have trouble. And through faith in Jesus Christ we can have peace, even in times of trouble. Even in times of war, strife, division, hunger, worry, pain, loneliness, and sorrow. Whatever our troubles are, take heart; God is beside us. He suffered and died on the cross, so that we can have salvation. Through Him, we can have peace even in times of trouble.

Prayer: God, help us find peace through you. There are so many problems in the world and so many people suffering. We pray for those that are in trouble, struggling, and suffering. Help us see the vision that you have for us and help us share your peace with others.

Katherine Stevens

Hunger Fact/Challenge: United Food Bank receives a lot of food from the community that engages in food drives throughout the year.

Tuesday: Isaiah 26:2-4 – “Kept in peace” Good News Translation (Good News Translation)

- 2** Open the city gates
and let the faithful nation enter,
the nation whose people do what is right.
- 3** You, Lord, give perfect peace
to those who keep their purpose firm
and put their trust in you.
- 4** Trust in the Lord forever;
he will always protect us.

PROTECT is the word that caught my eye in this text. It causes me to think about the people, places, and things I want to protect and to be protected from. Protection of people is important, including their families, their homes, and any animals or items that provide for the family. I think of farmers, ranchers, and fishermen/women who are working to protect the land, forests, animals, and oceans to provide for their own and many other families. I think of police officers and firefighters who choose protection as a profession to help those in need. Additionally, there are doctors, nurses, lab technicians, insurance agents, veterinarians, people who clean buildings and homes, and those who protect people and their property. And, certainly, we acknowledge that it is God who protects us.

Protector of all: Thank you for loving us in ways that protect us from evil, harm, disease, and all that may cause us to leave Your side. Teach us to be protectors of others. Teach us to protect our thoughts and actions. Teach us to respect those who do the work of protecting people and animals. Amen.

Deb Hull

Hunger Fact/Challenge: Businesses and governments entities hold annual food drives every year.

Wednesday: Philippians 4:4-7 – “Pray for peace”

⁴Always be full of joy in the Lord! I say it again—rejoice! ⁵Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. ⁶Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. ⁷If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

In January 2019, the Pew Research Institute released a report about religious practice's relationship to *happiness*. It found that individuals who reported being active in their faith (attending worship services and involved in their faith community) were also more likely to identify as “happy.” But “happiness” is not necessarily “joy”—is it? Rick Warren, evangelical pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest CA once said, “*Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be all right, and the determined choice to praise God in every situation.*”

When “Philippians” was written, Paul was imprisoned in Rome (circa 61AD). The church at Philippi had sent Paul a gift and this letter was a kind of “thank you” note to them. Paul encourages them to “work together with one heart and purpose” (2:2). He tells them to pray and give thanks to God for all God has done, rather than worrying and feeling anxious. Today we might say that Paul encouraged them to see the “glass full to overflowing” rather than “half-full”. Often we can't do this by ourselves; we need to lean on other people—family and friends of course, but also our faith community. Knowing there are people whom we can lean on for support, prayers, encouragement and compassion makes our toughest times more bearable, and helps us feel God's presence and peace surrounding us.

God of compassion, thank you for your constant care and comfort. Help us to be sources of support to our family and friends, to our neighbors, and to the people of our faith community, and help us to seek the support of others in times of struggle and anxiety. Amen.

Val Rehrer

Hunger Fact/Challenge: Some of the largest food drives include Scouting for Food, the National Association of Letter Carriers Food Drive and our Christmas in July food drive that partners with business that are members of the Chambers of Commerce in Mesa, Tempe, Chandler, Gilbert and Queen Creek.

Thursday: Romans 15:12-13 – “Filled with Peace”

I was struck by the word “hope” in verse 13: “May the God of hope fill you will all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (NIV)

When I think of words for God, Price of Peace, and other terms come quickly to mind. God of hope isn’t one that I typically think of. Yet, the imagery is so strong here. I imagine God pouring out joy and peace into a cup, a pitcher, or us so that we are so filled with hope that it overflows, leaving no room for fear, distress, worry, or hate. We are so filled by the Holy Spirit that it flows out from us to others, so much that everyone around can see it.

