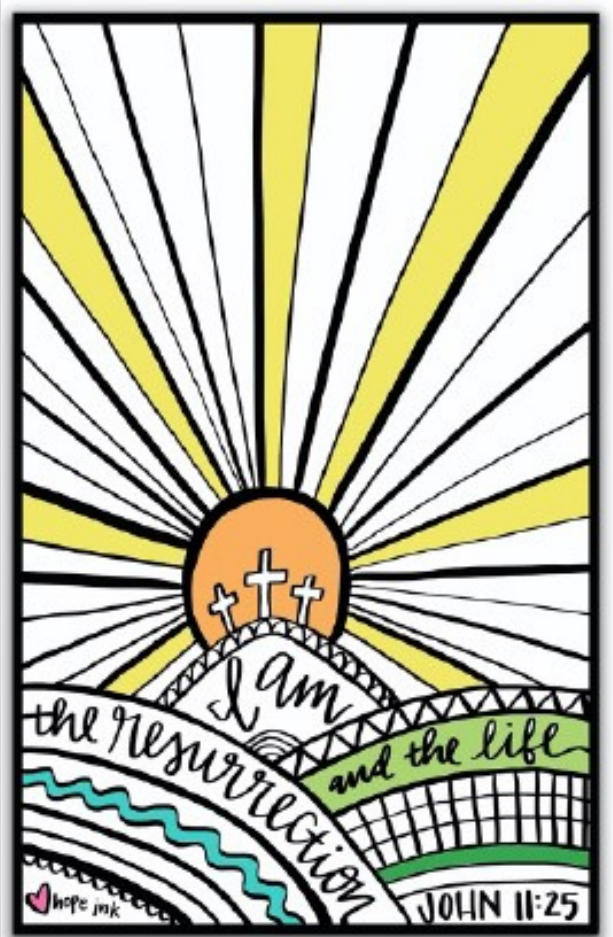


**Pastor Nathan Johnson
is inviting you to join the
Tabernacle MBC Family
in a
2021 Lenten Devotion
“Arising Son”**



“Arising Son”
2021 Lenten Devotional



Jesus said to her,
“I am the resurrection and the life. Those
who believe in me, even though they die,
will live...”

~ John 11:25

Week Two: ALPHA



(Beginnings)

February 21-26

Monday, February 22, 2021

SCRIPTURE: Romans 6:4

Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

REFLECTION: Have you ever stepped in the deep mud at the edge of a pond, felt your foot sink into the mud and find that you are completely stuck? Twice I have lost good boat shoes to a few feet of freshwater muck. For me, being stuck like that it is an awful feeling, like I'm trapped.

At times I have felt like that is what has happened to my life. Walking in the old life of sin and shame felt like every step, every word, every action, was just putting me deeper and deeper into the muck. One bad step led to a worse one.

Paul says that we "might walk in newness of life." Yet most of us are very stuck trying to move through life. And all of us, because we are human are stuck in our way of thinking or in some other way. We are buried in the muck.

In Baptism, we are unstuck. In baptism the Holy Spirit frees our feet and gives us the freedom and the permission to walk a new way. The way of the Cross.

PRAYER: *God help us to see that we aren't stuck. Amen.*



Tuesday, February 23, 2021

SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 11:18-19

When they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh.

REFLECTION: As we reflect on the Weekly Theme, ALPHA, Gods' message to Ezekiel is that he should convey to the people, that if they give up their sinful ways and idolatry, they will be made new and right with God. King David in Psalm 51:10: said "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." When we surrender and repent, it is God who does the work of cleansing our hearts and minds.

During the Civil War, American evangelist D.L. Moody said: "I believe firmly that the moment our hearts are emptied of pride, selfishness, ambition and everything contrary to Gods' law, the Holy Spirit will fill every corner of our hearts. But if we are full of pride, conceit, ambition and the world, there is no room for the Spirit of God. We must be emptied before we can be filled."

The verses, from Ezekiel can also give us insight into the "Alpha Beginning" that is to come many centuries after this writing. Jesus, the "Arising Son" will be born in Bethlehem, suffer and die on the cross and in three days rise from the dead. Through Christs' death and Resurrection, our sins are washed away and we are given new life through baptism and the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER: *Lord you are the Alpha and Omega. Create in us a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us, through your Son Jesus Christ who is the Arising Son. Amen*

Wednesday, February 24, 2021

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1: 3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

REFLECTION: God has given us, His children, so much: His grace, even though we don't always deserve it, His mercy when we don't live up to His expectations and the greatest gift of all, His Son Jesus Christ. For this we must show Him our thankfulness and praise. This we can do every day with our prayers and worship.

When I was very young, the resurrection seemed impossible to understand, even scary. As I grew older, I was excited when the angel declared to the women at the tomb, "He is not here for he has risen!" God gave us such hope on that day. Not only had we received the words of love and caring from Jesus during his ministry on earth, but His resurrection proved that we had that hope of a new birth. Because of His death on the cross for our sins and His resurrection, God fulfilled His promises. Now we have faith and hope for our eternal home.

