

### **Sunday January 1, 2017, New Year's Day**

Matthew 2:11 (NIV) On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

On this New Year's Day we go with the Magi to Bethlehem to where the baby Jesus has been born and join with them worshipping God's love, provision, and goodness. Our human response to God's great love is worship and awe, and the giving of our best gifts for God to use to transform the world. God draws all people to provide for one another the means to live into our faith in Jesus Christ!

What gift is God asking you to share in this New Year? Today will you chose to begin this New Year by opening your heart to Jesus Christ and being God's gift?

May your New Year begin in worship of Jesus Christ and the transformation of your heart and life!

### **Monday January 2, 2017**

Isaiah 42:6 (NIV) "I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles."

One of the roles of a Prophet was to be a mouthpiece for God speaking to God's people. May the words of God spoken through the prophet Isaiah speak to us at the beginning of this New Year: That we were created to be in covenant with God and a light to all people!

Do you rely upon God's promises? Today will you trust God to hold your hand, to keep you faithfully, and to guide you to be a light to others?

May you walk faithfully into this New Year hand in hand with God trusting God to shine through you!

### **Tuesday January 3, 2017**

Psalm 29:4, 11 (NIV) The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is majestic. The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace.

The Psalmist teaches us that God is powerful and majestic throughout this psalm and then concludes the psalm with the affirmation that God gives strength to God's people and blesses them with peace. As God's people we experience powerful storms that are overwhelming in our lives but we are not overwhelmed by them because of the great love God has for us, filling us with the strength we need and placing peace within our hearts!

When has God's powerful presence given you strength? Today will you let go of fear in the midst of the storms in your life and accept God's gift of strength and peace?

May you trust fully today in God who is capable of creating peace for you in the midst of the storm!

### **Wednesday January 4, 2017**

Acts 10:34-35 (MSG) Peter fairly exploded with his good news: "It's God's own truth, nothing could be plainer: God plays no favorites! It makes no difference who you are or where you're from—if you want God and are ready to do as he says, the door is open."

God's good news is not a private thing, it should explode out of us as we share God's truth with others. God's love is available to every person who desires a relationship with God and are willing to live a joy filled loving life. The door is always open!

Are you ready to explode with the news of God's love? Today will you walk through door and fully embrace God's love for you?

May Peter's good news be your good news today: You are loved by God and the door to relationship is open!

### **Thursday January 5, 2017**

Ephesians 1:17 (NIV) I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

The Apostle Paul is teaching us to pray for one another and ask God to give spiritual gifts. The gifts of wisdom and revelation enable the receiver to discern and know God more intimately because God is revealing God's self to the seeker. With wisdom we come to know who we are and that we belong to and are dependent upon God for all of life!

Do you pray boldly for others and yourself? Today will you accept your spiritual gifts so you may know God better?

May you pray boldly today and receive God's spiritual gifts to grow in relationship with God!

### **Friday January 6, 2016 Epiphany**

Matthew 2:1 (KJV) Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.

Today is Epiphany, twelve days after Jesus' birth, a day when wise scholars came from the east to reveal Jesus' birth to king Herod and the religious leaders of Jerusalem. The season of Epiphany is an invitation for each of us to engage in the holy work of revealing Jesus, God with us, to the world!

How are you a light showing others Jesus? Today will you accept your sacred role as a wise one revealing and shining a light on Jesus to those who don't know him?

May you be an Epiphany light for others today so they may know Jesus!

### **Saturday January 7, 2017**

Matthew 3:13 (NIV) Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

Following the Magi's visit the gospel of Matthew touches upon Joseph taking Mary and Jesus to Egypt until king Herod died and then moved the family to Nazareth at God's direction, then we jump to the adult Jesus coming to be baptized by John. Jesus began his ministry by first being baptized. We begin our Christian lives with baptism as well!

Do you remember your baptism? Today will you strive to live into your baptism vows?

May you remember today that Christian life and ministry begins with your baptism!

### **Sunday January 8, 2017 Baptism of the Lord Day**

Matthew 3:16-17 (NIV) As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a

dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Jesus was baptized by John to fulfill the Scriptures but it was so much more as he emerged from the water and the Holy Spirit dove from heaven and anointed him. God spoke, and declared Jesus as God's beloved Son with whom God was well pleased. Jesus modeled for us the transformation that happens at baptism when we are received into a new Spirit and Love filled relationship with God!

When do you most often sense God's Holy Spirit in your life? Today will you remember your baptism and welcome anew the anointing of the Holy Spirit and God's love in your life? (If you have never been baptized I urge you to find a pastor to explore with you becoming baptized and entering fully into a life with Jesus Christ!)

May you be empowered today by the Holy Spirit diving on you with God's words of love, relationship, and affirmation ringing in your ears!

### **Monday January 9, 2017**

Isaiah 49:1 (NIV) Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the Lord called me; from my mother's womb he has spoken my name.