How do we get that hope? By trusting in God and the power of the Holy Spirit, we can find hope, even in time of difficulties and sorrow.

Prayer: God, please fill our hearts with hope, joy, and peace. And help us reach out to others who are suffering, showing compassion, empathy, and actions through our faith.

Katherine Stevens

Hunger Fact/Challenge: Through our partnership with the [Association of Arizona Food Banks](#) and other food banks in Arizona, we are able to secure large donations through the statewide produce rescue program.

Friday: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14 “At peace with others”

The word in this passage that stood out to me was “peace.” These verses were under the heading of “Final Instructions.” This reminds me of the benediction: “go in peace.” We go in peace knowing we are forgiven, knowing all people are loved by God, knowing peace between people is God’s desire for the world, and knowing we can be a part of God’s plan for humanity. We must take that peace and share it with others by encouraging the disheartened, helping the weak, and (maybe the hardest one) being patient with everyone. While there is unrest between families, friends, communities, and countries, let’s look to God to inspire peace and peaceful actions.

Dear God, thank you for differences in opinions and help us to come to peaceful and productive understandings with one another to spread peace throughout the world. Amen

Amy Gauthier

Hunger Fact/Challenge: The food United Food Bank receives has one destination: to feed hungry people in our community in Arizona.

Saturday: 2 Thessalonians 3:16 – “The Lord of Peace”**Peace**

In this verse Paul prays for the Lord’s peace. Paul specifically asks for peace for the church at Thessalonica, but his plea also extends to peace for all. We as humans have always been and still are in search of the ever elusive peace that Paul requests.

In times of trial we must remember that the bible tells us that the Lord shall be known as the Prince of Peace and that all peace comes from him.

Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Please impart your gift of peace upon us so that we may share it with those around us.

Rachel Knoche

Hunger Fact/Challenge: The USDA defines "food insecurity" as the lack of access, at times, to enough food for all household members. In 2017, an estimated 15 million households were food insecure.

Sunday: 1 Peter 2:21-25 – “Following in Christ’s footsteps”

The word in this passage that stood out to me was “example.” As a child, I was often intimidated by the idea of Christ being the example of the best human. In all the stories, Christ seemed so perfect and how was I, a mere mortal, supposed to reach that level of perfection. It all seemed so impossible and disheartening. As I grew, my understanding changed. I did not need to hold myself to the impossible standard of being Christ. I could just try my best to be Christ-like and extend grace to myself and others when we fall short. We do not have to be perfect like Christ; we simply have to try your best.

Dear God, thank you for the great example of love and grace that is shown through Christ. Help to give grace to ourselves and to others. Amen

Amy Gauthier

Hunger Fact/Challenge: We work with community partners across our service area that operate food programs like food pantries, meal sites, after-school youth meal programs, as well as distributing food on our own through our mobile pantries and Help Yourself Program.

Monday: Hebrews 12:1-3 Joy – “The joy set before you”

“Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” (NIV)

There are lots of words that call out to me in this passage: sin entangles, fix our eyes, author of faith, joy set before him, scorning shame, not grow weary. Today, the image that struck me was the call to run. “Let us run.”

I’ve often thought of the image of walking with Jesus. When I think of my journey of faith, there also have been times where I dawdled, stepped backward, dilly-dallied, and sashayed. But there have rarely been times of full-out running with Jesus. And those were more like a sprint. What if I took my faith and applied it with the vigor and perseverance of a race?

I realize that I don’t want to just walk in my faith. I want to run. How fast could I go? How long could I run? What could I accomplish? I don’t know, but I am assured that God has a race marked out for me. And if I keep my eyes fixed on Jesus, I know I can endure and not grow weary.

Prayer: Lord, help us keep our eyes fixed on you and feel the Holy Spirit with us. Help us avoid the distractions and sinful ways that can entangle us. Help us keep our faith and not grow weary or lose heart.

Katherine Stevens

Hunger Fact/Challenge: You can help by donating food or money. We appreciate both.

