

Rethink Mercy!



*“Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.”*

Matthew 5:7



2025 Lenten Bible Study on *Rethink Mercy*

Dear friends,

Thank you for picking up this Lenten Devotional Booklet. I hope and pray that it will be a beneficial tool to draw you closer to our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. Lent is a time for us to prepare for Easter through prayer, mortifying the flesh, repentance of sins, almsgiving, simple living, and self-denial.

This Lenten season, FPCGH is partnering with the Children's Hunger Fund to support their ministry. And our Lenten Devotional is based on a study from the Rethink Mercy Foundation, published by the Children's Hunger Fund. Rethink Mercy Foundation's mission statement is *"to deliver hope to suffering children by equipping local churches for gospel-centered mercy ministry."* You can find the study at <https://childrenshungerfund.org/rmf/>

A well-known verse to many of us is Micah 6:8, *"He [the Lord] has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."* In this study, we'll seek to better understand the love, kindness and mercy of God and how God has shown mercy to us. And then we'll ask how we might show God's love, kindness and mercy in the world.

I hope this devotional will bring new clarity to the season and inspire us to seek justice, love, mercy and walk humbly with our God. We do all to bring Him honor and glory.

In Christ's love and service,

Lance

Children's Hunger Fund Food Pak Project

As a church-wide project in conjunction with the Lenten Series, First Pres. is partnering with the Children's Hunger Fund to fill Food Paks (shoe-box sized containers of food) to support their program of supplying food and hope to suffering children.

Food Paks can be filled by individuals, families, small groups, etc.

Empty Food Paks will be available on the patio on Sundays from March 9 through April 6, 10:15 to 11:00 am.

Shopping list for specific food items and precise instructions for filling the boxes are included in each box.

Donation of \$8 per Food Pak is suggested to cover delivery costs.

Return filled Food Paks to patio on Sundays from March 16 through April 13, 10:15 to 11:00 am.

Donations accepted to help others fill boxes or to donate directly to the **Children's Hunger Fund**.



As you begin your study, we pray the word of God will dwell richly in you as you ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you through His word and song.

Thank you to the contributors for the 2025 Lenten Bible Study: Lance Allen, Janis Brown, Stephanie Deach-Foyle, Helen Magana, Niki Rodas, Sue O'Connor and Gary Ventimiglia.



We hope the following article on Ash Wednesday written by one of our former associate pastors, Stephen Robertson in 2022, will be meaningful.

As we approach the season of Lent, we begin our journey with Ash Wednesday. This day marks the beginning of Lent and occurs forty-six days before Easter Sunday. Ash Wednesday also prepares us for a season of reflection, repentance and discipline.

Reflection

When we reflect on our lives, we realize that we need to make more room for God's word. Look at the example Scripture provides for readers in Matthew four. When Jesus was about to end His forty-day fast, the evil one tried to use a strategy of temptation to discredit Jesus. However, at the end of their conversation, Jesus tells the adversary, "*Away with you, for it is written, worship the Lord your God and Him only.*" In doing this, Jesus demonstrates for us an example of how to live out God's word. Therefore when we reflect on Ash Wednesday, we are declaring our focus on God's word so that we may experience transformation during the Lenten season.

Repentance

Transformation also occurs when we repent of our trespasses. Repentance is valuable because it provides us space for confession. In John chapter eight, scribes and Pharisees brought a woman they caught in adultery before Jesus. Look then at the most crucial aspect of this story. Jesus tells the crowd, "*Let anyone who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.*" We found that all the people walked away. Jesus then tells the woman, "*Go your way and do not sin again.*" We find confidence in Jesus' words for us today. Repentance is not about feelings of guilt and shame. Repentance is God's transformative power strengthening you to live out forgiveness in the world.

Discipline

Ash Wednesday is also a time when we embrace discipline. Discipline is our response to reflection and repentance. In other words, it is our resolve to understand God's Spirit in our hearts. After Ash Wednesday services, you will find worship participants with ash marks on their foreheads in the shape of a cross. Often made from burnt palm branches, the ash markings indicate that one acknowledges mortality. Ashes represent death and repentance. Scriptures teach us that the body is composed of dust (Genesis 2:7). Spiritual discipline helps us live out what we believe. It helps us trust wholeheartedly in the Triune God who heals our diseases, covers our weaknesses, and gives us life anew in Christ.

Therefore, when we gather on Ash Wednesday, we gather to reflect on our lives in Christ, repent from the weight of sin, and seek God's gracious gift of discipline. We desire to draw closer to God that we may experience transformation.



Ash Wednesday

Encounter the Promise
the Way, the Truth, and the Life

God's Mercy Triumphs!

First Sunday in Lent 2025



Mercy is an essential part of God's nature. **Psalm 116:5** says, *"The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion."*

How is God described in **Exodus 34:6-7a**? ("a" meaning the first part of the verse)

Mercy comes from God's holiness and loving nature and is often seen alongside other expressions of His nature:

"For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away His face from you, if you return to Him." (2 Chronicles 30:9b, NRSV)

"But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." (Psalm 86:15, NRSV)

"... for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing." (Jonah 4:2b)

Although we are disobedient people of God and do not deserve mercy, what does **Jeremiah 3:12** remind us about who God is in His display of mercy?

However, Jeremiah goes on to say in verse **13** we are to acknowledge our guilt and rebellious ways. Why is this important to God?

God's mercy is generous, gracious, unmerited and undeserved and not something we are able to earn or deserve. Mercy is the quality of God's character that causes Him to seek a relationship with His people. It is the driving force that leads Him to create a relationship with Israel and with us today. It's who He is! In **Exodus 33:19**, how does God respond to Moses when asked about His glory?

Lest we think...well that was in Moses' day but not in 2025, look at **Hebrews 13:8** and write down what it says about our Lord.

Write out **1 Peter 2:10** _____

Note: Both Jews and Gentiles alike only came into relationship with God because He showed mercy to both of them. Jesus displayed God's mercy to the whole world in His death and resurrection. Through His sacrifice, all can be released from the slavery and penalty of sin. Because of Christ, when God looks at those who believe in His Son, He no longer sees their sin but instead sees the sacrificial blood of His Son who paid the price for their wrongdoings and gives the gift of forgiveness and mercy. Write out **1 Peter 1:3** below:

Salvation depends on God's mercy to sinners which includes all of us! Praise God from whom all mercies flow!

