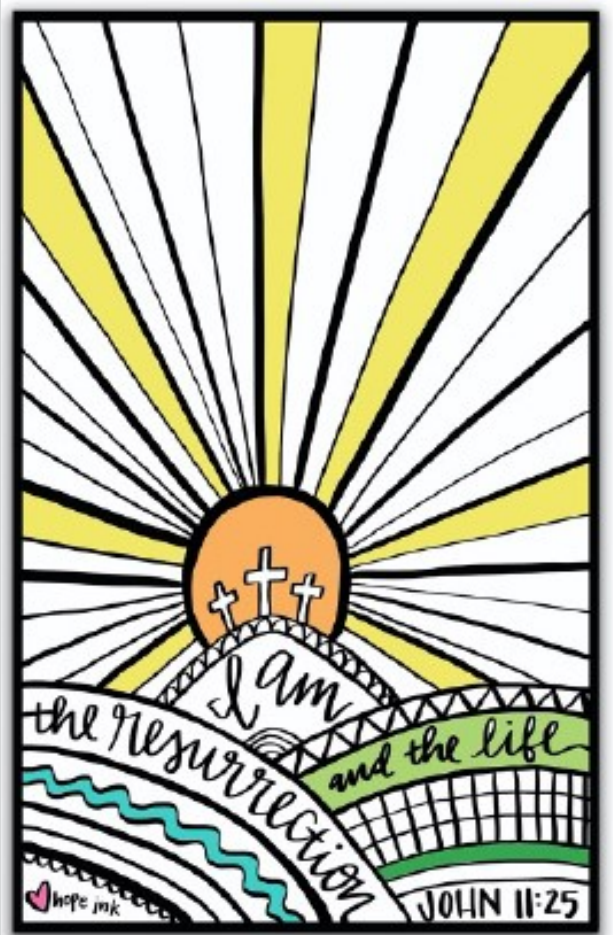


**Pastor Nathan Johnson
is inviting you to join the
Tabernacle MBC Family
in a
2021 Lenten Devotion
“Arising Son”**



“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 Three: Journeys



February 28- March 6

Monday, March 1, 2021

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 23:4

Even though I walk in the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff-comfort me.

REFLECTION: Growing up, I learned the version...Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil... Reading that, I still envision walking with God in a pretty valley with large mountains surrounding it. And all of a sudden, the sky darkens, a shadow covers our path, and it takes an ominous feel of pending death.

This year in particular, more people than I ever knew personally or with my hospital work have walked that dark valley in their battle with COVID 19. Like Jesus, we each have our own life's journey, that has a beginning and end on Earth, filled with good times and bad. During these pandemic times with so much sickness, death, financial burdens, domestic violence, isolation and fear, it is commonplace to call out and ask God..."Where are you?" But when we are still and open our hearts, spirit and mind, we realize God has been helping us along even now as he always has and always will.

This verse which used to make me sad, now gives me comfort. Because like a good shepherd, God is with us every moment on our life's path, to guide and protect us. So even in our darkest hours, we are not alone; and what security that brings. Psalm 23 ends with a recap and finale of our lives that was a promise paid in full by Jesus' journey to the cross. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Amen to that brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus!

PRAYER: *Dear Jesus, help us to not lose sight of your presence and love even on our darkest days. We may not yet understand your purposes for suffering and loss, but help us to trust you and be thankful for all your blessings and constant love. Amen.*

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

SCRIPTURE: Proverbs 16:9

The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps.

REFLECTION: "Journeys" Let me start with the journey of marriage. It all started with a prayer " Lord, send me someone who will love me for me". I prayed this for about one year and along came a traveling sales man. Pretty much since our first date we have been together, that was 34 years ago. In hindsight I believe the Lord sent me to him to show him what love is. (1 Corinthians 13: 4-8).

My next Journey has been/is parenthood and the prayer went like this "Dear Lord please help me change my life". I prayed this for 2 years. I had a home and a marriage, a good job but was lacking substance/direction. I was not attending church and felt as thou I was sinking. No one knew this, on the outside it all looked good. I was going thru day to day life as I should. We were not planning a family so at 34 years old I did actually ask my doctor "How did this happen". We had been together 12 years and were careful. Well it was at that point I high tailed it back to church. I knew I would need extra help in raising a child. Becoming a parent is not what I had in mind when asking God for help. I must say parenthood has been the ABSOLUTE best journey ever. (We even had a second child) It has been 22 years and I refer back

to 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. My love for our children has shown me what God our father feels for us. Learning that takes me to my Spiritual Journey.

I told you I returned to church and have continued getting involved here and there over the years. What a joy it is to be part of a church family. My Journey now is one I do not want to take. It is the one where I am care taker for my elderly mother. Oh people say "You are lucky to still have your mother". To be honest watching her struggle thru her day, losing her strength, seeing her confusion brings me to this prayer "Lord have mercy" and of course 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. I now have Faith over Fear and will take this journey with Jesus by my side.

