

## ARE WE ABLE?

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

LUKE 4:18-19 (NIV)

The Lord came to save. This point is made repeatedly throughout scripture. The Lord never ceased this work throughout His ministry. He allowed time for rest as well as quiet moments of prayer so that He was readily able to face each day.

He did not judge whom He would speak to, teach, or heal. He was about the business of salvation for us all, not selecting certain people. Scripture does not specify *select* people but *all* people.

The ministry did not stop when He was hanging on the cross between two criminals. He was still intent on His mission when one of the criminals, who feared God, asked to be remembered when Jesus came into His kingdom. He was given mercy and grace when Jesus promised the criminal that he would be with Him that day in paradise (Luke 23:40-43).

I wonder: Are we able to readily meet people we encounter exactly where they are? Can we overlook annoying words or actions that may cloud our vision in dealing with others who may not meet our expectations? Can we easily forgive? Are we truly able to follow our Lord's example? As we move through Lent in somber reflection, let us strive to attain this place of spiritual maturity so that we can say, "Yes, we are able."

*Dear Lord, please clear our vision and personal expectations of what we think should be, so that we can truthfully say yes, we are able to follow your example of how we should love.*

LACY HAYNICZ  
TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



God did not direct His call to Isaiah — Isaiah overheard God saying, "... who will go for Us?" The call of God is not just for a select few but for everyone. Whether I hear God's call or not depends on the condition of my ears, and exactly what I hear depends upon my spiritual attitude.

*Oswald Chambers  
My Utmost for His Highest*

## THE POWER OF THE TAMIM

*Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and sanctify it. And the altar shall be most holy. Whatever touches the altar must be holy. Now this is what you shall offer on the altar, two lambs on the first year, day by day continually, one lamb you shall offer in the morning and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight.*

EXODUS 29:37-39 (NKJV)

In the Old Testament God gave specific instructions for how to prepare the sacrifice in the Temple for Passover. The first offering would be offered up at the third hour of the day. With the morning sacrifice, the Temple trumpets would sound, and the Temple gates would be opened.

Then at the ninth hour, the evening sacrifice would be offered, and the sacrifices would be concluded.

The animal that was to be given on the altar was to be a lamb. In the Torah (the sacred Jewish writings and law), this lamb is called a *tamim lamb*. The tamim lamb had to be perfect, innocent, and spotless without a blemish, according to the Jewish ordinance.

The first sacrifice was offered the third hour of the day. Jesus was nailed to the cross the third hour of the day. “It was nine in the morning when they crucified him” (Mark 15:25).

The last sacrifice in the temple was offered at the ninth hour, which scriptures say was 3 p.m. (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34, Luke 23:44). This was the hour Jesus gave His life and died on the cross.

Jesus is our Tamim Lamb. He is innocent, without spot or blemish, and without sin. Jesus had to be spotless and without sin to pay the price for our sins as was that first tamim lamb. The difference is our Lamb Jesus died once for all our sins. No need for another sacrifice or another lamb — once for all.

This Lenten season, the power of the Tamim Lamb is available to all who open their hearts to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

*Father God, I thank you for sending your Son to cleanse me of my sin this Easter. I receive Him as my Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.*

AL ZAPPOLA

NEW HOPE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## GRATITUDE

*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-17 (NIV)

These past two years have not been the easiest for me or for my family. In less than a year, my older sister died unexpectedly (only 61), I was diagnosed with cancer, and my father had a major fall and subsequent hospital/rehab stays. All of that was followed by my dad having a stroke, and I suffered chronic joint pain as a result of hormone therapy. When it rains, it pours! However, through it all, we have tried to rejoice in the positive things, keep praying, and remember to be grateful for the little things.

Since the new year started, I have been keeping a gratitude journal. I write in it at the end of each day. I love this new habit, since it makes me reflect on the day and find big and little things for which I can be grateful to our ever-loving God. Even on days when work is frustrating, caregiving is exhausting, and joints are hurting, I can always find a few things for which to be thankful.

During this time of Lent we are certainly reminded to be thankful for Jesus' sacrifice for our sins and the grace and salvation we receive when we put our faith in Him. So no matter what your circumstances are, take time each day to think of the many blessings that God has bestowed upon you. Rejoice, pray, and give thanks!

*Gracious God, we give you thanks for sacrificing your Son and raising Him from the dead so that we may live forever with you. We also thank you for the way you bless us every day no matter what our situation may be. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

JENNIFER ANDRADE  
PITMAN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



The life of faith is not a life of mounting up with wings,  
but a life of walking and not fainting.

Oswald Chambers  
*My Utmost for His Highest: Selections for the Year*

## WORSHIP HIS MAJESTY

*Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts. They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty — and I will meditate on your wonderful works.*

PSALM 145:3-5 (NIV)

The hymn writer Carl Boberg wrote: “When thro’ the woods, and forest glades I wander and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees, When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze.”

My wife, Linda, and I were visiting Muir Woods National Monument (Park) just north of San Francisco. Muir Woods is a peaceful walk-in park, and once you walk through the gate you enter a sanctuary of birds, plants, and wildlife. But mostly it is a grove of giant, awe-inspiring redwood trees. Running through the middle of the forest is Redwood Creek, more like a babbling brook. On either side of this babbling creek are well-prepared walking paths winding in, around, and through the giant redwoods.

