

Pastoral REFLECTIONS

April 2, 2023

The Free Gift

"A certain atheistic barber was conversing with a minister as they rode through the slums of a large city. The Unbeliever said, "If there is a loving God, how can He permit all this poverty, suffering, and violence amongst these people? Why doesn't He save them from all of this?"

Just then, a disheveled homeless man crossed the street. He was unshaven and filthy, with long scraggly hair hanging down his neck. The minister pointed to him and said, "You are a barber and claim to be a good one, so why do you allow that man to go unkempt and unshaven?" "Why, why..." The barber stuttered, "he never gave me a chance to fix him up." "Exactly," said the minister. "Men are what they are because they reject God's help."

God has done more. He allows us to hear the gospel on radio and television and has established churches throughout the city. Even though many people listen to Him, they do not accept His free gift.

"In the year 1829, a Philadelphia man named George Wilson robbed the U.S. Mail, killing someone in the process. Wilson was arrested, brought to trial, found guilty, and sentenced to death. Some friends intervened on his behalf and finally obtained a pardon for him from President Andrew Jackson. But, when he was informed of this, George Wilson refused to accept the pardon!

The sheriff was unwilling to enact the sentence – for how could he hang a pardoned man? An appeal was sent to President Jackson. The perplexed President turned to the United States Supreme Court to decide the case. Chief Justice Marshall ruled that a pardon is a piece of paper, the value of which depends on its acceptance by the person implicated. It is hard to believe that a person under the death sentence would refuse to accept a pardon, but if it is refused, it is not a pardon. George Wilson must be hung. So, George Wilson was executed, although his pardon lay on the sheriff's desk. So, too, do some of us reject the gift of salvation by refusing the pardon thereby offered. (Quoted from Illustrations for Biblical Preaching by Richard Green)

Christ's death paid the price for all our sins, and His resurrection gives us victory over sin's power. The gift is available for all because all have been pardoned. It is a free gift available to all who accept Christ and what He has provided. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10)



UPCOMING Events



GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE— "WORTH IT" PLAY
FRI. APRIL 7TH AT 6 P.M.
Mark your calendars for a Resurrection weekend filled with remembrance, joy and celebration for our Resurrected Lord and Savior! To kick off this weekend, join us Friday, April 7, 2023 at 6 p.m. for our Good Friday Service at 6 pm featuring the play, "Worth It" For more information contact Rita Hughes at rlhughes68@gmail.com or Melita Washington at melita290@gmail.com



GOOD NEWS FEST—SAT. APRIL 8TH 11 A.M. DONATE CANDY FILLED EGGS
Get ready for our Good News Fest, April 8th from 11am-2pm. We are asking for all to donate candy-filled Easter Eggs. Please get with your ministry leaders and coordinators to see how you can help engage the community and share the gospel. Bring donated eggs to the Children's Wing. For more information, contact Sylvia Edwards at sedwards@lwfellowshipchurch.org



RESURRECTION WEEKEND—APRIL 7TH—9TH
FRI. APRIL 7TH 6 P.M.
Good Friday Service & "Worth It" Play
SAT. APRIL 8TH 11 A.M.—2 P.M.
Good News Festival—Donate Candy-filled Eggs
SUN. APRIL 9TH—Resurrection Services
6 A.M. | 8:30 A.M. | 11 A.M.



MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH GAME NIGHT
FRI. APRIL 14TH 6-8 P.M.
Middle School Youth!! It's time for the first Middle School fellowship of the year, so get ready! It's a game night! If you are in grades 7th-8th, Min. Jordan Washington will be hosting this event at his house on Friday, April 14th from 6 p.m.—8 p.m. The address will be given upon confirmation of attendance. So Pull up for fun, games, fellowship, and food. For more information email Jordan.washington@lwfellowshipchurch.org Hope to see you there!