Showing mercy to others is the response God desires from those whom mercy has been given. (See Luke 10:25-37 and Leviticus 19:27-28)

How would you describe the meaning of "mercy?" _____

The founder and president of Children's Hunger Fund Dave Phillips states,
"Mercy is rooted in the Character of God and is demonstrated throughout the Old Testament."

Examples of God's faithful mercy can be found throughout the Old Testament.

Take a moment to review each of the Biblical stories below:

Adam and Eve – **Genesis 3:8-21**

Israel's release from slavery in Egypt – **Exodus 3:7, 17**

Israel's unfaithfulness – **Psalms 106:44-45**

God warned His people to turn back to His law and yet they continued to act presumptuously and did not obey His commandments. What is God's response in

Nehemiah 9:31?

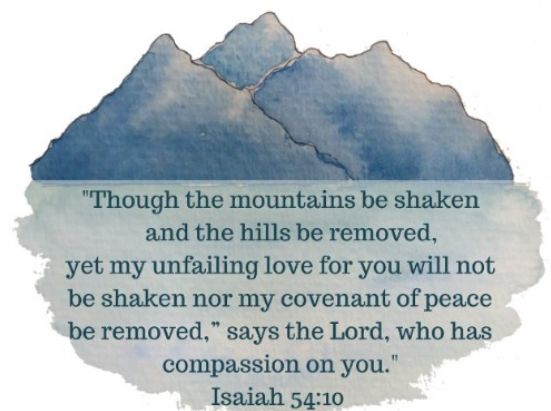
According to **Isaiah 54:10**, how is God's love described?

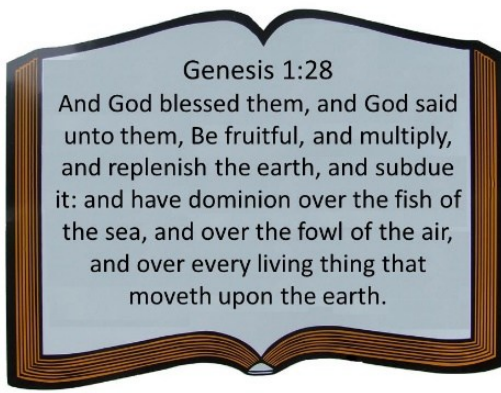
God's mercy is also demonstrated in the New Testament as Jesus both taught about and demonstrated mercy. Take some time to read the references below and summarize how Christ showed His mercy and how we are called to do the same.

Sermon on the Mount – **Matthew 5:7**

Jesus' desire for sinners – **Matthew 9:13**

Jesus' compassion – **Matthew 9:36, Luke 9:11, John 9:6-7**





Dave Phillips states,

“Humanity was created by God for God, and for the purpose of His glory. God made men and women in His image to commune with Him and to reflect His character.”

“God commissioned humanity to multiply and to steward the creation that He made. We are designed to know Him and to make Him known.”

What are some ways you can “reflect” God’s image to others?

Genesis 3 tells us when Adam and Eve sinned and ate the forbidden fruit with a desire to elevate themselves and not honor God, they broke their fellowship with God causing them to hide from Him. This sin not only affected their relationship with God, but it also had consequences with each other as they attacked and blamed one another.

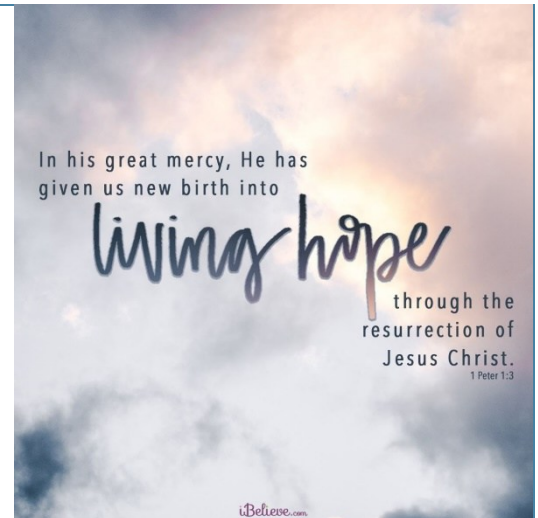
What does **Jeremiah 17:9** say about the heart? _____

“I the LORD, search the heart and examine the mind.” (Jeremiah 17:10a)

How does Jesus describe the human heart in **Mark 7:21-23**? _____



Since sin has affected and corrupted everything, we need help spiritually, physically and relationally. In other words... we need God's mercy! According to **1 Peter 1:3**, how did God show His mercy to us?



The climax of God's mercy is found in Christ and when we invite Jesus into our hearts, we are welcomed into a family to be built up and sanctified. This family is the church and the instrument of God's mercy to the watching world. (1 Peter 2:4-5) The church or spiritual house, in obedience to God's call, communicates His mercy and reconciliation. What an honor and privilege to be called and commissioned to be His ambassadors! *"Go and make disciples of all nations."* (Matthew 28:19)

According to **Mark 12:29-31**, what did Jesus say was the "Great Commandment?"

Mercy flows from the character of God to broken humanity through the ministry of Jesus. We are called to love people like the Father does. When we serve the poor, we are serving Christ. **Matthew 25:35.**

Dave Phillips states; ***"The church must grasp the complexity of poverty and view it from a biblical perspective recognizing spiritual and material poverty."***

Paul, who worked with Titus in Crete to spread the gospel and establish churches, instructed Titus to teach people to fulfill the command of Jesus. (Matthew 28:19-20) In Paul's letter to Titus, he encouraged him to constantly remind Christians to show proper respect and humility toward all people.

Titus 3:3 How were the people behaving before they knew Jesus?

When we remember our spiritual poverty and how we were before knowing Christ, then God can build four traits in us:

Gratitude for how God changed us.

Humility as we see that it was God's work that changed us.

Kindness as we realize the kindness and the love of God reaching out to us.

Faith that God can change those who are spiritually impoverished.

