



April 2: Palm Sunday
 Sunday School: Bethany Markey
 Worship: Gail Cannon

April 9: Easter Sunday
 Sunday School: Kathy Willetts
 Worship: Brittany Inman

April 16
 Sunday School: Susan Davis
 Worship: Kristi Greene

April 23
 Sunday School: Cathy Walsh
 Worship: Katie Reeves

April 30
 Sunday School: Cathy Allen
 Worship: Donna Wood



April 2: Palm Sunday
 Kristi Greene

April 9: Easter Sunday
 Stefanie Effler

April 16
 Donna Wood

April 23
 Kathy Willetts

April 30
 Robbie McLeod

MAUNDY THURSDAY
 "I give you a new commandment:
 Love one another as I have loved you."
 - John 13:34

RSVP by Monday, April 3 @ 3:00 pm by
 calling the office at 828-648-2367 or email
 @ cfb202@gmail.com

Supper with your deacon.
 Meal provided @ 5:30 pm Thurs-
 day, April 6th in the Fellowship
 Hall and then Maundy Thursday
 service to include the Lord's
 Supper following in the Sanctuary.



Everyone is invited
 Thursday, April 6, 2023
 6:30 pm Maundy Thursday Service

MAUNDY THURSDAY



The WITNESS Volume 66, Edition 3, April (Easter), 2023



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Canton First Baptist Church
 828-648-2367 www.canton-fbc.org
 208 Academy Street
 Canton NC 28716

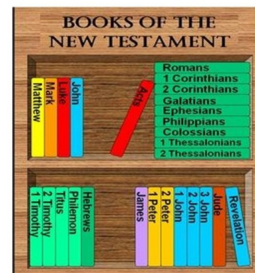
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WOMEN
 on a *Mission*

Jean Teague Ladies WMU Circle
Tuesday, APRIL 4th
@ 10:00 am/Fellowship Hall

QUESTIONS? Contact Susan Shumolis
 828.400.1593

EASTER Covered Dish BREAKFAST
 Easter Sunday, April 9th @ 9:00 am
 Invite family, friends & neighbors!



Join online at
www.zoom.us/j/455573873

Wednesday Night Bible Study

New Series Starts April 12th
 "The Little Guys: Small and Often Overlooked Books of the New Testament"

To join by audio only:
 Dial: 1.301.715.8592

Meeting ID#: 455 573 873

THE Joy CLUB INVITES YOU
 Joyful Hearts at Crestview Baptist has invited us:
FRIDAY, April 14 & 28
 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm
 Mann Classroom 2nd Floor
 What: After-Easter Luncheon
 When: Tuesday, April 18th
 Time: 11:30 am
 Where: Crestview Baptist Ch.
 RSVP: Lowell/Sandra 734-6310



Save the Dates:
JUNE 26 - JUNE 30, 2023

The Witness

208 Academy Street • Canton, North Carolina 28716
 Office: 828.648.2367 • cantonfirst@gmail.com

Volume 66, Edition 3, April (Easter), 2023

In Luke 23, as he is getting crucified, Jesus utters one of the simplest, and yet most powerful statements ever to pass through human vocal cords. Or did he? If you look up Luke 23:34 in your Bible, you may find a footnote that says "some ancient authorities lack this sentence," or something similar. Did he say it? That is something we each must decide for ourselves. So let me walk you through What I think. Let's start with the phrase itself.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

It is a prayer, but it is so much more. I do not think it was meant for us to hear. The man was in the process of actively dying. Performance was probably not on his mind. If he said it (and you will see later why I think he did), then it was overheard. His words, or something like them were passed through the rumor mill as, in my mind anyway, they were spoken with shock.

"Can you believe him?" one observer would say to another, "Who says something like that? Maybe we were wrong about him."

Obviously none of that is biblical, but groups tend to deal with shocking experiences collectively, and word spreads, so I feel safe in my assumption. This powerful statement was meant for God, but as happens with a God who cares for people often, it could have been used to change lives.