The Prophet speaks to us of how God calls to us all of our lives even before birth speaking our names, shaping our identities, claiming us as beloved children with a mission in the world. God gives each of us gifts and talents to be used to improve the lives of others and call them back into relationship with God. In God's eyes each of us is worthy as God's child!

Do you hear God speaking your name? Today will you embrace your identity as God's child, deeply loved, and work to live into your ministry?

May you hear God's call in your life today and respond with joy!

### **Friday January 13, 2017**

1 Corinthians 1:2-3 (NIV) To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul greeted the church in Corinth and us as those who have received healing, wholeness, and grace from God through Jesus Christ. When we call upon

Jesus to be the Lord of our lives with our whole hearts the power of God flows through us in amazing ways. This relationship is not earned by us but is the freely given gift of God that gives our lives ultimate meaning, purpose, and love!

Have you heard God's invitation to be a holy person? Today will you say "Yes" to Jesus as the Lord of your life and accept the power God gives to transform your life?

May you hear Paul's greeting today as an invitation for you to call on Jesus and accept God's gifts for you!

### **Saturday January 14, 2016**

John 1:32-34 (NIV) Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."

John the Baptist had become well known as a holy man who practiced the spiritual disciplines he preached and was revered as a spiritual teacher. John spoke with all of his authority to identify Jesus as God's Chosen One who baptized with the Holy Spirit. May we heed John's testimony and place our trust in Jesus Christ the one who gives us the Holy Spirit!

Does God direct you to share your knowledge of Jesus with others? Today will you trust the testimony of John and become a follower of Jesus Christ?

May John direct your attention and heart to Jesus Christ, God's Chosen One, who baptizes with the Holy Spirit!

### **Sunday January 15, 2017**

John 1:37-39 (NIV) When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him.

John the Baptist was with two of his disciples when Jesus walked by and he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" The disciples immediately began following Jesus wanting to find out for themselves who he was, and Jesus invited them to come and see for

themselves. Jesus invites us too to come and spend time with him and grow in a life changing relationship with God's Chosen!

Have you heard Jesus' invitation to follow him? Today will you accept Jesus' invitation to spend time with him?

May you respond to Jesus' question of "What do you want?" as an invitation to life transforming relationship!

### **Monday January 16, 2017 MLK Jr. Day**

Amos 5:24 (NIV) But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never failing stream!

Martin Luther King Jr. often quoted this passage from the Prophet Amos as a call to faithful reliance upon God in the midst of the trials of racial profiling and rampant social, cultural, and economic injustice. This passage is a source of strength and hope whenever God's people lose their way and break their covenant with God. It is when we trust in God's providence and work with God, that justice rolls like a river and righteousness never fails!

How do you honor MLK Jr.'s legacy? Today will you choose to let God work through you as a source of justice and righteousness in your community?

May the witness of prophets like Amos and MLK Jr. empower your journey with God to let justice roll and righteousness never fail!

### **Tuesday January 17, 2017**

Psalms 27:4-5 (NIV) One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.

The Psalmist leads us in seeking what is most important in this life, a relationship with God at the center of our lives. Troubles will find us, however when our hearts and lives are in God's hands then we are given the strength, protection, and comfort we need to overcome all that transpires with abiding love!

What do you seek from God? Today will you seek to be fully in God's loving presence and allow God to anoint and fill your life with Holy living?

May the Lord our God be your safe dwelling place today and always!

**Wednesday January 18, 2017**

Psalm 27:7-8 (NLT) Hear me as I pray, O Lord. Be merciful and answer me! My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me." And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming."

The Psalmist leads us today in speaking to God with all of our emotions, our doubts and fears as well as our faith and joy. Because of the things we are going through there will be times when we feel distant from God but the assurance we have is that God is always as close as our heart beat. Take courage from the Psalmist and pray with an open heart about everything in your life with God!

Do you hear God inviting you to conversation in your heart? Today will you respond to God like the Psalmist and speak your emotions in full confidence that God wants to hear everything?

May you feel empowered today to speak freely of your whole life and all of your emotions to God in prayer!

**Thursday January 19, 2017**

1 Corinthians 17-18 (NIV) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

The Apostle Paul redirected the attention of the faithful in Corinth from arguing over whose baptism was most prestigious to focusing upon the power of the cross of Jesus Christ to claim and redeem their lives. The Word of God transforms an instrument of shame and death into the means of our salvation and is a symbol of God's redeeming power in our lives!

What do you focus on in your life? Today will you seek God's promises of salvation in the power of the cross of Jesus Christ?

May your focus today be upon God's power through the cross of Christ!

**Friday January 20, 2017**

Matthew 4:12, 17 (NIV) When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

Jesus' public ministry began after John the Baptist was put in prison, and he left home in Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum on the shore of Galilee. Jesus called all people to examine their lives, acknowledge where their thoughts and habits led them away from a healthy life with God, and then to make changes immediately, because God's kingdom is near. Jesus extends this same urgent call to us today!

Where in your life do you need to repent? Today will you respond to Jesus' call and do the work of examining and changing your life to be in alignment with God's love?

