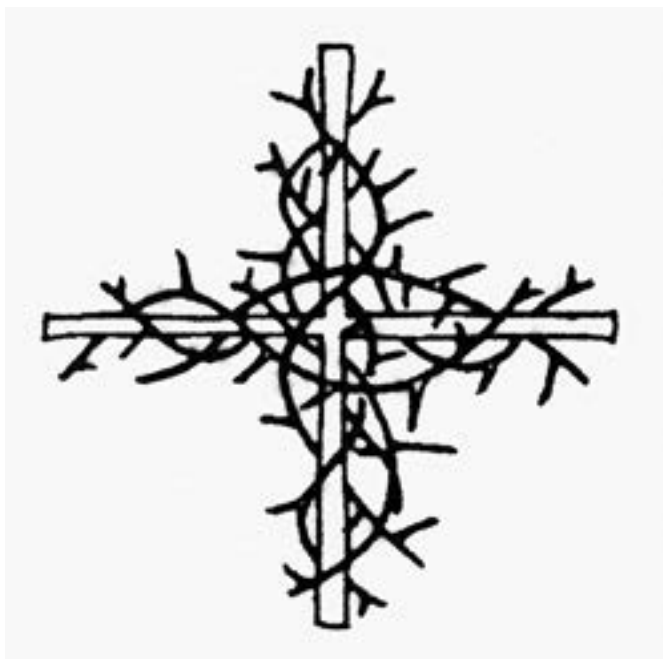


WEEK 4

# Lord,

*teach us to pray*



2018 Lenten Devotional

South Highland Presbyterian Church  
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**Friday, March 9, 2018**

**Henry Gilchrist and Jody Gilchrist**

**Matthew 6:25-34**

Henry: I think this means don't worry about what you have to wear or eat because there are other people on earth that don't have anything.

Jody: This reminds me of a sign at camp that said, "I am third." It was a constant reminder during the day to put God first (and others second) and that God would take care of the rest.

**Matthew 14:13-21**

Henry: I think this means just a little bit can help a lot of people.

Jody: Sometimes we withhold help because we think our house isn't large enough or we don't have enough time, etc. But if God calls us to help, then he will take care of the rest.

Prayer adapted from redemptiondiary.com:

*Dear father, please give us the confidence and patience to work through challenges at school, at work, at church and at home. Ease the anxiety we feel. Give us wisdom in how to serve others best. When we doubt ourselves or doubt you, be there to comfort and guide. And help us to know we can accomplish any task with you by our side. Amen.*



**Saturday, March 10, 2018**

**Brian Hurst**

**Faith**

**Do we truly believe** that God will provide for our needs? Do we truly believe that God's provision is sufficient? In a broader sense, do we truly believe that Jesus' death and resurrection is enough for our salvation? That God's love for us is all that we need to fulfill us?

Greed is certainly a sin that causes people and nations to hoard God's resources and to not share them with others. Fear and a lack of faith are other causes for such hoarding. We who have plenty are blessed to be His agents of provision. In feeding the five thousand, Jesus shows that God is a God of abundance and that we, as His agents, can do great things with His resources by and through His power!

I challenge each of us at the end of the day today to reflect on the times we maintained faith in God's provision and the times when our faith wavered.

Prayer of St Ignatius Loyola:

*Teach me, Lord Jesus, to be generous:  
to serve You as You deserve;  
to give, not counting the cost;  
to fight, not heeding the wounds;  
to toil, not asking for rest;  
to labor, not seeking any reward,  
save that of knowing that we do Your will.  
Amen.*



**Sunday, March 11, 2018**  
**Jimmy Brown**  
**The Empty Basket**

**After a full** day of Jesus' teaching and healing, the disciples came to him worried about how that big crowd was going to be fed. They had no baskets of food to feed the hungry throng, and so they suggested Jesus send them on their way. I know what it feels like to have an empty basket. Months ago I was sleeping outside on the porch of a nearby church in exchange for doing some yard work. One afternoon I was invited to come to South Highland to visit the Sunday Club fellowship. They offered me a good hot meal and some warm handshakes. I thought to myself, "This seems like a nice church and maybe I'll come back on a Sunday morning." And that's what I did. God would wake me up off that porch and say it's time to go to church. I started coming faithfully each Sunday and found my way to a Bible study with some folks who welcomed me and made me feel at home. Next thing I knew they put me in touch with some more Christian friends who helped me sort out my living situation.