Getting back to the question of if he said it, I believe that actions speak louder than words. In this case, actions speak to the believability that words were spoken at all. In Jesus' life, if there is one thing we see through his actions, it is that these words could very easily have come from his mouth. Perhaps more meaningful, this prayer could have easily been offered from him to his Father in heaven. Jesus spent his time in ministry thinking of, caring for, and carrying the load of others. His ministerial specialty, according to all four gospels, was not giving speeches. Believe it or not there are very few speeches in the gospels. What made him stand apart was this wonderful move he made over and over. He found the outsiders, the broken, and the hopeless. He sought them. Then, he simply brought them in, made them whole, or offered them hope. It was, like the words of Luke 23, simple but powerful. In all of these efforts, his focus was on the people we often refer to as "them." So why should we doubt that in a moment so powerful, his focus remained on "them?"

If that were not enough, then let's think about the request for forgiveness. This is the same Jesus who, when teaching those who followed him a model for their prayer lives, made forgiveness the central theme. After glorifying God and hoping for the earth to resemble the perfection God envisions, the Lord's Prayer offers three things that relate to us as individuals. We state our dependence on God in hopes for daily bread, and we hope to not fall prey to temptation, but in the middle of the section focused on us, we find the topic of forgiveness. Speaking of forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer, notice how he mentioned it.

"And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us." (Luke 11:4 NRSVUE)

In teaching followers how to pray, he teaches them how to live based on how he thought it appropriate to live according to the desires of his heavenly Father. Central in the section that deals with us is forgiveness, and the key part of that central phrase is simple; we who hope to be forgiven had better be forgiving. Forgiveness, then, was critical to him. He hoped it would be critical to us. So, in that moment of bitter anguish in which a man was hoisted to die a humiliating and public death, it does not surprise me, knowing him, that he sought God's forgiveness on their behalf.

That brings me to the other reason it is so easy for me to believe these were his words. Because, like many of you, I know him. I know, as I hope you do, the power of the forgiveness he offers. I also know, probably more than anyone, how desperately I need it. Finally, having received it, I know how precious I, and you, and all of the other "them(s)" are to the Jesus who died on a cross for all of us.

So, did he say it? I can certainly believe it. I understand that there may be a problem with authoritative scriptures, and I am fine with that. That is a part of what makes the Bible so special to us. We get to bring it to life in our minds and souls as we wrestle with how we will understand it. That said, even if he did not utter those words, the Jesus who has forgiven me numerous times, none of which I deserved, certainly lived them.

For that reason, as Easter draws near, I am going to make an effort to be forgiving. I will still celebrate the resurrection. I will still be just a tad self-centered as I thank God that death has been overcome for all of us. I will still be glad that the tomb was empty, and all of the other things we typically think about this time of year, but I will choose to be a little more Christ-like if I can help it. I will do my best to forgive, even when no one asked for it, and especially if no one deserves it. Perhaps contemplating how much has been forgiven in your life can lead you to do the same.

Be Blessed,

Rev. Dr. Court Greene



As we ponder the forgiving nature of Christ, who chose to care for those he did not have to, we may wonder how we can be Christ-like to others. The answer, as Danny McDowell shows, is to find ways to invite others in, look through that which makes them different, and find the goodness that God created. Someone was Christ-like to him, and it made an impact. Let his story of someone else's example guide you this Easter season.

Easter Memories— Danny McDowell

When I began teaching at Rosewood High School in 1984, one of the first things I needed to know was who to call on when I needed a substitute teacher. I asked the right people and got good advice. The lady's name was Helen Pierce. She was the wife of a longtime farmer and was loved and respected by all who knew her. She went on to become one of my dearest friends for more than 30 years.

Being involved in Rosewood First Baptist as well as coaching spring sports my entire teaching career, most years I was unable to spend Easter with my family in Canton, NC. Early on, Mrs. Pierce became aware of this and began inviting me to her home for Easter dinner. I would get a call on Palm Sunday weekend with her personal invitation, reminding me that we would eat at 1:00 and that I could bring a change of clothes if I wanted to. In the early years, her grandchildren were still into hunting eggs, and there were farm and green house tours.

I always considered myself the guest of honor because that's how I was treated, but the fact was she invited various others each year. Some of them I never met but that one time on Easter, but others I came to look forward to visiting with each year. Many were her own family members. Others were people she knew through her church (Antioch Presbyterian), the school, or just the neighborhood.