Tuesday: 1 Peter 4:12-17 – “The fiery trial”

The word that stood out to me in 1 Peter 4: 12-17 was “suffer”. The word itself has such a strong meaning in a sense that it combines human discomfort with all that makes us feel bad. But it is comforting to know that because we suffer, we share Christ’s suffering as well. In other words, when we find ourselves in times of great suffering and struggle, we should find comfort in the fact that we share Christ’s suffering as well. That by itself gives me comfort and gives me a stronger faith towards God and Christ. If I were to put it into my own phrasing, “every storm may look bad, but above it all, there lies a calm and tranquil heaven that seems untouchable by all that troubles you”.

Lord, we ask that you be with those who suffer and are generally dealing with their own struggles/sufferings. Give them strength and knowledge that we share our suffering with you, so that you may be with us even in times of great distress.

Dylan Weeks

Hunger Fact/Challenge: We depend on many yearly food drives to replenish our shelves when donations decrease. However, with our partnerships with Feeding America and the food industry monetary donations go much further.

Wednesday: Matthew 5: 10-12 – “Persecuted for Christ’s sake”

The word that stuck out to me in this reading is the word "revile", which means to criticize in an abusive or angrily insulting manner. There are many groups of people that act out in the name of God to relentlessly criticize and insult groups of people with ideas and opinions that differ from their own. I think it's interesting that they'd be so hateful to groups of people different than them when the 12th line of that reading says to the reviled groups "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you". People should not be persecuted for what they believe in, period. However, it's nice to know that no matter the criticisms or hatred people spew towards people different than them, everyone is going to end up in the same place in the end.

Lord, you created people in your image. I do not imagine you to be someone who reviles against your own creation. Everyone, and I mean everyone, is created equal; thank you for that. Amen.

Mitchell Weeks

Hunger Fact/Challenge: Why are monetary donations imperative? We can obtain truckloads of nutritious foods for the cost of transporting it to our warehouse.

Thursday: Isaiah 53:4-6 – “Christ suffered for us”

(smitten)

From yourdictionary.com, **smitten** definition: **Smitten** is **defined** as to have struck, hit or blow with a heavy force, or to be very much in love.

Isaiah speaks of the coming Messiah as having been struck by a heavy force, afflicted and suffering for our transgressions. Here, it's the first definition of the word smitten, with connotations of violence and oppression. This word has great meaning for me because I have been smitten in the opposite meaning of the word, the last meaning given by yourdictionary.com above, not only by our Savior, but by a member of the opposite sex as well.

Gracious Lord, May we all be "smitten" by your love for us and ever mindful that you were "smitten" by us for showing us how we should love one another.

Keith Cornell

Hunger Fact/Challenge: Fact, for every \$1 donated we can distribute four meals to hungry people.

Friday: Acts 5: 38-42 – “The Disciples Suffer”

In Acts 5, the apostles are jailed and then freed by an angel of the Lord. After the apostles follow God’s command to teach in the temple court, they are taken to the Sanhedrin, the elders of Israel. Because of their teaching, the apostles are flogged and ordered not to speak in the name of Jesus.

How do the apostles respond to this persecution? They rejoice. “The apostles left the Sanhedrin rejoicing because they have been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.” (NIV)

Rejoicing. That’s not how most of us would respond. They weren’t discouraged or feeling wounded. The apostles were glad their teaching made enough of an impact that they were jailed and beaten. And for that, they rejoiced. They considered it an honor to suffer for Jesus. Rather than stopping or slowing down, they continued teaching with vigor. “Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ!”

Prayer: Dear Lord, we pray for those who are persecuted for their faith. May you guard them and help their hearts rejoice at continuing to serve you and your will in times of trial. Let us not get discouraged.

Katherine Stevens

Hunger Fact/Challenge: More than 623,300 (16.5%) of people in Maricopa County live in poverty. Nearly 1,138,000 (29%) are “working poor.”

