

## We Have an Inheritance

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away reserved in heaven for you. ~ *1 Peter 1:3-4 (NKJV)*

**I**n this season of Lent we are preparing with the hope of an inheritance of eternal life that was given to us by the resurrection of Jesus. We live by hope. We hope for many things. In verse 3 above we see that God has given us a living hope — a new birth through the resurrection on Easter morning.

Hope is used in the Bible to mean confident expectation. In our everyday language, we use the word *hope* as wanting something to happen but not sure it will. Even though some hope is uncertain, we have a solid hope of eternal life given to us by God through our belief and faith in Him.

We all go through trials and suffering. They are part of life. During these times it can be easy to lose our hope and have it fade away. The disciples became discouraged and hid away during Jesus' trial and journey to the cross. Through the Holy Spirit given to them and Jesus' appearances to them before His ascension, their hope was renewed.

We have been given this same real hope, guaranteed by God Himself. We have an inheritance reserved in heaven for us. So continue to pray and read the Bible and look toward heaven and wait for Easter morning. Then rejoice with other Christians who share this same glorious inheritance of eternal life.

*Dear God, during this 40-day time of self-reflection, may you guide us and be part of our daily lives. May we be an example to others in their Christian walk. We bring you our thanks and praise as we come together on Easter morning with great joy for what you did for us.*

Tom Bennett

*Richwood United Methodist Church*

## Triangles

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. ~ 2 Corinthians 13:14 (NIV)

A triangle that spiritually holds our lives together is called the Trinity. The Trinity is God in three entities: God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God created the world and everything in it. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). Jesus, His Son, was sent to take away sins because people had become sinful and rebellious. “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17). When Jesus was sent to the cross to take our sin and rebellion on Himself, He enabled the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts. Having these three entities loving us is brilliant. The Trinity is a strong support system for our lives. “Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

I had geometry in high school, and we were taught about the benefits of different shapes. The triangle was the strongest because it distributes weight evenly. Triangles are great for tables and chairs because if one leg is a little shorter, it won't rock like a four-legged table or chair. Besides the Trinity, the most important use of triangles is in bridges.

One of our assignments was to create a tower using one of the geometric shapes we had learned about. We were only allowed to use four 3-foot lengths of ¼-inch square balsam wood dowels and white glue. We had to pick our grade based on the weight the tower held. If you chose a grade of A, it must hold 3 pounds, a B must hold 2 pounds, and a C must hold 1 pound. If the tower collapsed before the weight that corresponded with your grade, you got the lower grade. If it held the weight, you got the grade you chose. If it held more than the goal weight, you did not get the better grade. It was a gamble.

I constructed mine using triangles because most bridges are made from them. I went for a B. My bridge continued to stand over 3 pounds. If I had gambled, I could have gotten an A.

Looking back at my geometry assignment and my life, I have learned that back then I should have trusted the triangle. Now, I trust the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; there is nothing stronger.

*Father God, please live in my heart, because I know that if the three of you are there, my life is in good hands.*

Kim Tortella

*Pitman United Methodist Church*

## Radical Trust

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on. ~ *Mark 12:41-44 (NIV)*

**O**ne of the spiritual disciplines of the Lenten season is “almsgiving” (or charity), the giving and kind deeds that flow from mercy toward the poor. It’s motivated by our relationship with Jesus and wanting to share His love with others.

Widows in Jesus’ day didn’t get a Social Security check or have a retirement account. They had to depend on God and other people to take care of them. Yet out of her poverty, this woman lavishly worshiped God with what she had, highlighting radical trust in God to provide.

Often we pay too much attention to what everybody else is doing. We see what they give and judge the value of their contribution in dollars and cents rather than what their motivation is for giving. We watch with envy how someone else contributes time or skills to help the church or a charitable cause, and we might even be intimidated by the significance of it. It seems like so much more than we have to offer!

The footnote in the *NIV Life Application Bible* on this passage says: “The value of a gift should be determined not by the amount, but by the spirit in which it is given.” We don’t need to withhold what we have to offer — if our spirit is right, the gift is enough. Other people might have thought this woman was foolish to do what she did. But Jesus didn’t think so. He was blessed by it. Mother Teresa is quoted as saying: “It’s not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving.” If that’s true, then whatever we have to give can be enough!

Nobody forces us to give, not even God, so let’s not be miserable, resentful givers. Instead, let our almsgiving, whether in money or deeds, be motivated by the love we have for Jesus and given with an attitude of joy. God is our provider, and He loves a cheerful giver.

*Lord, give us opportunities this Lenten season to practice almsgiving in ways that require us to have radical trust in you. May we bless you and others with our gifts. Thank you for being our provider.*

Pastor Shirley Goodman  
*Evangelical United Methodist Church*

## Keeping God in All We Do

That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.

~ 1 Timothy 4:10 (NIV)

**L**ike many people, I walk regularly for exercise. My goal is to get 8,000 steps each day. Most days I make my goal, sometimes I exceed it, and sometimes I'm short. It all averages out and my body is healthier for it. My phone in my pocket keeps track of the steps for me.

Every fall my cousins and I take a trip to Maine. We love being there, but getting there and back involves many hours of driving. Spending the whole day in the car coming home doesn't leave time for my daily walk. As my feet sometimes get cold on the long drive home, this past fall I decided to lift the front part of each foot alternately for short stretches of time, figuring the movement would keep them warmer. I had my phone on my lap in the car, and after doing foot lifts for a while, it occurred to me to check whether my phone was recording these motions as steps. Lo and behold, it was! So, I kept it up much of the ride home, lifting my feet, getting a tiny workout as we rode. By the time we got home to New Jersey, according to my phone I had "walked" almost 9,000 steps while sitting in the car.