May Jesus speak his words of repentance and grace into your life today and may they bring great blessing and transformation to you!

### **Saturday January 21, 2017**

Matthew 4:19-20 (NIV) "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him.

We read this account of Jesus calling his first disciples and we wonder at what we would do if we were one of the fishermen. Would we leave our livelihoods and families behind to follow Jesus? I give thanks for the countless numbers of disciples who have responded to Jesus' call through the centuries and have followed him!

How have you responded to Jesus' call in your life? Today will you will you take seriously your calling to fish for people in Jesus' name?

May you hear and respond today to Jesus as he calls you to a new life as his disciple!

Please pray for all those who have left behind jobs, families, and community to become pastors and missionaries!

### **Sunday January 22, 2017**

Matthew 4:23 (NIV) Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.



Jesus called disciples to "Come, follow me" and then went throughout the region of Galilee teaching and healing. The Gospel of Matthew is written so that Jesus' call is a living invitation to each person who hears or reads. An invitation to engage in Jesus' ministry of connecting to others and sharing the fruits of the kingdom of God!

Do you hear Jesus calling you to experience new life? Today will you give your heart to Jesus and join him in living the good news of the kingdom and experience the power of healing in his name?

May you respond to Jesus' call today and experience first hand the good news and the healing it brings!

### **Monday January 23, 2017**

1 Corinthians 1:25 (NIV) For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Paul's letter to the church in Corinth to address issues of people segregating themselves by class, ethnicity, social status, and ability to argue convincingly, addresses issues we still struggle with in and out of the church today. Paul clearly puts forth for all of us the truth that God is totally beyond our human capacities of wisdom and strength. We are all loved and treasured for who we are in God's eyes not who we think we ought to be!

Do you need Jesus' help to stop comparing yourself to others? Today will you let go of trying to be seen as wise by others and accept God's love in Jesus Christ?

May you experience peace and joy today by letting go of the need to be wise in human eyes and embracing God's love for you!

### **Tuesday January 24, 2017**

Micah 6:8 (NIV) He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

This verse is the conclusion of a lively exchange between God and the prophet Micah where God first speaks of how God has issues with how ungrateful the people of Israel have been and Micah asks how extravagant should the people's response be. God declares that what is needed is walking with God in humility and being people who act with love and justice!

Do you set up barriers to a relationship with God? Today will you allow yourself to simply be with God as a person of humility, love, mercy, and justice?

May you find peace of heart today by simply being your true self with God!

### **Wednesday January 25, 2017**

Psalm 15:1a-3 (NIV) Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart; whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, and casts no slur on others.

The Psalmist teaches us how we are transformed as we learn to be people of faith and grace. We live in covenant with God and our neighbors doing what is right, speaking truthfully from our hearts, building up our character and one another. The life of faith is about living Gods love so we become God's love!

How are you doing in living faithfully? Today will you accept God's loving invitation to grow in faithful living?

May you grow today in righteousness as you strive to speak from the heart words that uplift and share God's love!

### **Thursday January 26, 2017**

Matthew 5:1-2 (NIV) Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.

Jesus has been teaching and healing, and crowds of people are coming from everywhere to experience Jesus. So he climbed up on a mountainside and sat down in Rabbinic style and began to teach everyone how to be people of faith. Jesus begins by teaching about the attitudes that we must grow into in order to become his disciples!

What are you bringing to Jesus? Today will you center yourself in God's love and grow into being Jesus' disciples?

May you receive healing and wholeness today from resting in God's Word!

### **Friday January 27, 2017**

1 Corinthians 1:21 (MSG) Since the world in all its fancy wisdom never had a clue when it came to knowing God, God in his wisdom took delight in using what the

world considered dumb—preaching, of all things!—to bring those who trust him into the way of salvation.

The Apostle Paul teaches that our preconceptions and worldly wisdom often blind us to knowing and being in relationship with God. Paul tells us to stop trying to label and quantify God, and instead take delight in God's self revelation through Jesus Christ crucified on a cross to save each of us who believe in his power to cancel our sins and restore our relationship with God!

Are you ready to let go of your preconceptions about God? Today will you embrace God's wisdom in Jesus our Christ, trusting him with your heart, mind, and soul, and walk into the way of salvation?

May you see and hear God's wisdom in Jesus Christ today and trust him to lead you into the way of salvation!

### **Saturday January 28, 2017**

Matthew 5:5-6 (MSG) You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought. You're blessed with you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.

I love how Eugene Peterson has translated the Beatitudes, he especially captured Jesus' teaching that helps us avoid comparison, envy, and greed when we know and accept who we are as God's child. The second part of this teaching is that true blessing comes when we hunger for God. Together these produce peace and joy in our lives!

What is the level of peace and joy in your life? Today will you ask Jesus to help you accept yourself as loved by God and seek to love God with all your heart?

May you experience today being content with being 'you' and receiving God's amazing Love!