Saturday: 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 – “Comfort the suffering”

The word in this passage that stood out to me was “comfort.” We often hear the word comfort in the context of food. I search for comfort food after a long or particularly draining day. When in search of comfort, I long for a bowl of warm soup or a fresh-baked cookie (the ones from Crumble are the best!). Those are familiar tastes and smells that conjure up so many memories. The memories connected to these dishes help me remember I am not alone. We are not alone. Just as we find comfort in our favorite food and loving memories, may we find comfort in knowing God is always with us.

Dear God, thank you for being with us during the highs, the lows, and the in-between. May we find comfort in your presence. Amen

Amy Gauthier

Hunger Fact/Challenge: Monthly donors are instrumental in helping United Food Bank have a sustainable source of income.

Palm Sunday: Luke 19:28-40 – “Drawing Closer to the Cross”

(Palm Sunday/ Sunday of the Passion)

In these verses, Jesus enters Jerusalem. “... at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. If anyone asks you ‘Why are you untying it?’ tell him, the Lord needs it.” (NIV)

The Lord *needs* it. In our consumer-driven world, I wonder how often we ask ourselves: What do I have that Jesus needs? What of my time, talents, or things, does Jesus need? What could I give to others to further Jesus’ message? What could I ask others to provide? What does Jesus need me or need us to do?

Prayer: Lord, I pray that we will look and ask for what you need, listen quietly and patiently, and respond quickly to your answers.

Katherine Stevens

Hunger Fact/Challenge: \$500 monthly donor could provide 872 cases of turkey breast and provide 24,000 meals!

Monday: Psalm 49: 7,8, 15 – “The cost of reconciliation”

Though written as a "Wisdom Psalm" and about wealth, it reminds us that wonderful as reconciliation is, often it can come at a cost. A cost to our pride, a financial cost, a cost of putting away and old belief or understanding to take on a new one. This is often why we avoid being reconciled: it brings with it risk. Yet, sticking with a financial theme, sometimes the biggest risks have the biggest payoffs. Who might you be avoiding now because the cost of reconciling could be high? Might a reconciled future be better than now? Might reconciliation be worth the cost?

God of Jesus, on the cross at great cost to you, you reconciled all the world to yourself. Give us the courage to do what we may need to do to reconcile with one another. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Katie von Bora Luther

Hunger Fact/Challenge: \$250 monthly donor would provide 12,000 meals!

Tuesday: Romans 6:3-5 – “Buried with him in baptism”

Some of the most ancient churches had baptismal fonts that looked like a grave on the floor of their baptistry. Dipping the child or having the adult stand in them reminded all the baptized was being baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Sin and grace are powerful masters. Life without Christ is slavery to sin. Life with Christ is being a slave to God and righteousness. The baptized share in Christ's righteous death and resurrection. Sin does not have the final say nor hold the ultimate power over us.

Righteous God, thank you for raising us sinners to new life. Thank you for the gift of baptism that reminds us always of your claim on us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Samuel Simon Schmucker

Hunger Fact/Challenge: \$100 monthly donor would provide 4,800 meals and help nearly 530 families through emergency food services.

Wednesday: Philippians 2:5-11 - “Obedient Unto Death”

To serve God is to serve others. One cannot be in service to God if one is not in service to others. The passage says Jesus humbled himself by his obedience to God. How can we humble ourselves in service to God? Service to me is a profound iteration of love. Service is meant to touch the hearts of others and oneself and by doing so form a spiritual connection that strengthens the bonds of what it means to be human. Human beings are not perfect but God’s love for us is. Perhaps by expressing love outwards in service to others we can enrich the lives of those around us and grow in our capacity for love. For God so loved the world he gave his only begotten son so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. God was willing to give his son for the world. How much are we willing to give for God?

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

- 6** Who, being in very nature^[a] God,
 did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
7 rather, he made himself nothing
 by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant,
 being made in human likeness.
8 And being found in appearance as a man,
 he humbled himself
 by becoming obedient to death—
 even death on a cross!
9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
 and gave him the name that is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
 in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
 to the glory of God the Father.

We ask our Heavenly Father that he bless our works to his service and the service of others.
 Amen.

Jake Roselius

Hunger Fact/Challenge: \$20 monthly donor would provide food for a whole year to a student who goes home hungry every day.