Phillips states, ***"Poverty is a complex, comprehensive state, and it can be difficult to understand. Scripture details both the primary root of poverty and three general causes that flow from it."***

The primary root of poverty is found in the Fall of humanity into sin. (Genesis 3:1-19)

Phillips goes on to say, ***"The causes of poverty may come from within the self or from others, including sinful choices, worldviews, and beliefs."***

Oppression by others.

Moral failures such as foolishness and laziness.

Natural calamities such as sickness, disaster, or death.

Poverty and suffering are never without purpose, and never without hope. God always has a purpose in what He does and we are called to respond in humility, worship and mercy. Think of ways you already see your church and its members displaying God's mercy to your community."

Mercy is the response God desires from those whom He has shown mercy and is a sign that we have accepted the free mercy of God in our own lives:

"For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13, NASB)

"Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." (Luke 6:36, NRSV)



We encourage you to listen to *Here I Am Lord*
and *God So Loved the World*

HERE
I AM,
LORD



Here I Am Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcxOkht8w7c>

I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard My people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin, My hand will save.

I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them? Whom shall I send?

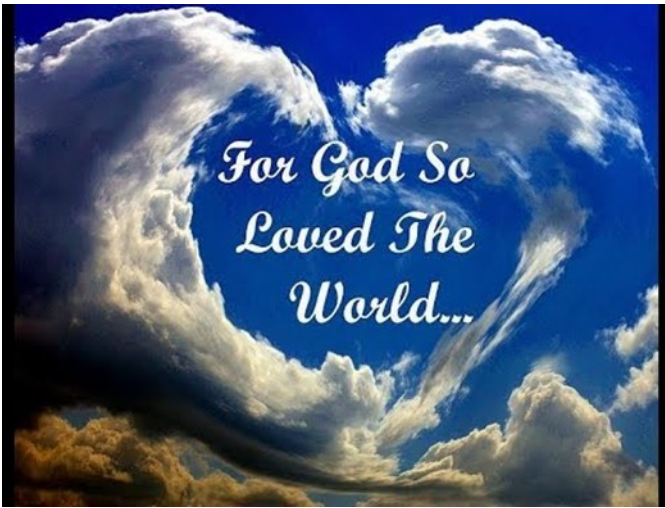
Here I am Lord, is it I Lord? I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me. I will hold Your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them, My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide, Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give My life to them, whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, is it I Lord? I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me. I will hold Your people in my heart.

I will hold Your people in my heart.

John Michael Talbot
Table of Plenty



God So Loved The World

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jasoo3UDSwY>

LYRICS

Come all you weary
 Come all you thirsty
 Come to the well
 That never runs dry
 Drink of the water
 Come and thirst no more
 Well, come all you sinners
 Come find His mercy
 Come to the table
 He will satisfy
 Taste of His goodness
 Find what you're looking for
 For God so loved
 The world that He gave us
 His one and only
 Son to save us
 Whoever believes in Him
 Will live forever
 Bring all your failures
 Bring your addictions
 Come lay them down
 At the foot of the cross
 Jesus is waiting there
 With open arms
 See His open arms

For God so loved
 The world that He gave us
 His one and only
 Son to save us
 Whoever believes in Him
 Will live forever
 The power of hell
 Forever defeated
 Now it is well
 I'm walking in freedom
 For God so loved
 God so loved the world
 Praise God
 Praise God
 From whom all blessings flow
 Praise Him
 Praise Him
 For the wonders of His love
 (praise God)
 Praise God
 Praise God
 From whom all blessings flow
 Praise Him
 Praise Him
 For the wonders of His love
 His amazing love
 For God so loved
 The world that He gave us
 His one and only
 Son to save

For God so loved
 The world that He gave us
 His one and only
 Son to save us
 Whoever believes in Him
 Will live forever
 The power of hell
 Forever defeated
 Now it is well
 I'm walking in freedom
 For God so loved
 God so loved the world
 Bring all your failures
 Bring your addictions
 Come lay them down
 At the foot of the cross
 Jesus is waiting
 God so loved the world

Source: [LyricFind](#)

Songwriters: Andrew Bergthold / Edmond Martin Cash / Franni Cash / Martin Cash / Scott Mctyeire Cash
 God So Loved lyrics © Capitol CMG Publishing



Nurturing a Heart of Mercy

Second Sunday in Lent 2025

Do you know what a paradox is? According to the dictionary, a paradox is any person, thing, or situation displaying an apparently contradictory nature or a statement that seems self-contradictory. When it is said that God is the God of justice and mercy, it seems like a paradox. In examining what mercy is and what justice is, it can seem that way because mercy is in fact injustice. If justice is getting what is deserved, then mercy is NOT getting what is deserved.

Justice is defined as rightfulness or lawfulness, the moral principle determining right conduct, the administering of the deserved punishment or reward and the maintenance or administration of what is right by law. Scripture refers to justice, God’s justice as being righteousness. Read **Micah 6:6-8**. What does God mean by

Justice? _____

What does God’s justice look like? _____

How would you define justice? _____

Mercy is not justice. So how can God who is a just God also be the God of mercy? Reading the definitions of mercy, this one stands out. Mercy is showing compassion or forgiveness toward someone whom it is within one’s power to punish or harm. Read **Lamentations 3:22-25**. What does this text say about God?

How has God shown mercy to you? _____

Scripture tells us that both justice and mercy are not only important but are also necessary. God created a world that is orderly and runs according to rules. When the rules are broken, there are far-reaching consequences. This can be seen in Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit from the tree. The Lord God crafted a plan of redemption that would satisfy the requirements of justice and would at the same time offer mercy to those who would accept it. He offers the greatest gift of mercy – forgiveness – to all who believe in His Son, Jesus. Jesus, God with us, God becomes flesh, the only One who could satisfy all the requirements of justice received our punishment for our sin.



When He was asked about forgiveness, Jesus told the parable of the unforgiving servant. Read **Matthew 18: 21-35**. The first servant in the story begged for forgiveness (mercy) from his master.

Have you ever had to ask for mercy/forgiveness from someone else?

What was the result? _____

The same servant refused to give mercy/forgiveness to another servant who was in debt to him. Why?