### **Sunday January 29, 2017**

Matthew 5:8 (MSG) You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

The Beatitudes are cumulative, meaning that each one builds upon the ones that came before. As we live into each of the Beatitudes as individuals and community our

relationships with God and one another grow. When we can see God at work within us we have the right lens to clearly see God at work in others and throughout the world!

Where do you see God? Today will you put your inside world in God's order and see God in others?

May you come alive today as you live into the Beatitudes and your potential as God's beloved child!

### **Monday January 30, 2017**

Isaiah 58:6-7 (NIV) "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"

The Prophet Isaiah is functioning here as the mouthpiece of God speaking to the people about how true fasting is not lip-service on one day a year but a choosing of practices that break the yoke of injustice, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, providing shelter, and caring for family. God's words are just as timely for us in the 21st century who seek to follow Jesus to care for those who are most in need in our communities!

What kind of fasting do you do? Today will you choose to follow Jesus in fasting from injustice and acting with justice and compassion?

May your words and actions today follow your trust in Jesus and his ongoing work of breaking the yoke of injustice!

### **Tuesday January 31, 2017**

Psalms 112:4-5 (NIV) Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous. God will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice.

The Psalmist wrote this psalm to encourage God's people to be faithful and loving even in the midst of challenging times. When we live fully as God's beloved people we bring the light of God to difficult circumstances by the graciousness of how we conduct ourselves, the generosity in which we give of our time, talents, and treasures, and how we work compassionately for those experiencing injustice!

How are being a light in the darkness for God's people? Today will you seek to be God's gracious, compassionate, and generous servant?

May your thoughts and actions show God's love, compassion, and generosity to others today!

### **Wednesday February 1, 2017**

1 Corinthians 2:4-5 (NIV) My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

The pharisee Saul, persecutor of Christians, had been struck down in his arrogance by the power of God, and he was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and transformed into the Apostle Paul, passionate follower of Jesus Christ. Paul knew that words of human wisdom would lead people away from God and that what the Corinthian people needed was a firsthand experience of the Holy Spirit to be the foundation of their faith in Jesus. We too need the Holy Spirit to ground our faith in God's power!

What is the foundation of your faith in Jesus Christ? Today will you ask Jesus to fill you with the Holy Spirit and ground your faith in God's power?

May the power of the Holy Spirit fill you today and empower your faith as a passionate follower of Jesus Christ!

### **Thursday February 2, 2017**

Matthew 5:13 (MSG) "Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage."

This is Jesus' first teaching following the Beatitudes where he declares to his disciples and followers, "You are the salt of the earth." Sodium chloride, salt, is stable and never loses its flavor, and Jesus teaches that we are to be his flavor bringing out God's glory everywhere we go. Jesus gives meaning, purpose, and holiness to our lives!

Are you salt-seasoning bringing out God-flavors in others? Today will you invite Jesus to be the salt-seasoning of your life and give you meaning and purpose?

May you embrace your earth saltiness today and bring out the God-flavors everywhere you go!

### **Friday February 3, 2017**

Matthew 5:14 (MSG) Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill.

Jesus spoke boldly to his disciples and followers about their new way of being in the world. They are to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world, it is impossible for human beings to see color without light. Our mission is to be Jesus' light with boldness so the world will see and know God's love!

Who has been Jesus's light in your life enabling you to see God in technicolor? Today will you live boldly being Jesus' light so others can see the beauty of God?

May you embrace today Jesus' call for you to be his light in world enabling others to see the colors of God's love!

### **Saturday February 4, 2017**

Matthew 5:16 (NIV) In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Jesus teaches that it is his light that shines through us bringing the gospel to life, drawing people to him. Archbishop William Temple is quoted as saying, "The church is the only organization on earth that exists for those who are not its members." We are called by Jesus to carry his light to where people are experiencing darkness!

How is your Jesus shine? Today will you seek to shine with Jesus' light everywhere he leads you?

May your life shine brightly with Jesus' light today and every day!

### **Sunday February 5, 2017**

Matthew 5:17 (NIV) "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

As Jesus taught his disciples he made it very clear that God had sent him to lead by fully living the covenant of God's Laws and fully living the relationship with God that the Prophets proclaimed. Jesus invites us to fully live with him by being the salt of covenant and the light of right relationship with God. It is a high calling that requires us to fully trust Jesus as we set aside our own agendas and follow him!

Do you do what is easy or what is right with God? Today will you commit yourself to following Jesus and living in covenant with God?

May you trust Jesus today to lead you into eternal life as salt and light in God's covenantal love!

### **Monday February 6, 2017**

Deuteronomy 30:15-16 (NRSV) See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess.

Moses was delivering his final teachings to the Hebrew people to prepare them for life in the promised land across the Jordan, a life he would not be joining them in. He emphasized in the strongest terms the stark difference between living in covenant with God and the rapid diminishment of life without God. We too have a choice today and every day, I urge you to listen to Moses and choose life with God!

Do you make a conscious choice to live with God every day? Today will you choose to love and live in fellowship with God?

May your choices today honor God and be filled with abundant life!

### **Tuesday February 7, 2017**

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 (NIV) ...Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life...