MEN'S BE INTENTIONAL DISCUSSIONS
SAT. APRIL 15TH 12—2 P.M.
Join the Kingdom Builder's Men's Ministry for their BE INTENTIONAL Discussion series. The next session is Saturday April 15th from 12 pm 2 pm Men will discuss "How to fight in your relationships" For more information contact Ian Moore at ianmooresr@gmail.com

Children are now required to check-in upon arrival. Please report to the registration desk located in the children's wing.

Infants—6th grade

LWFC KIDZ



ORDER OF WORSHIP

- Announcements
- Communion
- Visitor's Welcome
- Worship In Giving
- Offering boxes are located at all perimeters under crosses
- Special Music
- "Get Up"
- Matthew 26:36-46
- Click "Sermon Notes" on the Website
- Call to Discipleship
- Please remain seated at this time
- Benediction

LEGACY EFFECTING TODAY FOR TOMMORROW youth ministry of LIVING WORD FELLOWSHIP

MIDDLE SCHOOL - HIGH SCHOOL

2:30 4:15 & TUESDAY NIGHTS SUNDAY 6:30 PM

Get Up
Matthew 26:36-46

I. Stay Awake vs. 36-41

- a. Peter and the Two Sons of Zebedee
 - i. Matthew identifies James and John not by their names, as in Mk. 14:33, but as ‘the two sons of Zebedee’.
 - ii. Peter is there as the one who will deny Jesus; is it too much to suggest that the sons of Zebedee are there as precisely those who have asked, via their mother, for positions at Jesus’ right and left hand
 - iii. This is one of the special occasions in which only the inner core of disciples is allowed to participate (cf. earlier 17:1 ; Mark 5:37 [raising of a dead girl]). At this hour of trial, it is only natural that Jesus would want the emotional support of his closest friends The two sons of Zebedee are of course James and John (cf. 4:21; 10:2; Mark 14:33). The reason for Jesus’ desire to pray is indicated in the that he was “sorrowful” and “anxious
- b. Keep Watch
 - i. Keep Watch- **to stay awake, be watchful to remain awake because of the need to continue alert** Accordingly, the command to “watch” (γρηγορεῖν) becomes a standard feature in ethical catechism in the NT (in the sense of spiritual preparedness; cf. 1 Cor 16:13; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:6; 1 Peter 5:8; as does the command to pray (cf. Eph 6:18; 1 Thess 5:17; 1 Peter 4:7). The reference to praying so as not to enter testing recalls the petition of the model prayer in reference to the great eschatological trial (6:13).
- c. Found them sleep
 - i. Said to Peter
 - ii. Couldn’t keep watch
 - 1. For one Hour
 - a. Given the reference to come to the flesh being weak, the former is preferable. μίαν ὥραν (‘one hour’) here is consistent with a period of prayer of up to an hour. But although it is the basis for the traditional understanding of a three-hour vigil
 - b. but the disobedient disciples—who promised so much (vv. 33–5)—sleep and so add to the hurt done by enemies. They seem oblivious to what he is going through despite the indication of his anguish in v. 38. καθεύδοντας, “sleeping,” here and in v. 43 is a culpable act (unlike in 25:5), especially after the command of v. 38