How does Jesus end the story? _____

So then, how does one develop a more merciful heart? It would be wonderful to have a step-by-step list to follow, but unfortunately changing one's heart doesn't work that way. God alone is in the business of changing hearts. It is His work to do. Our part is to be open to God working in us. We need to spend time with the Lord in prayer, studying His word, and in worship. We continue to deepen our relationship with Him. We continue to open ourselves up to allow God to work His transforming power on our hearts so that we are more compassionate, more merciful, more kind, more loving, and prayerfully then more like Jesus.

Spend some time thinking over your life. Who are the people who have hurt you in the past (and/or present)?

Have you been able to forgive them? Why or why not? _____

Spend some time praying and offering the situation(s) and person(s) to the Lord. Ask the Lord to work in you. Ask the Lord to bring healing to yourself and the situation. Ask the Lord to give you direction. Write down anything that the Lord brings to mind (a scripture, a song, the name of someone to talk with, etc.)

As we trust God to work in us, we may just find our hearts of stone transformed into hearts of flesh just as God promised Israel in **Ezekiel 36:26**. May our transformations bring Him glory forever and ever.



Blessed are the Merciful

Jesus says one of the ways to have joy in your life is to be merciful.

Consider how the following illustration gives us an example of how we can show God's mercy.

Rebecca Manley Pippert, in her book *Stories from the Heart*, tells about an article that appeared in *Campus Life* magazine sometime back, written by a young nurse about a patient of hers.

The patient's name was Eileen, one of this young nurse's first patients. Eileen was totally helpless. "A cerebral aneurysm (broken blood vessels in the brain) had left her with no conscious control over her body," the nurse wrote. "As near as the doctors could tell, Eileen was unconscious, unable to feel pain and unaware of anything going on around her."

All the nurses could do for this poor woman was to turn her every hour to prevent bedsores and to feed her twice a day through a stomach tube. "When it's this bad," an older student nurse told her, "you have to detach yourself emotionally from the whole situation."

But the young student nurse found she couldn't treat this woman with detachment. She decided to talk to Eileen, sing to her, and even brought her little gifts.

On difficult days, she was particularly kind to Eileen. Thanksgiving Day was one of those.

The young nurse said to Eileen, "I was in a cruddy mood this morning, Eileen, because it was supposed to be my day off. But now that I'm here, I'm glad. I wouldn't have wanted to miss seeing you on Thanksgiving. Do you know this is Thanksgiving?" The telephone rang. The young nurse turned to answer it. She looked back at Eileen.

"Suddenly," she wrote, "Eileen was looking at me ... crying. Big damp circles stained her pillow, and she was shaking all over. That was the only human emotion that Eileen ever showed any of the hospital staff, but it was enough to change the whole attitude of the staff toward her." Not long afterward, Eileen died. The young nurse closed her story, saying, "I keep thinking about her. It occurred to me that I owe her an awful lot. Except for Eileen, I might never have known what it's like to give myself to someone who can't give back."

Jesus knew what it was to give to people who couldn't give back. That's what He did for me, for us. When Jesus saw the crowds, He had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. And there were so many of them. Just like today.

Less Like Me

Song by Zach Williams

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hawc0emHg8c>

Lyrics

Oh, I have days I lose the fight
Try my best but just don't get it right
Where I talk a talk that I don't walk
And miss the moments right before my eyes
Somebody with a hurt that I could have helped
Somebody with a hand that I could have held
When I just can't see past myself

Lord, help me be

A little more like mercy, a little more like grace
A little more like kindness, goodness, love,
and faith
A little more like patience, a little more like peace
A little more like Jesus, a little less like me

Yeah, there's no denying I have changed
'Cause I've been saved from who I used to be
But even at my best, I must confess
I still need help to see the way You see
Somebody with a hurt that I could have helped
Somebody with a hand that I could have held
When I just can't see past myself



Lord, help me be

A little more like mercy, a little more like grace
A little more like kindness, goodness, love,
and faith
A little more like patience, a little more like peace
A little more like Jesus, a little less like me

Oh, I wanna feed the beggar on the street
Learn to be Your hands and feet
Freely give what I receive

Lord, help me be
I want put You first above all else
Love my neighbor as myself
In the moments no one sees

Lord, help me be
(One, two, three)

A little more like mercy, a little more like grace
A little more like kindness, goodness, love, and faith
A little more like patience, a little more like peace
A little more like Jesus, oh, a little less like me

A little more of living everything I preach
A little more like Jesus, a little less like me
Oh, a little less like me

Source: [Musixmatch](#)

Songwriters: Zach Williams / Hank Bentley / Mia Fields

Great Is Thy

Faithfulness

Based on: Lamentations 3:23



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ytmx9Xm8Xkk>

Verse 1

Great Is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father! There is no shadow of turning with Thee; Thou changest not; Thy compassions, they fail not. As thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Chorus: Great is Thy faithfulness! Great Is Thy Faithfulness!

Morning by morning new mercies I see; all I have needed Thy hand hath provided

Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.

Verse 2

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest, sun moon and stars in their courses above, join with all nature in manifold witness to Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Chorus

Verse 3

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide, strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow - blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside.

Chorus



Communicating the Gospel

Third Sunday in Lent 2025

In a sentence or two, how would you define gospel?

Listen to this short video summarizing the meaning of the gospel and discuss.

<https://freegrace.in/what-is-the-gospel/>

As a believer of Jesus Christ, we are called by God to communicate His message of love and forgiveness. To put it as D.T Niles said, *“Evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread.”* Although God is the One who regenerates the hearts of lost souls for them to respond in repentance and faith, we are given the honor and responsibility to share the good news or gospel with those we meet. In other words, we are in partnership with Jesus to share His love, call to repentance and the plan of salvation.

Phillips reminds us, *“The Bible is the content and authority for communicating the gospel. The power of evangelism comes from knowing God is at work through us and in the hearers.”*

Note: “To evangelize means to share the [gospel](#) of Jesus Christ with someone else. Personal evangelism should be the lifestyle of every true Christian. We’ve been given a great gift, and our Master left us with clear instructions: “Go into all the world and make disciples of every nation” ([Matthew 28:19](#)). Before we can “make disciples, we must evangelize.” (Got Questions.org)

Without a knowledge of God’s Word, it will be difficult to be messengers of the gospel. This is why reading the Bible and studying it is so vital to our call to evangelize. But how do we begin?