Maundy Thursday: Luke 22:14-22 – “The Lamb of God”

Is. A simple two letter word. A word we often use. Here the word serves a very important purpose. Jesus did not say: This is like my body. Jesus said it IS my body. It IS the new covenant in my blood" When we reach out for the bread and wine of communion, we are reaching out for Jesus. True, at any time the bread and wine if chemically tested will remain bread and wine. Yet they are much more. Much more. Often something happens when we receive these elements. I see it in the faces of those reaching out. I see it in their eyes. Something happens when a community of diverse ages, backgrounds, races, ethnic groups, genders, sexual orientations, intellects, political parties, and incomes take from the same loaf and drink from the same cup. There IS a oneness experienced around the table of Jesus like no other place. There IS a presence glimpsed like no other place. Here we catch a glimpse of something. Here we catch a glimpse of someone. Here this IS Jesus Christ given to and for us.

God of the communion table, we thank you for the presence of Jesus in simple bread and wine. May we come that presence for others as we leave the table and venture into the world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Johann von Staupitz

Hunger Fact/Challenge: A \$10 monthly donation can help provide 480 meals a year and feed 53 families.

Good Friday: John 19:28-30 – “Jesus dies on the cross”

Ours is a theology of the cross. That is, it is *not* a theology of glory where God is seen only in the great and good events of our life and the world. God is often better viewed in the lowly, the suffering, and the struggles of life. In a Holocaust internment camp one prisoner once asked, of another, "Where is God?" The other replied, "In the ovens in the crematorium". Indeed. On the cross of Jesus God is there. In our very worst moments in life, God is there. Jesus, in this text says, "It is finished". We who know the rest of this story know God was not yet finished with Jesus. The God of the cross, the God with us in our times of strife is not yet finished with us. Stay tuned for the rest of the story.

God of our ups and downs, joys and heartaches, we thank you for Jesus and his willingness to go to the cross. Give us strength and hope from Jesus' death as we await new life in our times of pain and suffering. Amen

Martin Luther

Hunger Fact/Challenge: Last year, United Food Bank fed more than 3,000 children by providing 31,169 back pack buddy bags and more than 309,000 afterschool meals and snacks.

Holy Saturday: John 19:38-42 – “A new tomb”

A new tomb. How excited we can become over that which is new. A new car! A new electronic gadget! A new hair style! Yet newness can also be frightening. What changes might something or some place new bring? A new tomb. This is a hint of something underway, something that will be entirely new, something that will bring constant newness to human life and human history. Be patient. That newness awaits. It will be soon! And it will be everlasting.

As we stand vigil at the tomb, trembling, confused, and worried, we ask that you surround us with a faith and trust in you that is wavering. Hold us fast as we await a time and a faith that will be newly restored. Amen

Phil Melancthon

Hunger Fact/Challenge: In 2016-17, United Food Bank provided more than 22,500,000 meals to hungry children, families and seniors across five Arizona counties Easter Sunday

Easter Sunday: Matthew 28:1-10 – “He is risen!”

Go quickly and tell! We miss this part of the Easter story. There is fear, there is great joy, Matthew tells us. But there is also a job to do. Go and tell! The resurrection is not a possession for followers of Jesus to hoard. Neither is it something to be displayed like a rare collectible. It is a gift that is to be shared.....and shared.....and shared. The women are to go and tell "the brothers". The brothers are to go and tell others. Generation after generation have shared this story. It is a story worth repeating to a world in need of hope and restoration. The church is always one generation away from extinction. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Celebrate with great joy.....and go quickly and tell!

Thank you, O God, for the resurrection of Jesus Christ! Fill our life with new life. Give us the strength and courage to go quickly and tell! In Jesus' risen name we joyfully pray. Amen.

Pastor Gary

Hunger Fact/Challenge: Grace Lutheran Church in downtown Phoenix has weekly opportunities to volunteer with the poor and homeless. The contact information for Grace Lutheran Church is officemanager@graceinthecity.com; phone number: 602-258-3787.

ULC is always receiving offerings of money for world hunger.