II. Snooze vs. 42-43

- a. Praying - **to petition deity**
 - i. As we saw earlier, the petition in the Lord’s Prayer is to be spared times of great pressure, times which would prove very trying for one, and the prayer reflects a sense of one’s own frailty and limitation, one’s vulnerability to situations in which one finds oneself. The prayer the disciples are being asked to pray parallels broadly that which Jesus is praying for himself. They are to pray to be spared the pressure that it is becoming clear Jesus is not to be spared. In 20:21 the sons of Zebedee have asked for positions at Jesus’ right and left hand; here they are in effect being told to pray to be spared
- b. Enter into Temptation
 - i. Temptation - within, that can be an occasion of sin to a person
 - ii. Spirit is willing
 - 1. Spirit
 - 2. Willing - **to being eager to be of service, ready, willing, eager, of “The spirit indeed presses eagerly, but the flesh is powerless the spirit**
 - a. saying tells us that this can be trodden only in orientation and commitment, not on the basis of inner movement alone. Where the latter is attempted, there is disclosed the limitation of man which causes him to fail. Hence the saying is a bridge from the disciples’ declaration of solidarity with Jesus (Mt. 26:35 and par.) to their failure on the way with Him, and it shows us why failure was inevitable
 - b. “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,” how much more will this be the experience of the disciples in the struggles that await them. This logion points to the tension between the inner person, the center of volition, and the outer person, the bodily flesh with its more obvious inherent weakness (for the spirit flesh distinction, see 1 Cor 7:34; 2 Cor 7:1; cf. Rom 8:4–17; Gal 5:17
 - iii. Flesh is Weak
 - 1. Flesh
 - a. In the OT ‘spirit’ and ‘flesh’ each represent the human person, but considered, at least sometimes and to some extent, under different aspects. ‘Flesh’ is the easier word to comment on.

II. Snooze vs. 42-43 continued

- b. In connection with ‘flesh’ the disciples are not distinctive: they too are weak and subject to temptation. Under pressure they too are likely to break. ‘The spirit is willing’ is, however, something that distinguishes the disciples from many others. They have been eager to identify themselves with Jesus and his project. They have recently declared their readiness to die for him. Their prayer must be to be spared a situation that could prove to be too much for them. But for them too, there sits in the background the need, ultimately, to submit their wills to the divine will.
- 2. Weak - **to experiencing some incapacity or limitation**
- c. Again
 - i. Eyes were Heavy - of physical weariness
 - ii. Didn’t wake them up
 - 1. This interpretation is consonant with the fact that Matthew in the preceding verse gives no report of Jesus saying anything to the disciples. It is also in agreement with the command of v. 45 that they go on with their sleeping

III. Overslept vs. 44-46

- a. Still Sleeping
 - i. The same motivation may lie behind the omission of the expression of embarrassment in Mark, ‘and they did not know what to say to him’. The additional urgency expressed by Jesus in v. 41 has made no difference. The disciples might need to pray because the flesh is weak, but the weakness of the flesh is already getting in the way of the needful prayer being undertaken.
- b. The Hour is at hand
 - i. Son of Man being betrayed
 - ii. It seems best to refer λουτόν to the third and last period of time available and for which Jesus has encouraged watching with him and praying, but which the disciples have instead used for sleeping and taking their rest. So I translate λουτόν as ‘for the time that was left’ The available time for watching and praying versus sleeping and taking one’s rest has passed.
- c. Get Up

RESURRECTION WEEKEND

This changes everything.

4/7/23	4/8/23	4/9/23
Good Friday Service	Good News Festival	Resurrection Services
6 pm	11 am - 2 pm	6 am 8:30 am 11 am
"Worth It" Play	Free Food, Fun, Games & More	Praise & Worship

PRAYER REQUESTS

Grieving: Susie Farley & family, Ethel Lewis & family, Lula Hayes & family, and Lora Turner & family.

Health and Healing: Lurlean Lane, Florence Wiggins, Retha Amos, Margaret Baptiste, Cici Sharpe, Eunice Johnson, Jeffrey McQueen, Barbara Gordon, Eric White, Ella James, Pat Crawford, Lisa Roberts, Birdie Williams, Jon Heard, Lakesia Davis, Rutha Patrick, Betty Goode, Latifah Brown, Tanisha Collins, Eric Prichett, Rufus Hadnot, Pat James, Kevin Carey, Lori Lee, Nikisha Doyle, Jessie Austin, Patricia Jackson, Sherri Love, Elizabeth Clark, Clara Williams, Betty Cunningham, Wanda Turk, Deborah Smith, Dorothy Price, Kathryn Ford-Cheatham, Joshua Williams, Anthony Thomas, and Beverly Austin.