Walking into the park we immediately had a sense that we were in a sacred place. There was no yelling or loud talking. People walked the paths, sat on the benches, and talked in almost hushed tones, while gazing on the beauty and majesty of the place. The giant redwoods with their wide girth and trunks that stretched high into the sky, covered with a reddish-brown velvety bark, were the center of attention.

As we gazed and marveled at the size and beauty of the trees and the tranquility of the park, I was reminded of the majesty of God, the One who had created all these things. So often the god we worship is too small and we fail to encounter and worship the majesty of Almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth. The Psalmist has said: “LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (Ps. 8:1) Again, in the passage above, “Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise ... One generation commends your works to another ... They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty...”

To finish the chorus of the hymn line above: “Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee, How great Thou art!” During this Lenten season, which is most often a time of self-reflection, let us also reflect on the greatness and majesty of God. Only as we see and worship His majesty do we begin to understand who and what and where we are in relation to Him.

*Father, help us to lift our eyes above our day-to-day experiences that we may see and worship your majesty. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

PASTOR GARY TURK

## REDUCE YOUR MULLIGANS

*Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23 (NIV)

The golfer steps up to the first hole, tees up his ball, and proceeds to hit it 10 feet in front of himself! He looks at his playing partners and says, "I'm going to take a mulligan." He then tees up his ball again and hits it 200 yards.

A mulligan is a "do-over" in golf. Some golfers take only one per round (18 holes), but they can take more if allowed by their playing partners. It's not a legal move in professional golf, but it is popular among recreational golfers. The group, especially if they play together often, will already have informal rules about using mulligans, such as how many and where they can be used. Some golfers make use of the mulligan, while others decline.

Where in your life would you have loved to have taken a mulligan?

*I said an unkind word.*

I should have softened my comment.

*I sent a snarky text message.*

Why didn't I choose better words or wait to reply?

*I made a selfish decision.*

There were others to consider before I acted.

*I lied (white lie of course), gossiped (it's only sharing).*

I need to be honest. I need to be a better friend.

*I ignored someone in need.*

Why did I pretend I didn't notice?

*I showed an ill-timed display of anger.*

Couldn't I have waited until I cooled down a little before reacting?

In the game of golf, the number of mulligans is limited. However, in the game of life, God gives us an unlimited number of mulligans. He also plays the course with us, coaching us and showing us how to be more like Him, so that we can reduce our need for mulligans. And even when we get off course, He lets us start playing with Him again. Every game — every morning — is a new start, and great is the faithfulness of the One who has never needed a mulligan.

*Lord, you promise us a fresh start when we mess up. Help us learn from our mistakes. Thank you for being a God of second chances.*

CLAUDIA CUDDY

TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## CHILDREN ARE A BLESSING

*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

PROVERBS 22:6 (KJV)

One of my greatest blessings is being a Sunday School teacher to the nursery class. I have always strived to be as good a teacher to these precious children as my dearest friend and mentor, Jean Young, who taught for over 50 years. I have been teaching now for more than 25 years and doubt I will make it to 50, but I would like to think I have helped to bring the children I have taught closer to God in some small way.

The children are always so full of energy and eagerness to learn each week. I can't help but get caught up in their enthusiasm and love for learning. They love to sing and listen to the Bible stories and do crafts. It is such a joy to spend time with these precious "gifts from God." They come into our room with such big smiles, and it thrills me to see how happy they are to come to Sunday School. Sometimes they run to me and give me a great big hug ... and oh my, that just melts my heart! During story time in our story circle, I love to look at their sweet, innocent faces. They are so excited to learn all about Jesus.

My hope is that I am teaching them how much Jesus loves them and that He is their very best friend. They, too, teach me how much fun it is to learn about Jesus. It is a win-win for the children and me. Jesus loves me, this I know ... Jesus loves the little children ... He sure does, and I am so thankful for that. Praise be to God!

*Dear Heavenly Father, we are so blessed and honored to teach and influence your precious children. Give us guidance as we look for opportunities to make a difference. Amen.*

BEVERLY GUY  
EVANGELICAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Faith never knows where it is being led,  
but it loves and knows the One who is leading.

*Oswald Chambers*

## RENEW, RESTORE, REPURPOSE

*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.*

*Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

*Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
so that sinners will turn back to you.*

PSALM 51:10-13 (NIV)

**M**y Senegalese friends have a gift for taking something that would otherwise be discarded and finding a new use for it. Old clothes become new diapers, empty jars become storage containers, egg cartons become fire starters, and paint buckets become shopping carts. Each old item is given a new name and purpose.

In this passage, I am reminded that as we submit ourselves to God, He takes our heart and makes it pure. He takes our weak spirit and renews it by His spirit, making it steadfast. When we are lost, He redirects us and draws us into His presence and refills us with His Holy Spirit. In our despair and brokenness, He restores us and reminds us of the joy we experienced when we first knew Him. In our rebellion, He gently molds our heart and spirit to be willing to seek Him and follow Him and be sustained by Him.

As a result of God's transforming work in our lives, we are given a new purpose and name. We are called, as we see in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "new creations," as the old has passed, the new has come. In this newness, we have been given a new purpose to go out from a place of His strength to show others the path from darkness to light, death to life, and despair to hope.

*Lord we thank you that you receive us exactly where we are and that as your life flows through us we are renewed, restored, and repurposed for your sake. We give ourselves to you in this Lenten season to be used by you, for you, and for the furtherance of your Kingdom until you come again.*

JOANNA BESKE  
TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
MISSIONARY TO SENEGAL