Take a moment and listen to this short video on evangelism presented to us by Got Questions.org

<https://www.gotquestions.org/evangelize-friends-family.html>

What is the first thing we need to do before sharing Jesus with others? _____

From where does **Romans 10:17** say faith comes? _____

How is the message heard? _____

According to **1 Peter 3:15**, what do we need to be “prepared to do?”

How are we to do this? _____

1 Peter 4:7-10 goes on to remind us what our Christian conduct should be. No one will want to listen to us share God’s Word if we are not living it out first.

How are we to love each other? _____

How are we to show hospitality? _____

How are we to use our gifts from God? _____

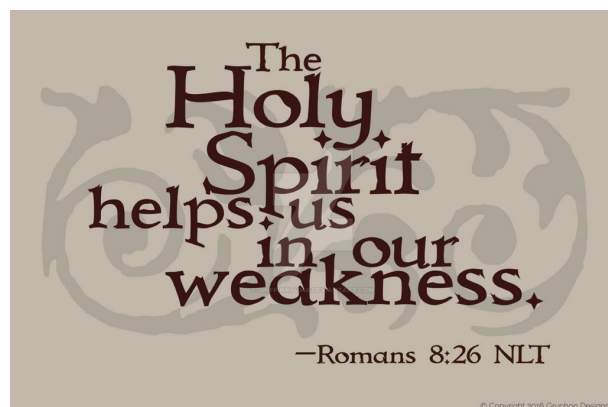
We are called to be faithful givers of God’s grace.

Evangelism is an act of love as it builds and strengthens our own faith. It is an overflow of hope within us to be shared with others.

How does **Hebrews 4:12** describe the word of God? _____

We are never alone when sharing Jesus with others. **John 16:13** reminds us what Jesus says. Write it here:

As we share God’s infinite love, He calls us to pray for one another. **“Prayer means that we get into union with God’s view of other people.”** (Oswald Chambers, *Prayer: A Holy Occupation*. P. 97)



Humans are sinful and separated from God, and salvation is possible solely through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus. Since human life is brief, uncertain, and unpredictable (Psalm 103:15-16, James 4:13-14) NOW is the time to share Jesus' love with those whom we meet. Phillips reminds us, *"Urgency serves not only as a call to action but also as a catalyst for personal transformation."* (Romans 12:1-2)

Write out **2 Corinthians 6:2** _____

Phillips goes on to say, *"The gospel has the power to transform lives, bringing spiritual healing, forgiveness, and purpose. The urgency to share this transformative message is grounded in a desire to see individuals experience the kind mercy of God."*

2 Corinthians 5:17 "If anyone is in Christ, s/he is a new _____
the _____ has gone, the _____ has come!

What does **Philippians 2:10-11** say will happen when we hear the name of Jesus?

Matthew 5:16 What are we called to do? _____

Phillips reminds us a joyful demeanor reflects the heart of a God who passionately seeks to restore humanity to Himself. We are called to sing to the Lord and bless His holy name and tell of His salvation from day to day. Let us declare His glory among the nations and His marvelous works among all the peoples! (Psalm 96:2-3)

As Pastor Lance shared with us a few weeks ago, we are called to invite people to **"Come and See!"** (John 1:35-51) The task of evangelism, or telling others about Jesus, was the first thing Jesus asked His followers to do as He left the earth. (Mark 16:15) Evangelism is God calling us to be available and faithful to the opportunities that He gives us. We are called to encourage others, pray for others, share our story with others and invite others to church. Telling others about Jesus doesn't mean we have to stand on a street corner shouting, but it does mean we need to seek out intentional and meaningful conversations with others. Pastor Lance reminded us that our calling is to plant the seed and invite people to know Jesus; and then let Jesus do the rest! So....be ready to say, **"Come and See!"**

The Children's Hunger Foundation reminds us that poverty can rob a person of hope and joy. We are called to recognize that the poor often face pressing physical and emotional needs such as hunger, lack of shelter, and access to healthcare. Some practical steps we can take are:

- a.) Providing for needs
- b.) Spend time with those in need
- c.) Listen
- d.) Learn

What does **Matthew 4:23-25** say Jesus did to provide the physical needs of the people? _____

God's expression of His unconditional love is found throughout the Bible. Although we are commanded to repent our sins and strive toward the way of God, He never stops loving us in our journey to righteousness. The Bible shows us that God's unconditional love never fails!

What does unconditional love of God mean?

- God's love is undeserved and unconditional, and it is based on God's nature to love.
- God's love is unwavering and extends to everyone, regardless of their actions or worthiness.
- God's love is a gift that provides support and affirmation, and reminds people that they are valued and cherished.
- God's love moves God to act benevolently, such as sending rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

We are called to remind people of God's unconditional love for them and they are valued and loved by God. We are also called to "live out" God's love to others.

God's love is everlasting!

Jeremiah 31:3

One of the privileges we have as Christians and members of First Presbyterian Church is to reach out to those in need. The Children's Hunger Fund has provided us an opportunity to love others by providing much needed food. We also have the opportunity to pray for this ministry as we reach out being Jesus' hands and feet to those in the world that need food and care. This is the heart of evangelism! We are called to show God's mercy and care as we share His Word - the Good News of Jesus Christ! Amen! May it be so!



The Bible is full of examples of evangelism. Let's examine two samples provided by Paul to see if we can gain some valuable insights.

The first situation is found in **Acts 16:11-15**.

"In Philippi, Paul and his companions find a place of prayer outside the city gate on the Sabbath. This deviates from Paul's normal practice in Acts of first preaching in a synagogue within the city. The missionaries encounter a group of women on the riverbank, presumably part of the praying assembly. Among them is Lydia, a sojourner in Philippi, characterized as a "dealer in purple cloth." This designation puts Lydia among those first-century women who ran a household and a business." (From: Enter the Bible)



According to **Acts 16:14**, how did God prepare Lydia to receive Paul's teaching?

What did Paul do for Lydia and her household? _____

WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

Lesson One: We need to be flexible and learn from Paul's example as he demonstrated a willingness to go anywhere to present the gospel.

Lesson Two: We need to trust in God who is the One who prepares the hearts of people to receive His message of love and forgiveness.

Lesson Three: We need to be willing and ready to listen to the Holy Spirit and be obedient to God's guidance and calling.