Over the years, the Pierces became friends with my parents who would make the trip to Goldsboro from time to time. They got a chance to sample first-hand Helen Pierce's hospitality.

When I changed jobs in 1998, that didn't change Easter. I still got my phone call and looked forward to my yearly dose of Pierce cuisine. Helen and her husband Carl even came to visit me in my new home in the nearby Newton Grove area.

I missed spending Easter with the Pierce family in 2007. Carl, her husband of 61 years, died that year.

Easter visits resumed in 2008 and continued through 2016, the year that I moved to Canton. By then, Helen had been diagnosed with cancer. (She had overcome brain cancer 30 years earlier.) I returned to visit her the following spring and she moved on to her heavenly home in early August.

She worked as a substitute teacher for 43 years. I retired in 2010, but in 2014 I served in an interim position at Rosewood Middle School. I was blessed with the privilege of having lunch with Helen every day. She was still working, and loving it, at age 86.

In the season in which we celebrate the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it brings me joy to remember a lady who didn't have to wear a bracelet to remind her to do what Jesus would do. It was her nature.

Experience God with Canton First

Sunday: April 2, 2023 PALM SUNDAY

- 9:45 Sunday School Adults-FH, Children - 3rd Floor
- 11:00 Worship in-person, Facebook, YouTube & WPTL
- Tuesday 10:00 Jean Teague Ladies WMU Circle Meeting
- 3:30 Staff Meeting
- Wednesday **NO SERVICES-Join us tomorrow evening**
- Thursday 12:00 Community Lenten Service @ Canton First UMC
- 12:30 Community Lunch after Lenten Service (\$5/person)
- 4:00 Community Kitchen Ministry
- 5:30 Maundy Thursday Dinner in Fellowship Hall
- 6:30 Maundy Thursday Service & Communion in Sanctuary
- 7:00 Adult Choir Practice 🎵🎵

Sunday: April 09, 2023 EASTER; HE IS OUR RISEN SAVIOR

- 9:00 Easter Covered Dish Breakfast—FH
- 10:00 Sunday School Adults-FH, Children - 3rd Floor
- 11:00 Worship in-person, Facebook, YouTube & WPTL
EASTER Service with Communion
- Monday **Pastor Court's Birthday**
- Tuesday 3:30 Staff Meeting
- Wednesday 6:00 Adult Bible Study: **New Series Starts; "Little Ones"**
- 7:00 Adult Choir Practice 🎵🎵
- Friday 5:30 S.O. S. Young Women's Group-Mann Classroom

Sunday: April 16, 2023

- 9:45 Sunday School Adults-FH, Children - 3rd Floor
- 11:00 Worship in-person, Facebook, YouTube & WPTL
- Tuesday 11:30 JOY Club to Crestview for After Easter Luncheon
- 3:30 Staff Meeting
- Wednesday 6:00 Adult Bible Study
- 7:00 Adult Choir Practice 🎵🎵
- Thursday 6:00 Young Women's Ministry Fellowship

Sunday: April 23, 2022

- 9:45 Sunday School Adults-FH, Children - 3rd Floor
- 11:00 Worship in-person, Facebook, YouTube & WPTL
- Tuesday 3:30 Staff Meeting
- Wednesday 6:00 Adult Bible Study
- 7:00 Adult Choir Practice 🎵🎵
- Thursday 6:00 Young Women's Ministry Fellowship
- Friday 5:30 S.O. S. Young Women's Group-Mann Classroom

Sunday: April 30, 2023-5th Sunday

- 9:45 Sunday School Adults-FH, Children - 3rd Floor
- 11:00 Worship in-person, Facebook, YouTube & WPTL
- Tuesday 10:00 Jean Teague Ladies WMU Circle Meeting
- 3:30 Staff Meeting
- Wednesday 6:00 Adult Bible Study
- 7:00 Adult Choir Practice 🎵🎵
- Thursday 4:00 Community Kitchen Ministry

An Issue of Forgiveness—Renee Mullinax

Join in-person, online, or on WPTL radio each Sunday at 11 am
Links at www.canton-fbc.org

Palm Sunday

HOSANNA TO THE KING

Sunday, April 2, 2023



Joining us in worship with
special music on
Sunday, April 2nd
Ms. Renee Woods.