As a result of my coming to South Highland my empty basket became full to overflowing, not only with food and a safe, dry place to live but with good new friends who genuinely care about me. I just kept believing that something was going to turn around and it did. God kept telling me to stay focused. Go to church. Go down there (to South Highland) and I did that. You people met me with so much warmth every time I showed up.

My basket was empty and God provided.

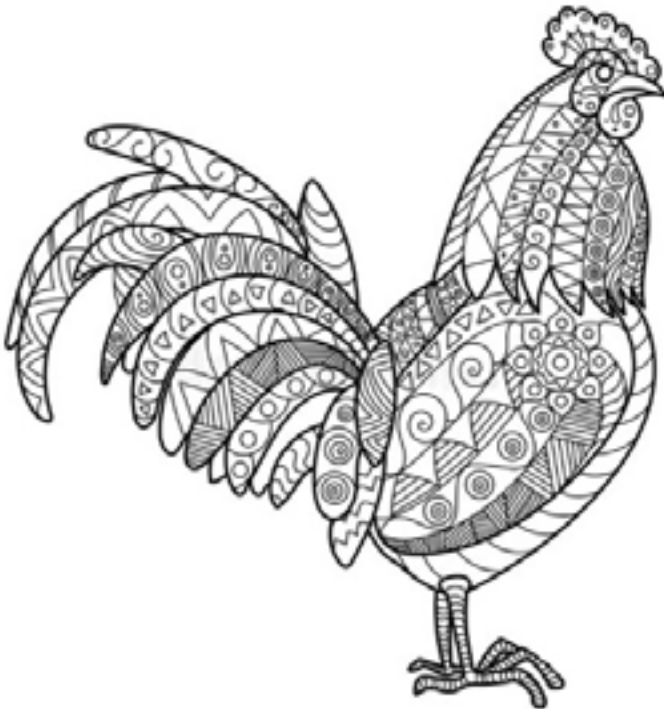




**Bible reading for Week 4 (March 12-18):  
“Forgive Us As We Forgive”**

Matthew 18:21-22 21 Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” 22 Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

Matthew 26:69-75 69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.” 70 But he denied it before all of them, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.” 71 When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” 72 Again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.” 73 After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.” 74 Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, “I do not know the man!” At that moment the cock crowed. 75 Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: “Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.



## Fourth Monday in Lent, March 12, 2018

Ed Hurley

### “Forgive Us As We Forgive”

**Is there anything more wonderful** than believing with trust and conviction each Sunday, “In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!” Jesus wasn’t the first to teach about God forgiving sins. Ancient religions had their rites, many of them primitive and brutal - like those requiring human sacrifice. The Jews turned away from all that, yet Abraham had been so serious about obeying God that he was about to sacrifice his own son up on the mountain as God had commanded. But God provided another sacrifice in Issac’s place - a lamb. And the use of the sacrificial lamb became part of the great Temple ritual.

The fact is, obviously we sin and we are in need of forgiveness. Jesus brings forgiveness to a new level through the depth of his love for us. Peter was looking for clarity and limits. “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me how often should I forgive?” Note this forgiveness is directed toward the family, the faith community... often the hardest place. Jesus replies enigmatically, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.” His answer moves beyond the standard Jewish answer and beyond any mathematical approach. This is not a matter of tallying up just how many times you have forgiven someone, but reflects the infinite forgiveness of God and the call upon us to keep on forgiving - infinitely.

The point of this part of the prayer is that we are to receive forgiveness and likewise lavishly extend forgiveness. Again, not up to a certain limit. God does not have a checklist and tick off “a forgiveness” to us just after we extend “a forgiveness” to someone else. God forgives. God’s grace always goes before us.

The power of forgiveness is at the heart of our faith. Moving toward Jerusalem and the Cross this week, we long to grow in our reception of and practice of forgiveness.

“The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, that we might be dead to sin, and alive to all that is good. I declare to you in the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.” Amen. So be it!