Apologist and professor Sean McDowell encourages people to engage others in sharing their views on various world topics (i.e. authenticity of the Bible) and then responding by asking the question, "Would you be willing to hear how I as a Christian see the world differently?" With that in mind, we as Christians need to be ready to share our faith and to follow the advice in **1 Peter 3:15** *"In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."*

Our second situation is found in **Acts 17:22-31** . Paul provides us with an excellent example of how to share the gospel. While he was in Athens, Greece he observed the very religious people having many objects of worship.

What was the wording on one of the altars? _____

Paul jumped at the opportunity to share the gospel saying, *“Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.”* From there he shared the good news of the gospel. Let’s see what nuggets we can learn from Paul.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

One: Find the common ground with the person you are sharing the gospel with.

Lesson Two: Know God’s word and be ready to point them to Jesus (see verses 24-31)

Lesson Three: Engage the people with respect. Paul said, *“I see that in every way you are very religious.”* .

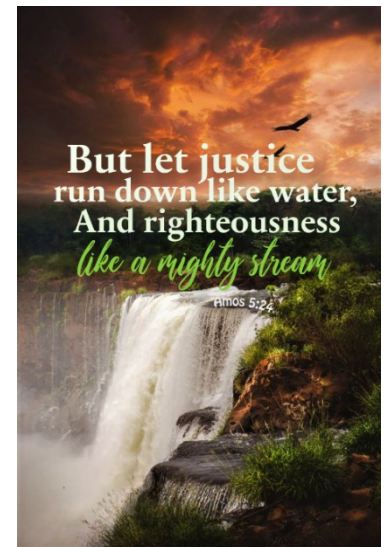
Note: According to verse **32**, not everyone was ready to accept God’s truth so be ready to realize some people may dismiss the gospel. Remember it is not up to you to “bring a person to Christ.” It is up to you to share His love and forgiveness and leave the rest to the Savior.

We respond to God’s mercy by being merciful.

We respond to God’s love by being loving.

We respond to God’s forgiveness by being forgiving.

Write out **Amos 5:24**



It was once said, *“People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.”* We are called to align our hearts with God. It’s about being intentional and posturing and positioning our hearts with God. Evangelism begins with praying and showing people mercy, love, and forgiveness. It continues with sharing God’s word and His truth. So let’s be ready to share the good news of Christ’s salvation and the hope our Lord gives to all those who put their trust in Him.

No Longer Slaves

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8TkUMJtK5k>



You unravel me with a melody
You surround me with a song
Of deliverance from my enemies
'Til all my fears are gone

I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God
I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God

From my mother's womb
You have chosen me
Love has called my name
I've been born again into a family
Your blood flows through my veins

I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God
I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God
I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God
I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God

I am surrounded by the arms of the Father
I am surrounded by songs of deliverance
We've been be liberated (yah)
From our bondage
We're the sons and the daughters
Let us sing our freedom

Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh

Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh

You split the sea, so I could walk right through it
My fears are drowned in perfect love
You rescued me and I will stand and sing
I am a child of God

You split the sea, so I could walk right through it
You drowned my fears in perfect love
You rescued me and I will stand and sing
I am a child of God

Yes, I am
I am a child of God
I am a child of God
Yes, I am
I am a child of God
Full of faith
Yes, I am a child of God
I am a child of God

'Cause I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God
I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God

Source: [Musixmatch](#)

Songwriters: Brian Johnson / Joel Case / Jonathan David
Helser / Joel D Case
No Longer Slaves lyrics © Bethel Music Publishing

Children of God

By Third Day

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6jO7xhU_Pw

Praise to the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ
Our God and Our King, to Him, we will sing
In His great mercy He has given us life
Now we can be called 'the children of God'

Great is the love that the Father has given us
He has delivered us, well, He has delivered us

Children of God, sing your song and rejoice
For the love that He has given us all, oh, whoa
Children of God, by the blood of His Son
We have been redeemed and we can be called

Children of God
Children of God

Your mystery is revealed to the universe
The Father Above has proven His love
Now we are free from the judgment that we deserve
So we are called 'the children of God'

Great is the love that the Father has given us
He has delivered us, He has delivered us

Children of God, sing your song and rejoice
For the love that He has given us all, oh, whoa
Children of God, by the blood of His Son
We have been redeemed and we can be called

Children of God
Children of God

We are the saints, we are the children
We've been redeemed, we've been forgiven
We are the sons and daughters of our God
We are the saints, we are the children
We've been redeemed, we've been forgiven
We are the sons and daughters of our God

Children of God, sing your song and rejoice
For the love that He has given us all, oh, whoa
Children of God, by the blood of His Son
We have been redeemed and we can be called

Children of God
(We are the saints, we are the children
We've been redeemed, we've been forgiven)
Children of God
(We are the sons and the daughters of our God)

Children of God
(We are the saints, we are the children
We've been redeemed, we've been forgiven)
Children of God
(We are the sons and the daughters of our God)

We are the saints, we are the children
We've been redeemed, we've been forgiven
We are the sons and the daughters of our God
We are the saints, we are the children
We've been redeemed, we've been forgiven
We are the sons and the daughters of our God

Source: [Musixmatch](#)

Songwriters: David Carr / Mark Lee / Tai Anderson / Johnny Powell
Children of God Lyrics © Hipgnosis Sfh I Limited





Palm Sunday

The occurrence of the “Triumphal Entry” marks the pinnacle of Jesus’ public popularity during His public ministry. Counting the Galilean pilgrims who came with Jesus to Jerusalem with the Passover crowd coming up to meet them from the city, an enormous amount of people assembled. The commotion in these outskirts must have created a cacophonous racket! As it continued more and more people would crowd into the section of the Jerusalem. Perhaps there were several thousand celebrants lining the roads.

This amount of commotion was sure to arouse the religious rulers and their Roman task masters that something disturbing could be brewing. The Romans did not like large crowds of religious people together in one place. Crazy (and unlawful) things could happen.

Jesus was making a statement in orchestrating this event. He has entered into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. This was a purely messianic act in the midst of a purely messianic-longing bunch of Jews! Were they watching for the long-awaited deliverer and redeemer sent straight from the LORD GOD of Israel . The prophet Zachariah had foretold that when the Messiah entered the city He would be riding on a donkey (9: 9). He would come as a humble servant. Jesus of Nazareth was a different kind of Messiah than what the crowd had expected.