This is a troubling world we live in today. The Pandemic has made us fearful of something we cannot completely control. We stay in our homes as much as possible, go to church

virtually and isolate ourselves from family and friends. Our country and its values are under attack. What can we do? How do we survive all this uncertainty? We look to God's unchangeable promises and His steadfast love. He does not waver in His constant love and caring. Our hope is based on God and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER: *Dear God, We thank you for your endless grace and abundant mercy. Help us to look to the future, confident in the hope you have given us through your Son's death and resurrection. Amen.*

Thursday, February 25, 2021

SCRIPTURE: Revelation 21:4-5

God will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away. And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new."

REFLECTION: During a speech in 1992, Queen Elizabeth II referred to the year as "Annus Horribilis" (horrible year). I think we are all in agreement that 2020 can go down in history as the newest "Annus Horribilis".

New Year's Day 2020 was filled with hope and enthusiasm for the beginning of a new decade. Then the Coronavirus came to America and the world as we knew it was turned upside down. The thought of being in quarantine for months on end seemed like something out of an apocalyptic horror movie, yet here we are, still being kept away from family and friends and our normal daily routines. So much has changed in such a short period of time that it is

incomprehensible. Simple things we took for granted, like going to a store, have been changed. The sense of loss has been overwhelming. When caught up in the throes of sadness and despair, it is easy to feel alone and forgotten. Yet as we mourn what has been and may never be again, there are glimmers of hope and renewal like the crocus emerging from the winter snow. The promise of vaccinating as many people as possible; the slow reopening of our favorite restaurants and most important, returning to worship, all lead us to the hope of a return to the familiar.

As we enter this season of reflection and repentance, we need to remember that God our Father is always with us, wiping away our tears, and helping us emerge from these trying times more firm in our faith with gladness and newness in our hearts.

PRAYER: *Lord, we thank you for renewing us with your unending love and knowing what we need even when we may not know it ourselves. Amen.*

Friday, February 26, 2021

SCRIPTURE: Lamentations 3:22-23

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

REFLECTION: Imagine what it must have been like for the lamenter who wrote these words. The beloved City on a Hill, Jerusalem, lay in ruins and the people carried off by Babylon. Where is God? Why has God abandoned us?

The chapter starts with crushing emotions at the hand of God, images of darkness, brokenness, bitterness, emptiness and despair. The author truly feels that God has taken aim with heart piercing arrows targeting God's own people. In many ways the passage parallels Jesus' own passion on his way to and on the cross. He also cried out against the fury of God's wrath. Been there?

When I was young I can remember praying and feeling very much like my words bounced off the ceiling only to fall flat on the floor to be trampled. Life as a teenager can be filled with crushing emotions. Yet there I was crying out into emptiness. Now I am older and understand that God is there, I believe it with all my heart. Even so, when my cries to God for our world, that often lays in ruins, go out in prayer I still sometimes feel that they go into ... emptiness. Where do we begin to find God in our current sadness when we feel that God is not there?

The lamenter takes a "tragic reversal" and turns from despair to hope. It is deliberate. In spite of all the ruin and abandonment, even feeling targeted the lamenter is determined to see God's steadfast, never-ending, faithful showering of love and mercy.

The beginning of hope is our determination to remember God is with us even in the darkness, Jesus shares our brokenness. Every day we can awaken and look for new mercies. They are there, all around us, hidden like gems in the ruins. Every night when we say goodnight to God we can expect that God, though often silent is actively listening. And we can know, determined to believe, that when God speaks the words will bring love, mercy and comfort. I am comforted in knowing that will not change. You can be too!

PRAYER: Lord God, you always hear us. Help us to see, to experience your tender mercies and great love for us.

Amen

Saturday, February 27, 2021

SCRIPTURE: 2 Corinthians 5:17

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

REFLECTION: A fresh start is something we think of throughout our lifetimes. Things seem to be going awry and we wish 'it' could be different - we can start new again. This passage allows me to think about just that; new beginnings. I am an optimist, so when my life is challenging for so many different reasons, I love the idea of a reset. My house is disorganized? Tomorrow is a new day! I will start by organizing my bathroom and work from there. I am not happy about my health? Tomorrow I will begin walking once a day and making better eating choices. I feel disconnected from my faith, maybe from my church family? I can begin by starting my day with prayer or meditation. I will make sure I participate in our church zoom meetings and attend weekly services virtually, until it is safe for us to gather once again. Today is a new day - it is the perfect day to start over, IF we feel we need to. Change can be scary, but it can also be so good! Embrace the opportunity to improve an aspect of your life. I guarantee you will be happy that you did.

PRAYER : *Thank you Lord for the gift of a new day. Thank you for blessing us with that unique ability to start fresh when we are ready for change. Please guide me as I embrace healthy change in my life. Amen.*