Moses is aware that his people will be presented with all kinds of choices and temptations when they leave the desert for the promised land, and he urges them to choose God. We too are often overwhelmed with options and choices (just look at the options on every grocery shelf!) but Moses simplifies it for us. When we choose to love God and listen and hold fast to God we make the best choice and find life, belonging, purpose, and love for ourselves and our children!

What do you do when overwhelmed with choices? Today will you consistently choose God and welcome the blessings God lovingly places in your life?

May you experience peace of heart and mind today as you choose God over the temptations of the world!

### **Wednesday February 8, 2017**

Psalm 119:1-2 (NIV) Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.

The beginning of the longest Psalm points to the Psalmist's teaching that the way to be blessed is to seek the Lord with all our heart and to live God's law. This Psalm is an amazing work of poetry that grounds us in God's love found in God's commandments as it works its way through the Hebrew alphabet with each verse starting with the same letter in each section. The care and joy of the Poet is the care and joy we need to take in our relationship with God and living God's Word!

Do you experience freedom and joy living in God's Word? Today will you join the Psalmist in delighting in a living relationship with God that uses all of your creative gifts?

May you experience God's Law today as loving boundaries that give you freedom to express your best self!

### **Thursday February 9, 2017**

1 Corinthians 3:6 (NIV) I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.

The Apostle Paul was explaining to the church people in Corinth that God is the true source of spiritual growth and that he and Apollos as spiritual teachers are God's servants. This is an apt reminder for us in the 21st century that we may have beloved pastors and spiritual guides whom we revere, but we can not love them more than we love God. Good pastors and shepherds direct their people to love, trust, and depend upon God!

Do you have a pastor who directs you to God? Today will you trust that God is growing you spiritually with love?

May you honor today your spiritual teachers and give glory to God who is the source of your faith, growth, and love!



### **Friday February 10, 2017**

Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV) Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Jesus was speaking about the dangers of deeply held seething anger that festers in the soul and causes harm to self and others. He teaches that we can not be in a good relationship with God when we are holding this kind of anger within us. We must work things out with other people releasing our grievances and anger so that we can once again love God and others with an open heart!

Do you hold onto hurt and anger against others? Today will you ask Jesus to give you the strength and courage to release your pain and receive his reconciliation and healing?

May your heart be made whole and loving today as Jesus helps you to release anger, hurt, and pain!

### **Saturday February 11, 2017**

Matthew 5:37 (MSG) In making your speech sound more religious, it becomes less true. Just say 'yes' and 'no.' When you manipulate words to get your own way, you go wrong.

Jesus was very clear and direct about how people should use language to speak truth and to not embellish and manipulate others. He knew how easily we deceive ourselves by how we use words to reframe our thoughts and lead ourselves astray. To live as people of faith is to follow Jesus' example of being clear, direct, and simple with 'yes' and 'no!'

Have you listened recently to the words you speak? Today will you be mindful of the words you speak and seek to be clear and direct in all you say to God and others?

May your words today reflect your faith in Jesus and his practice of being clear and direct in all he said!

### **Sunday February 12, 2017**

Matthew 5:17 (NIV) "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

Jesus spoke early in his 'Sermon on the Mount' about his identity and purpose. His was and is the Messiah, the one who is the embodiment of God's Law and the teachings of the Prophets.

Jesus teaches us to see the heart of God, the way for us to focus upon God's heart, and live holy lives in God's heart!

Whom do you see when you look at Jesus? Today will you open your eyes to see and know Jesus as the embodiment of God's love for all of creation?

May you be filled with wonder today as you encounter Jesus the fullness of God's everlasting love for you!

### **Monday February 13, 2017**

Leviticus 19:1-2 (NIV) The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.'"

This passage speaks to our relationship with God, that we, the beings God created in God's image, are to be holy because God is holy. Then Moses spoke to God's people about how they are to honor and respect God and one another as people of justice, integrity, and love. We too are to be people of justice, integrity, and love as we live into what it means to be holy in the image of God!

Are you mindful of being holy when you make decisions? Today will you seek to be holy by making choices to act with justice, integrity, and love?

May your thoughts and actions today, and every day, show that you are made in the image of our holy God!

### **Tuesday February 14, 2017 Valentine's Day**

1 John 4:7 (NIV) Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

God is love, a truth revealed to us throughout the holy Scriptures, and in the teachings, life, death, and resurrection of God's son Jesus Christ. God is the source and wellspring of love, kindness, and compassion. We show that we know God whenever we love others through our words and actions!

How are you showing God's love? Today will you be God's love and kindness to every person you encounter?

May you be God's valentine today to every person you encounter so they too will know that God is love!

### **Wednesday February 15, 2017**

Psalm 119:37 (NIV) Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.

The Psalmist offers us wisdom in asking God to help us keep our eyes and hearts away from distractions so that we can focus on what is most important, living in God's Word with God. Distraction and wandering eyes are not just a modern malady but have been a constant struggle with God's people. Whenever you find yourself distracted by internet ads and other worthless things follow the Psalmist's advice and ask God to help you refocus!