From the roads that led into the city, the people had started laying down blankets in front of the “procession.” They added palm branches (John 2:13) as a symbol of victory, peace and kingship. It was the kind of entry, though on a smaller scale, of the parades given to victorious generals coming into Rome. The people started shouting, *Hosanna, glory to God, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord* (Matthew 21:9); again a fulfillment of Messianic prophesy. (Psalm 118: 26)

This was a great proclamation from Jesus of who He was, but it was confusing. Jesus was a King, but how is it that this King rides on a donkey and not on an emperor's furious stallion? In less than a week, this same Jesus would be viciously executed on a Roman giblet because He was seen as an insurrectionist and a blasphemer.

This is the question that confronts us all as we read and reflect about the triumphant entry on Palm Sunday. Which Jesus are we going to believe in; which Lord are we going to bow down and worship. The one who is coming to conquer as a revengeful military despot, or one who humbly comes as a Savior and brings us back to God. Was He coming to set us free from the "Romans" in our lives, or was it freedom from the sin that controls us and rejects our relationship with God?

Yes, Jesus did come to show us what kind of Lord His Father was (John 1: 18). How much His God loved His people! (John 20:28). But He came to give us life, real life that never ended. He did this by defeating the power of sin and death and the reign of evil. It is the self-sacrificial love of this Emmanuel that makes us free. Jesus came riding on a donkey. That means He came as only having Himself to give, He was endowed with salvation (Zachariah 9:9b), He would give his life as a ransom for many, that is what He said to His disciples; *"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."* (Matthew 20:28). Jesus wept over Jerusalem because they did not believe in Him as their Savior and Lord in this time of visitation (Luke 19:44).

On Good Friday how would Palm Sunday be understood: the, "calm before the storm," "the great misdirection?" But on "Resurrection Sunday," it becomes a different remembrance. One can think of Palm Sunday as the road through the Roman crucifixion death, through the empty tomb, into resurrection life. Salvation has now become a reality for all the people.



*"Hosanna, hosanna
in the highest!"*

Good Friday Poem

Salvation

By: Edward Miller ~ From: Luke 23: 39-43

*O what shall be done at the end of the day
when the heart and the flesh, faints and fails?*

*When earth with its glory is passing away, what good is salvation from nails?
What rest will be mine and what joy in my heart, that I have a Savior within;
how glad I will be when it's time to depart, I prayed for salvation from sin!*

*Two thieves were condemned for the very same crime; and sentenced the very same way.
Man's justice demanded that each on his cross would die on the very same day. But neither
man's death could atone for his soul; that price was too awesome to pay! Both needed a
Savior! Beside them, He hung, the very same distance away!*

*One saw his position. His soul he forgot! He cried out in pitiful wails.
He grieved his condition; lamented his lot: he sought to be free from travails. "Save me from
my problem; this horrible plight; redeem me from all that assails." He wasn't concerned that
his heart was not right; he wanted salvation from nails!*

*The other, observing life ebbing away; eternity, soon to begin, was focused on wages that he
could not pay, and warfare that he could not win! His eyes closed beholding One, paying the
price, and deep from his spirit, within, he prayed! And was welcomed into paradise! He found
God's salvation from sin.*



*"God is holy, so sin is serious. God is gracious, so sin can be forgiven.
On the cross His holiness and grace kiss." By: Paul David Tripp*

I Will Wait for You

Psalm 130

By Shane and Shane

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8C3WQ1G1Uso>

You are encouraged to read Psalm 130 and then quiet your heart and listen to the song below as you ask the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart for Good Friday (click onto the site above).

Out of the depths I cry to You
In darkest places I will call
Incline Your ear to me anew
And hear my cry for mercy Lord

Were You to count my sinful ways
How could I come before Your throne
Yet full forgiveness meets my gaze
I stand redeemed by grace alone

I will wait for You, I will wait for You
On Your word I will rely
I will wait for You, surely wait for You
Till my soul is satisfied

So put Your hope in God alone
Take courage in His power to save
Completely and forever won
By Christ emerging from the grave

I will wait for You, I will wait for You
On Your word I will rely
I will wait for You, surely wait for You
Till my soul is satisfied, oh, ooh

Now He has come to make a way
And God Himself has paid the price
That all who trust in Him today
Find healing in His sacrifice
That all who trust in Him today
Find healing in His sacrifice

I will wait for You, I will wait for You
Through the storm and through the night
I will wait for You, surely wait for You
For Your love is my delight

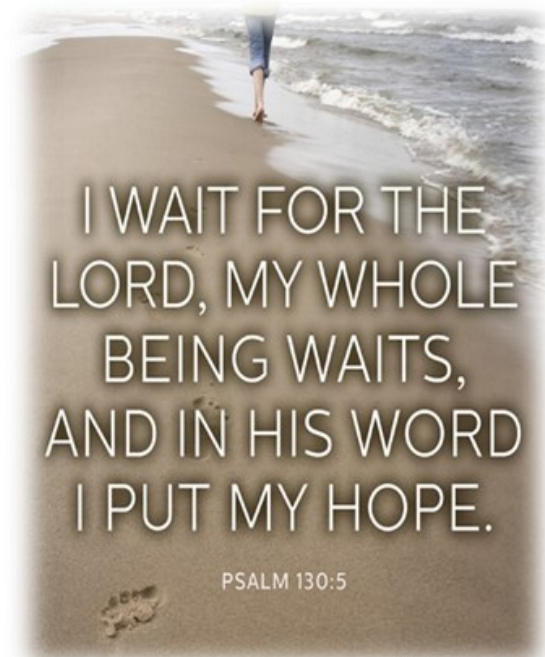
Oh I will wait for You, I will wait for You
Through the storm and through the night
I will wait for You, surely wait for You
For Your love is my delight

I will wait for You, I will wait for You
Through the storm and through the night
I will wait for You, surely wait for You
For Your love is my delight, oh, ooh

Oh You are my delight
You're my delight

I will wait for You, I will wait for You
On Your word I will rely
I will wait for You, surely wait for You
Till my soul is satisfied

I will wait for You, I will wait for You
On Your word I will rely
I will wait for You, surely wait for You
Till my soul is satisfied



The Lamb of God

It's Resurrection Sunday. The tomb of Christ is empty. Jesus the Nazarene has risen from the dead. The theology of the early church will say that by coming back to life, Jesus had "fired," death. (2 Timothy 1: 10) for everyone. People will never die eternally because Jesus was the Messiah and His death was a sacrificial one, really a substitutionary one for the sin of humankind. There was a judgment for sin a willful rejection of God, acting out in our actions and our words.