PRAYER: *Dear Lord, Thank you for this day, I know you have been with me thru out my life, I am praying for those who have not known you yet. If I can help send me. Amen.*

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

SCRIPTURE: Mark 10:17

As Jesus started on his way a man ran up to him, fell on his knees before him. "Good Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

REFLECTION: As I sit and reflect on the recent events of this past year I can see why many people are not trusting of God's Plan. These past months have been trying for so many and grief, disbelief, fear, and suffering seem to be prevalent in our day to day lives. As a Christian I too have sat and cried and ask God for some sort of explanation of His Plan. Life, in fact, is controlled by, His Plan. We are asked to follow him and trust that this Plan is set before us for a

reason. Our journeys' in life may be very different in some ways but as a Family of Faith we share in the hope for a brighter tomorrow and an answer to our questions.

No one, including Jesus, has a journey without trials and struggles. It is by Faith that we know that we will make it through with God's help. To inherit eternal life we must trust in the journey and follow God's plan for us. Accept Jesus into our hearts and know that he is always with us along the way. We are all bound to stumble and sometimes fall but knowing that we travel along this journey with the Love and Help of Jesus makes it a worthwhile task. May our Journey be filled with Love and Grace and may your share that with those around you as well.

PRAYER: Dear God, please be with us this day and always help us to trust in Your Plan and follow along the chosen journey. Amen.

Thursday, March 4, 2021

SCRIPTURE: Luke 10: 29-33

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.

REFLECTION: I think we are all familiar with this story, and it is a good one to be reminded of. But I would like to think of it in a different way. I have always read it as the Samaritan felt pity for the man who was beaten and robbed and laying there half dead because he then goes and helps him. But what if the pity he felt is for the people who walked by the man. To feel nothing for a man who is near death and bleeding and calling for help just because it may inconvenience you at the time

or you feel that person is beneath you. Those are the people who deserve pity.

I have been watching a show and one of the reoccurring sayings in it is "A man asks for help, you help him." And they stop what they are doing and go help. That was profound to me. No one has to check a schedule or has to discuss if they like the person "enough" to help. They just help. If someone comes to you for help, and you are able to, you help.

PRAYER: *God, in this world we live in, it is hard for us not to take the easy path and only help who we want to help. So much divides us. Please give us the wisdom to realize that we all are loved by you and we need to treat each other with compassion and know that you gave us the ability to help one another, not for us to keep it to ourselves, but to share it with the world.*

In Jesus name, Amen.

Friday, March 5, 2021

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 25:13.

"Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

REFLECTION: This verse ends the telling of the parable of the Ten Bridesmaids - five wise and prepared, five foolish and unprepared. In this strange world of today with crises upon crises this seems like very good advice, but also very exhausting - being aware/awake all the time on this journey. And we cannot not know what is right around the corner with any certainty although we make plans upon plans.

So how can I unpack this to be manageable while still hearing Jesus's words? Perhaps the journey is not moving forward each day but digging deeper into what is in front of me. "We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are." Anais Nin. This is one of my very favorite quotes. I have had it in my wallet for years and come across it now and again in articles and books. I am trying to see a bit more of things as they are during this unusual time.

In "normal" times I would be breezing along with a proper schedule and tasks to be accomplished. Now I have more time to dig deeper. I have time to reflect on my deeply held beliefs and be challenged. I have been taking a couple of on-line courses/classes and reading books I would never have picked up before. This all is changing my perceptions and understanding of race relations in this country in all its forms, including my own. I hope that I will be able to answer the challenges to these learnings when called upon to do so, knowing neither the day or hour. And I pray at the end of this deep digging I will meet God again.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father help us to be ready when called on to answer to our faith in You that leads us down paths we never expected to be on. And because we sometimes lack the courage to be awake and alert, but prefer the comfortable place, help us with your Holy Spirit to trust in You always. In the name of your Son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Saturday, March 6, 2021

SCRIPTURE: Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

REFLECTION: 2020 has shown us more than ever before how little control we have over the course of both world events, and our own lives. It can be both unsettling and frightening to realize this inability, shared by all, to prepare ourselves for the unexpected (like a pandemic). It is in these times, when we can neither make sense of the present, nor predict the future, that we must rely on God for our safety and survival. People always say that God works in mysterious ways, but this past year has exemplified this expression perfectly.

There was very little anyone could do to change the events experienced in our world, leaving us with no alternative but to trust in God to bring us out of these challenges. Our lacking insight into the future can bring us closer to God if we let it. In such uncertain situations as we have faced in the past year, we must abandon our own concerns and look to the Lord for guidance. Yet, challenging times can also push many of us away from God as well. The seemingly excruciating length of 2020 pushed many of us Christians to

a point of questioning God this year. Why would he allow such horrible things to happen, and persist for so long? How can we be expected to live in a world where people are scared of each other, and fighting almost every day? Though we may be unable to find the answers to these kinds of questions, the continuance of our daily lives should be evidence enough of God's compassion to his children. Regardless of how dangerous the world may appear to us, faith in the Lord will guide us to safety and salvation.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, please help us to give all instincts over to you in times of severe struggle and uncertainty. You are infinitely wiser than we could ever be, and we must rely on you to straighten our paths. Through faith in you we can persevere and thrive as your children walking in the ways you clear for us. Amen.