Do your eyes lead you away from God? Today will you be mindful of how everything you see can be a reminder to thank and praise God?

May you trust in God's Word today and call upon Jesus to refocus your wandering attention back to God!

### **Thursday February 16, 2017**

1 Corinthians 3:10-11 (NIV) By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul was a wise teacher and evangelist as he shared the wisdom of building a Christian life. The foundation of being a Christian is always Jesus Christ. Each teaching, tradition, and spiritual practice must have congruity and integrity with Jesus as we build a true life as his follower!

Who are the wise builders in your Christian life? Today will you examine with a critical eye and test the building practices of your life in Jesus Christ and make sure of their integrity and congruity with Jesus?

May your Christian life and identity be built upon the firm foundation of Jesus Christ!

### **Friday February 17, 2017**

1 Corinthians 3:16 (NIV) Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?

The Apostle Paul has a powerful message for the Corinthians and us, as he points out that we individually and collectively are God's temple, and God's Holy Spirit chooses to live in us. This is a reminder that our bodies are important and we need to take excellent care of them because God dwells in us, the people, not in buildings. We are a whole of body, heart, mind, and soul bearing the image of God!

What does it mean to you to be God's temple? Today will you take care of your whole self, including care of body, heart, mind, and soul because you are chosen and loved by God?

May you cherish and honor today our God who lovingly chooses to live in us!

### **Saturday February 18, 2017**

Matthew 5:38-39 (NIV) "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.

Jesus' teachings were radical for his time and unfortunately for our time too. His call to discipleship asks us to not retaliate when someone affronts us, insults us, or offers bodily harm. As children of God and followers of Christ we are called to live lives of loving forgiveness and grace, and to rely fully upon God because we can not do this by ourselves!

How are you at forgiving others or yourself? Today will call on Jesus whenever you are tempted to hit back or slam another person because you experience offense and ask for the grace to forgive?

May Jesus give you strength and courage today to change your responses to others and offer forgiveness!

### **Sunday February 19, 2017**

Matthew 5:43-45 (NIV) "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Jesus reminds his hearers of the conventional wisdom of the day and then adds the little word 'but' that changes everything. He teaches us that love is not exclusive but encompasses the evil and good, and that when we encounter those seeking to harm us

to transform enmity through love and prayer. When we live and act like Jesus we truly are God's children!

Are you conditional with your love and prayers? Today will you engage in the hard work of changing your perceptions of others and how you act towards them by embodying Jesus' message of radical love?

May you be today a child of God by radically loving neighbors and enemies alike as Jesus did!

### **Monday February 20, 2017**

Exodus 24:12 (NIV) The Lord said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commandments I have written for their instruction."

Moses was called by God to climb a mountain, be alone in God's presence, and receive God's commandments for Moses and God's people. This was a moment of transition for God's people and for Moses' leadership as he received the vision and mission for leading the Hebrew people. Mountaintops offer us an opportunity to spend quality time with God, and receive perspective on what God is calling us to do and be, as individuals and communities!

Have you had a mountain top experience with God? Today will you set aside time and space to clear your heart and mind to experience God anew and receive vision and direction for your life?

May you listen today for God's invitation to spend Holy time alone with God!

### **Tuesday February 21, 2017**

Exodus 24:17-18 (NIV) To the Israelites the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

The Israelites had remained on the plain below the mountain where they could see the glory of the Lord when Moses climbed and then waited six days for God's invitation to come to the summit. Moses went into the cloud that appeared to be fire and spent forty transforming days in God's presence learning and becoming holy. God invites us to leave our normal environments to spend formational time alone with God to grow and learn to become holy!

Do you have a special place where you spend quality alone time with God? Will you open your schedule book today and make appointments to spend special time alone with God each week?

May you answer God's invitation today to come away to a special place and spend quality time with God!

### **Wednesday February 22, 2017**

Psalm 28:7 (NIV) The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.

This is one of David's Psalms that he wrote when he was in the midst of adversity. Yesterday afternoon my Eye Dr. gave me news I had been fearing as my eyesight has been diminishing, I have Glaucoma, but it can be treated with daily eyedrops so I won't lose my vision. This morning this verse spoke of my joy and praise of God as I trust my whole self to God's amazing care and love, and I invite you to make this verse your verse too!

What fear do you need to let go of and trust to God? Today will you pray Psalm 28:7 and experience God's amazing help and joy in your life?

May the Lord be your strength and shield today as you trust your heart, receive help, and experience joy!

### **Thursday February 23, 2017**

2 Peter 1:20-21 (NIV) Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Peter wrote to early Christians to encourage them in their faith and to explain how God reveals God's self through the prophecy of Scripture. Prophecy is not about telling the future but speaking about the present reality of God's will being active in our lives. The Holy Spirit continues to work in and through us speaking God's truth!

How does Peter's explanation affect your understanding of the prophets in the Scriptures? Today will you open your heart and mind to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life?

May the Holy Spirit open your heart and mind today to God's Word!