I know those counted steps didn't really benefit my body very much, although at least my feet didn't get cold. I moved my feet a lot, but they didn't get me anywhere — the car did the work of transporting me home.

In some ways, that's kind of like God. We may be busy doing a lot of "legwork" — running programs at church, praying for others, collecting food and clothing for the needy, visiting people, studying the Bible, and more — all very good things to do. But we don't go anywhere without God. Nothing we do moves us along. Instead, all that we do to serve God and share the good news about Jesus only makes a real difference because God is working behind, ahead of, and through us. As we do the legwork of sharing the gospel, we can remember that God is the one moving us along: we put our hope in Him, because He is the Savior and the one transporting us home.

*Father, we want to serve you and do our best for you. Go with us and work through us to accomplish all that you have for us to do.*

Beth Price

Zion United Methodist Church

## Helpful Wanderings

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.  
~ *Ephesians 6:18 (NIV)*

**H**ave you ever read a Bible passage, a textbook, or a novel that gripped your attention, only to discover your mind wandered suddenly to a rogue idea that monopolized your attention instead? Multitasking usually kept me from losing too much attention as a younger person, as my meandering mind had to be reined in to focus. However, now I've even reread a passage and drifted away a second time in thought! Why does this happen? God can carry my drifting mind to where He uses it best.

Currently I enjoy the off-trail thoughts. I see these times as opportunities to learn more background on my biblical studies or express my problems to God for His wisdom to resolve. For instance, looking up Matthew 2:1-10 as part of this morning's daily devotional led me to read a longer footnote explaining Herod's massive building achievements, along with his shocking, ruthless murders of his wife and several sons.

Yesterday's mind-wandering was a God-nudge to journal about a "complicated person," seeking Jesus' help in overcoming a problematic tension before it erupted. Then I refocused on my reading with renewed attention. My confidence that God would provide His help in His time allowed my peace to return.

Most often my "wanderlust mind" drifts to people needing prayers. Just these past two months, two women received cancer diagnoses and one cousin needed extra healing from a fall. At the same time, several family members and friends continue to need the Holy Spirit's comfort to carry them through their tunnel of mourning and return them to seeing the peaceful light of Jesus that has been there all along. Talking with God about these needs is the best interaction I participate in each day!

If my 20-minute devotional time lengthens to 60-plus minutes, I praise God for His capturing my mind's mullings and supplying the Holy Spirit's help. Who knows? Maybe Jesus is giving me ways to share His love with friends as we wholesomely exchange "food for thought" and together sow some seeds of grace!

*Father God, thank you for using my rambling thoughts through my study and prayers to bring others to you as I share your peace and power with them.*

Barbara Buck  
Wesley Church of Elkton

## The Lord Loves Your Enemies

The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, “Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance.” ~ *Isaiah 19:25 (NIV)*

**D**uring this Lenten season, as we remember Jesus in the desert for 40 days leading up to His temptation, I think about the deserts some of us may find ourselves in. They may be social, economical, or emotional deserts. During these times we may find it tempting to blame someone else for our suffering.

As when the Israelites were in the desert, and maybe also in your circumstances, God may be the one keeping you in the desert. If this is the case, we know that God is using it for good and sustaining us through it like the Israelites (Deuteronomy 8). There may be outside people and forces at play in our situations when we are wandering in the desert. Possibly a person, company, or institution has played a part in our suffering.

Because the Lord was against the Egyptians enslaving the Jews, we assume that God was against the Egyptians themselves. The story is often viewed as Jews vs. the Egyptians, or even God vs. the Egyptians.

Isaiah 19:19-21 tells us: “In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the Lord at its border. It will be a sign and witness to the Lord Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the Lord because of their oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and he will rescue them. So the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the Lord. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the Lord and keep them.”

We need to remember that God’s ultimate plan is to reconcile all to Himself. He loves all people even if He is against their actions. He doesn’t love them for them to stay the same but to be transformed and walk in His ways.

*Lord, we thank you for sending us a Savior, your Son, that we may be reconciled to you by no merit of our own. Let us extend that love and grace to those we deem unworthy due to their actions toward us or others. In a world that hates haters, let us see them as you do, and help all of us walk in your ways forever.*

Jeremy Andrade

*First United Methodist Church Collingswood*

## What Is Your View?

You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above; and set the door of the ark in its side. ~ *Genesis 6:16 (NKJV)*

**H**ave you ever wondered why God instructed Noah to place the only window in the ark at the very top of the ark? I think one reason was so that Noah would keep his eyes focused on God above instead of on the circumstances around him.

Imagine being in the ark during the great flood! Surely the sound of the raging waters and the pounding thunder had the potential to be very frightening to the ship's passengers. Or consider the rocking of the boat on the tossing waves. It would have been easy to get distracted from the promise of God while in the perils of the storm.

Where is the window in the ark of your life? Does it give you a view of the heavens and God's faithfulness, or does it give you a view of the fierce storm raging all around you?

Let our gaze be forever fixed on the One who calms every storm.

*Lord, no matter what storm is raging around us, we are safe in the strength of your loving arms.*

MaryAnn Diorio  
*Church of the Risen King*