Come join us in person to
worship together with Renee.

Worship can also be heard via FaceBook,
YouTube, and WPTL Radio Station

**Calling all kids, we
need your help on
Palm Sunday.
Bring a friend,
they can help too!**

**WHAT A GREAT EVENT TO
INVITE OTHERS TO
EXPERIENCE!**

"He made a mistake. Keepin' him in prison wasn't doin' anything but keepin' me from movin' on. Forgiveness can set anybody free, Sheriff."

"It takes a big man to think like that."

"Ya think?" From "Longmire", Season 4, episode 6.

Honestly, I've never had a problem with forgiveness. Maybe no one has ever done anything really BAD to me—at least not anything that I felt particularly damaged by.

So maybe I speak from behind the scrim.

But I've known plenty of people for whom forgiveness IS an issue. They cannot "move on." They move through their daily lives under a cloud of an anger that seethes and festers, day after day, year after year—even decade after decade, until they die. Soon, no one remembers the root of the darkness, and, then — nobody really cares.

Yet sometimes, the damage continues. Call it collateral, call it some other name, it doesn't matter what you call it. Think of McCoy / Hatfield, think of Palestinians/Jews, think of countless other families, or ethnic groups. Go back in history and think: how much bloodshed, enmity, and anger could have been prevented if there had been any forgiveness?

I understand that forgiveness can be an unrealistic and a seemingly impossible concept, given the horrors people have — and do — commit against each other. How does a Jew, a Russian, a gypsy, or a homosexual forgive the perpetrators of the inhumanity of their Nazi oppressors? Or the Armenians, or the victims of Pol Pot's regime in Cambodia, or even the orchestrated attempt to eliminate the native Americans in our own country?

I have trouble processing some of the inhumanity I read about in history, as well as what I see now. I have some problem accepting the placid life I have lived, which has exempted me from many opportunities that call for forgiveness.

So, having said all of this, I feel a little nonplussed. For the purpose of analogy: I am a small woman. I have never had a weight problem. I do not care for bread, sweets, salt, or processed food. I want meat and fresh vegetables. It is not hard for me to reject foods that others crave; my body just does not ask me for them. Therefore, I don't feel that I deserve any accolades for doing without things that are no temptation for me in the first place.

Maybe that's somewhat of a stretch, but, since I've never felt wronged (at least by other people), my need to forgive has not been great.

When I've had occasion to forgive, I have not found it difficult to do so. I understand that there are reasons that people do what they do and react the way they do. I also understand that I can act as a safe place for others to release their emotions.

That is not to say that I am guiltless. If I have hurt anyone, it was never with intention. However, I know that hurt and offense can occur even if there was no intention.

I can say, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you. Please forgive me."

I can do that because my God whose love runs deeper than my needs has provided the forgiveness path for me.

For most of us, our greatest enemy is inside of us: anger, resentment, bitterness, fear, anxiety — things that we can't or won't let go of, things that grow inside of us like cancers—things like the inability or refusal to forgive.

It is hard to do what we must do to defeat the enemy—or enemies—that live inside of us. Indeed, these are the hardest battles of all.

But they must be fought.

They must be won.

And win we can.

Because His grace is greater than our failures; his power is greater than all our enemies and fears.

What Does Forgiveness Mean—Susan Davis

As humans, how hard is it to forgive? Does forgiveness mean you never think about that which needed to be forgiven or that you no longer have an emotional reaction?

The definition of Forgiveness: *the action or process of forgiving or being forgiven*. Similar words to forgiveness are: pardon, absolution, exoneration, remission, dispensation, indulgence, understanding, tolerance, mercy, pity, reprieve, the list goes on. But what does it mean to you?

Jesus often spoke about forgiveness. The Greek word for “forgive” in the New Testament is the word “aphes”, which also means to dismiss or free. Jesus taught, “If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you” (Mt 6:14). Peter asked Jesus how often it is necessary to forgive, and Jesus replied, “Seventy-seven times” (Mt 18:22), a number to be taken symbolically, not literally, for the never-ending way that we ought to forgive.