**Friday February 24, 2017**

Matthew 17:1 (NIV) After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

Previous to this hike Jesus had told his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem where he will be killed and raised to life on the third day, and Peter had been rebuked by Jesus when he tried to dissuade him from this course of action and Jesus had told him that he was focused on human concerns not God's concerns. Jesus was leading Peter, James, and John to a place where they could experience the presence of 'God in Jesus' in a profound new way. We too, need to be led by Jesus to a place away from our everyday life to experience 'God in Jesus' in a profound new way!

Do you tend to focus on human concerns rather than God's concerns? Are you going to follow Jesus today and trust him to bring you into the presence of God?

May your trust in Jesus lead you to a life changing encounter today with God!

**Saturday February 25, 2017**

2 Peter 1:16-17 (NIV) For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Peter was explaining that he and the other apostles of Christ were not following any clever script but speaking powerfully from their lived experience with Jesus and God glorifying Jesus in their presence. Peter is a wonderful example to us that simply speaking of Jesus and how he has changed our lives in our own words can be life transforming and bring others into relationship with Jesus!

What are your life transforming experiences with Jesus? Today will you share in your own words what Jesus has done to change your life?

May Peter inspire you today to speak of God's love at work through Jesus in your life!

**Sunday February 26, 2017 Transfiguration Sunday**

Matthew 17:5-7 (NIV) While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well

pleased. Listen to him!" When the disciples heard this they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid."

Peter, James, and John had just witnessed Jesus shining with his true inner glory, in conversations with Moses and Elijah (the superstars of Hebrew faith), and been enveloped by the presence of God and heard God speak to them about Jesus. Little wonder why they were overwhelmed and afraid, but in the midst of their fear, the hand of God in Jesus reaches out to touch and reassure them. Jesus is always ready to reach out and give us courage!

When are the times in your life Jesus has touched you? Today will you see Jesus as God's loving hand reaching out for you?

May God's Glory revealed in Jesus Christ transform today your worries and fears into faith and assurance!

### **Monday February 27, 2017**

Genesis 2:15-17 (NIV) The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

God placed the first human in the Garden of Eden to admire God's creation and to care for it with the freedom to eat from and enjoy everything except for one tree. God still desires for us to lovingly work and care for creation. And since Adam did eat of the tree of knowledge we needed Jesus to instill in us the knowledge of the good we are to pursue to live holy lives!

How do you handle temptation? Today will you seek Jesus' help and guidance to pursue God's goodness and lovingly care for God's creation?

May you fully rely upon Jesus today and always to choose good and care for God's earth and people!

### **Tuesday February 28, 2017 Shrove Tuesday**

Psalm 51:10-11 (NIV) Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.



This Psalm of the penitent King David is traditionally used on Ash Wednesday to begin the season of Lent and the inner search for areas of ourselves that need radical change and growth. I begin this journey today as I burn the dried palm branches from Palm Sunday, which always flare up with a bright hot flame that leaves a deep black ash. The process of grinding the ash in a mortar and pestle into a fine powder is for me the work God does in us to transform the detritus of our lives into the dust of creative love!

What needs transforming in your life? Today will you pray for a renewal of your steadfast spirit and celebrate God's ongoing work of transformation in your life?

May you celebrate today God's invitation to transformation and renewal in your life through the Holy Spirit!

### **Wednesday March 1, 2017 Ash Wednesday**

Psalm 51:1-2, 17 (NIV) Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

The ashen cross we receive this day on our forehead is an outward sign of the inward plea and acknowledgement to God of our sins, the brokenness of our relationship, and the need for cleansing and healing. The Psalm guides us to be real with ourselves and God, to recognize that we can not fix it ourselves, we can not smooth things over and make them look pretty. What God wants is for us to break our pride, and break our hearts open to make way for God to heal us!

Do you remember that God created you from dust? Today will you acknowledge your mortality and sin, and the most important thing in the world is to be reconciled with God?

May you begin God's great work of healing you today as you break open your heart and ask God to cleanse you!

### **Thursday March 2, 2017**

Romans 5:17 (NLT) For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul was explaining how Adam broke his covenant with God and how death was the consequence, but the amazing news is God's wonderful grace and gift of righteousness in Jesus Christ. For each of us who accepts God's gift of relationship in Jesus will be given the gift to overcome sin and death!

Are you ready to say 'Yes' to God's gifts? Today will you choose Jesus Christ and follow him into new and abundant life overcoming sin and death?

May you choose new life today in Jesus Christ and receive God's wonderful grace overcoming sin and death!

### **Friday March 3, 2017**

Matthew 4:1-2 (NIV) Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted (tested) by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

Jesus was led from his baptism and affirmation from God by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to an extended time of focused prayer. He fasted not only from food but the normal busyness of life to search his soul and discern the mission and ministry to which God was calling him. The forty days of Lent are our wilderness time to fast from the myriad of things that distract us from a sustaining relationship with God!

From what does God want you to fast? Today will you commit to spending wilderness time with God fasting from overcommitment in order to discern God's loving direction for your life?