But there is something about who Jesus was in relation to salvation that is important for us to remember; Jesus is called the **Lamb of God**. (John 1: 29). Paul called Jesus our Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7) meaning the one who is sacrificed as those lambs were on that faithful day back in Egypt.



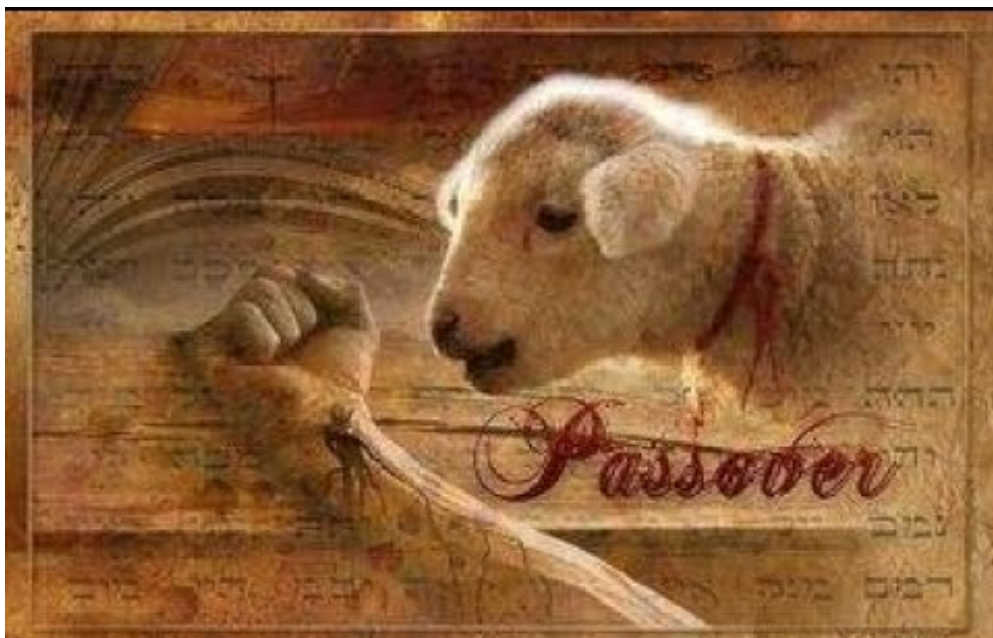
During the time, just before the exodus, God instructed the Israelites to go into their houses, because the angel of death was coming to kill the first born of the Egyptians. However, God said the angel will not enter a home where the door posts were covered with the blood of a lamb. The Angel, "passed over" those houses. The children of Israel would therefore in perspicuity, practiced a blood sacrifice of a lamb for their sins once a year; first in the Tabernacle and then in the temple in Jerusalem. A lamb was sacrificed and its blood was spread out on the altar. This expiated or covered the sins of the people for the entirety of a year until the next Passover feast.

Jesus' death on the cross is the sacrifice of His life. It was for the sin of the world, forever. Since Jesus was the Christ, the Holy One of God, the eternal Son of God, the shedding of His blood was done once and for all. (1 Peter 3:18).

When John the Baptist described Jesus of Nazareth as the, *“Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,”* it was an apt description both literally as well as figuratively. Jesus was described in the Old Testament as a lamb. Isaiah says of the suffering servant, *“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb who is led to slaughter, and like a sheep who is silent before its shearer’s. He did not open His mouth.”* (Isaiah 53:7). In Ephesians 1:7, Paul stated, *“In Him, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses....”*. The author of the letter to the Hebrew states, *“The blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself up without blemish to God.”* The phrase, *“He offered Himself without blemish,”* is an allusion that Jesus was the perfect Passover Lamb. (Hebrews 9: 14a). Peter reminds us when talking about the redemption from sin, it is done *“With the precious blood as of a lamb, unblemished and spotless, the blood of Jesus.”* (1 Peter 1:19)

Jesus is called the, “Lamb of God” because He gave His life as the ransom for many just like the little lambs were doing at the Passover. They died, shedding their blood back in the time of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt. (Exodus 12: 1-17, 29)

“Jesus is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.”





King of Kings

Brooke Ligertwood, Hillsong Worship

[https://youtu.be/McO-ELaBjfw?
si=GsiClddPC2MjZnHr](https://youtu.be/McO-ELaBjfw?si=GsiClddPC2MjZnHr)

In the darkness we were waiting
Without hope, without light
'Til from Heaven You came running
There was mercy in Your eyes
To fulfill the law and prophets
To a virgin came the word
From a throne of endless glory
To a cradle in the dirt
Praise the Father, praise the Son
Praise the Spirit, three in one
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of Kings
To reveal the kingdom coming
And to reconcile the lost
To redeem the whole creation
You did not despise the cross
For even in your suffering
You saw to the other side
Knowing this was our salvation
Jesus for our sake you died
Praise the Father, praise the Son
Praise the Spirit, three in one
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of Kings

And the morning that You rose
All of Heaven held its breath
'Til that stone was moved for good
For the Lamb had conquered death
And the dead rose from their tombs
And the angels stood in awe
For the souls of all who'd come
To the Father are restored
And the church of Christ was born
Then the Spirit lit the flame
Now this gospel truth of old
Shall not kneel, shall not faint
By His blood and in His name
In His freedom I am free
For the love of Jesus Christ
Who has resurrected me
Praise the Father, praise the Son
Praise the Spirit, three in one
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of Kings
Praise forever to the King of Kings

Songwriters: Jason Ingram, Scott Ligertwood,
Brooke Gabrielle Fraser. For non-commercial
use only.

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 2-:14-15a



When we put our different talents and gifts together, we are a mixture of a colorful bouquet of flowers serving as a sweet aroma to Christ and His flock. To Him be the glory!