Jesus was extremely kind and merciful in the way that he forgave those who sinned against others. Jesus told the paralytic, “Child, your sins are forgiven” (Mk 2:5); when a sinful woman bathed Jesus’ feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair, Jesus said, “Your sins are forgiven” (Lk 7:48); when a woman caught in adultery was brought before him, he said, “I do not condemn you” (Jn 8:11); and as Jesus hung on the cross he told the repentant criminal, “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Lk 23:43).

Even more compelling is the way that Jesus forgave those who sinned against him directly. For Jesus, forgiveness was not an automatic, it was intentional, a conscious choice. After the Roman soldiers had scourged and nailed him, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them” (Lk 23:34). After the resurrection Jesus had every right to be furious. Peter had denied him. The others had deserted him. When he entered the Upper Room, they deserved a severe reprimand, but instead, with divine compassion Jesus said not once, but three times, “Peace be with you” (Jn 20:19,21,26).

As my dad said at the end of his Evangelism training last night; “God forgives and FORGETS our sins. If, when we get to heaven, we bring up any particular sin we committed, God will not recall at all.” Can I be like that here on earth? When I forgive will I also forget?

Although I firmly trust in the phrases, “people don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care” AND the phrase, “I may not remember what you said or what you did, but I will NEVER forget how you made me feel”. At times when I am called to forgive, I do my very best to not bring up feelings from my heart and thoughts from my head, but ask that God give me the strength to completely and wholly live daily upon the act of forgiveness.



On April 9th

Easter Sunday, don’t forget to bring flowers to decorate the Flowering Cross and plan on making some great family photos too.



O soul are you weary and troubled
No light in the darkness you see
There’s light for a look at the Savior
And life more abundant and free

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace

“When you’re here, you’re family!” I’m absolutely on board with the sentiment behind this phrase, which has been the main slogan of my favorite fast casual Italian restaurant for as long as I can remember. Now, I know they don’t mean it literally, and as such I’ve never tried to kick off my shoes and get a load of laundry in when visiting the Olive Garden.

It’s probably for the best though, right? Because if we’re really holding this phrase to its most literal interpretation, that could complicate one’s life in the pursuit of soup, salad, and breadsticks.

Family is tough. On the one hand, we’re gifted the legacy of heritage, culture, and literally the fabric of our being by way of our genetic relationships. We are who we are in large part because of who our families are. On the other hand, family can be a source of the greatest anxieties, worries, and deep trauma for many of us.

Even the concept of what family is and means, varies among individuals. I don’t know about you, but I have one blood uncle that I hardly know, while my actual aunts and uncles are the people who are related to me by love and care, not DNA. In my life, family has always meant the people who are for you, committed to you through thick and thin, with a reciprocal acceptance of your importance in their own lives.

The season of Lent is a gift offering us a chance to reflect on our relationship with God. To be clear, God requires no reflection on where he stands with us. Before we knew Him, He was aware of us and His great love and affection for us both individually and in the context of the greater Family of God. Even facing the agony as well as enduring the pain of crucifixion, Jesus is steadfast in his Love and commitment to us. Do we offer the same devotion in response? I confess that I fall far short of such amazing love. Many times I treat God like His Love is an Olive Garden kind of love; only existing to fill me up with comforting things (which, to double down on an already tenuous metaphor, isn’t always the healthiest for me). Too often I’m comforted by convincing myself that God’s Love for me is unconditional, which somehow absolves me of my misdeeds, when I know I should be turning ever more earnestly toward a pursuit of a deeper, purposeful relationship with Him.

Much like an unruly child in their relationship with a loving parent, I’m aware that I’m guilty of often trying to manipulate my understanding of God’s expectations to serve my own desires. This never works, of course and I’m left disappointed in the outcomes in myself every time. I’m also aware that it’s because of God’s great, steadfast love and forgiveness that I am encouraged to pick myself up, prayerfully consider my actions, and walk a more Christ-like path. And even better than soup, salad, and breadsticks, God has gifted us His Word, with blessed assurance, hope for the future, and instructions and encouragement to help us on our way.

His word shall not fail you he promised
Believe him and all will be well
Then go to a world that is dying
His perfect salvation to tell

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace

(“The Heavenly Vision” by Helen Howarth Lemmel)



Rev. James Markey