May you learn from Jesus today that discernment and a closer walk with God require fasting from your busyness!

### **Saturday March 4, 2017**

Matthew 4:4 (NIV) Jesus answered, "It is written; 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

After 40 days of fasting Jesus was famished and the devil entices him to turn stones into food. Jesus resists temptation and lifts up that it is the word of God that sustains us, not just food. Temptations always lead us away from relationship with God, and we are so blessed to have Jesus' example and teaching to help us resist the enticing and rely upon the holy and true, God!

What tempts you away from relationship with God? Today will you call upon Jesus to give you the strength to resist temptation and seek to live in the word of God?

May Jesus be your guide and strength today to resist anything that seeks to replace the word of God in your life!

**Tuesday March 7, 2017**

Genesis 12:1 (NIV) The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you."

God spoke a word of invitation, change, and challenge into Abram's comfortable existence in his father's household. God has a way of speaking into our lives too, inviting us to journey deeper into faith by making substantive changes in our lives that cause us to be uncomfortable in the short term but lead us to a place where we are a blessing to others and we learn to fully rely upon God's grace!

Is God speaking to you a word of change in your life? Will you have the courage today to pay attention to what God is inviting you to change?

May you fully engage the practice of Lent today by listening to God's call to change your life!

**Wednesday March 8, 2017**

Psalms 121:7-8 (NIV) The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

The Psalmist shares a profound truth of God with us in these verses. God keeps us, we are beloved by God, and God watches over our lives desiring love and goodness for us. This loving relationship is for today and forevermore!

Do you believe that you are God's beloved? Today will you choose to live into this loving relationship with God, trusting God wholeheartedly?

May you choose today to live wholeheartedly as God's beloved child!

**Sunday March 19, 2017**

John 4:25-26 (NIV) The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

Jesus had an extended conversation with a woman at a well in Samaria that ranged from the practicality of drawing water from a well for a drink, to the woman's life, to

the 'here and now' offer of living water and Jesus' revelation that he is the Messiah. Jesus comes to offer himself to each of us to give us his living water of new life!

Do you recognize Jesus when he talks to you? Today will you open your heart and mind to recognize Jesus in the other you are speaking to and accept his gift of living water?

May you be totally open today to encountering Jesus and allowing his gift of living water to bubble up in you!

### **Monday March 20, 2017**

1 Samuel 16:7 (NIV) But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

The Prophet Samuel had been sent by God to anoint a new king over Israel and he thought God would select the one who appeared most kingly. The wise writer of 1 Samuel teaches us that as God's people we learn to look past the outer appearance and see people's hearts as God does!

Do you make snap judgements based upon a person's appearance? Today will you ask God to help you take the time to look past another's appearance and see their heart?

May you practice godliness today by looking deeply into the heart instead of the appearance of each person you meet!

### **Tuesday March 21, 2017**

Psalms 23:2 (NIV) He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.

King David wrote this psalm drawing upon his days as a shepherd and his deep and abiding relationship with God. He encourages us to make time and space in our busy day to allow our Shepherd to care for us by bringing us to a place of rest and refreshment. Our souls, my friends, crave this renewal time!

When was the last time you rested with The Shepherd? Today will you accept the Shepherd's invitation to rest and renewal?

May you experience rest and renewal in The Shepherd's presence today!

### **Wednesday March 22, 2017**

Ephesians 5:8-9 (NIV) For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth).

When we come into relationship with God through Jesus Christ our lives change in profound ways as we leave old habits, thought patterns, and ways of relating to others behind to live in Jesus' light and love. Living in light means we seek to know and be fully known by God with no secrets or shame to bind us, but have instead love, goodness, truth, and healing to make us whole!

Are you living in Jesus' light? Today will you ask Jesus to shine brightly within you healing the dark places within you?

May you live fully as a child of God's light today being set free by the truth of God's love for you!

### **Thursday March 23, 2017**

Ephesians 5:15-16 (NIV) Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity.

The Apostle Paul urged all Christians to be mindful and careful of the choices we make in our daily lives. Lent is an excellent time to find opportunities to spend more time with God. Time spent with God is the wisest investment we can make with our lives!

Do you examine the choices you make? Today will you seek God's direction in prayer to make wise choices?

May you make the most of every opportunity God places before you today to live faithfully!

### **Friday March 24, 2017**

John 9:1-3 (CEB) As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who was blind from birth. Jesus' disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned so that he was born blind, this man or his parents?" Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents. This happened so that God's mighty works might be displayed in him."

Jesus took every moment to teach his followers about God's grace and living in the kingdom of God, this conversation showed Jesus breaking the societal chains that

wrongly linked physical disability to sin, separation from God. Jesus teaches that every person no matter their ability or disability is loved and cherished by God!

Do you judge people who are differently abled than you are? Today will you fully embrace Jesus' teaching that all people are loved and cherished by God regardless of body and ability?

May you be empowered by Jesus today to break the sin of judgement and embrace God's all encompassing love!