**Tuesday, March 13, 2018**  
**Sue Keith**  
**Forgive Us as We Forgive**

**“Forgive us our debts** as we forgive our debtors.” We say these words every time we pray the Lord’s Prayer, yet sometimes we say these words automatically. Think about it. Jesus is saying that he forgives us AS we have forgiven those who have sinned against us.

When have others sinned against you? Perhaps the email you received from your brother or sister, who sent it in anger? Or the post on Facebook by a fellow Christian that reflects disrespect toward and/or a lack of understanding about a public servant? We are called to pray for our brothers and sisters and to forgive them. Christ said, “Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.”

Peter’s situation in the courtyard of the Jewish High Priest’s house was especially difficult because he had to try to forgive himself. You will recall that Peter had promised Jesus earlier that he would never desert him; but while Jesus was being tried by the Sanhedrin, Peter denied him three times. Peter wept bitterly.

Have you ever had anguish in the pit of your stomach when you realized that you did not do something that you ought to have done or that you did something you ought not to have done? I have. What Christ revealed to Peter he also reveals to us; His grace is sufficient to cleanse our sins.

My favorite sweatshirt has a teddy bear on the front with only one eye; Teddy is bandaged all over. The caption: “Jesus loves me just the way that I am.”

*Prayer: Jesus, help me to forgive my brothers and sisters in Christ. Also, in your mercy, cleanse my sins, forgive my shortcomings, and help me to grow so that I may become more like you. WWJD*

*Whenever you stand praying, forgive,  
if you have anything against anyone;  
so that your Father in heaven  
may also forgive you your trespasses.  
(Mark 11:25)*

**Wednesday, March 14, 2018**

**Laura Ray**

**Peter's question of "how often** should I forgive?" almost comes with a child-like tone in which he wants a definitive answer. Tell me the number and I'll comply. However at a deeper level it comes with a tone of reconciliation. A concept that is difficult and requires patience and faith. He is truly concerned with how to obtain this. The answer Peter gets of "seventy seven times" probably is not what he is looking for, and honestly it is not an answer I would be looking for. Jesus indicates seventy-seven times, but I think his message was more like forgive forever, never stop the reconciliation among you. This is difficult. It tests us and reminds us that faith is not easy. However, if we act together with others, this reconciliation suddenly becomes a journey in which we find joy. It becomes the joy of ministry to all in the reconciling love of Christ.

Peter comes to experience this need for reconciliation and forgiveness first hand, as we all eventually do, and even perhaps frequently. He has followed Jesus at a distance as Jesus was arrested and taken to the chief priest. Curious, Peter sat with the guards to hear the council looking for a reason to put Jesus to death. As he was in the courtyard, here came his chance. "You also were with Jesus the Galilean." asked the servant girl. This is it... a God-provided opportunity to live out his faith. Peter failed in his answer: "I do not know this man." Then comes the dreaded crow of the cock, and sadness engulfs Peter. Imagine the gut-wrenching, nauseating wave that overcame Peter. Peter felt it because he knew what Jesus had told him. He knew that he had failed. I pray that my faith is one where I can recognize my own failure to build the Kingdom of God, and that I may experience the gut-wrenching feeling Peter experienced. He experienced it because he believed, it was personal to him. I pray that my faith is strong enough and honest enough to recognize when I miss an opportunity put before me from God. Like Peter, I recall the promised forgiveness of "seventy seven times" and the joy of the reconciling love of Christ.



**Thursday, March 15, 2018**  
**Jack Smith**  
**Matthew 18: 21-22**

**Forgiving others** can sometimes be a difficult thing to do, especially if it was something done to you that you believe was very bad or unnecessary. Jesus said to forgive people not just seven times, but seventy-seven times. So even if it is something small or something large that someone has done against you, you should forgive them. There may be a situation where you have forgiven someone for something, but deep down you still hold a grudge because of what happened. If that grudge surfaces from time to time, forgive that person again. We need to let go of bad feelings and move on with our lives towards something more meaningful.

Not only do we need to forgive others, we need to ask God for forgiveness of our sins.

*Prayer: Our dear heavenly Father, we ask you to help us forgive others. We also ask for forgiveness of our sins. Amen.*



**Friday, March 16, 2018**

**Pam Buck**

**Psalm 139, Romans 12:3, Ephesians 1:17-18**

**Words matter to each of us.** Jesus knows it and Peter learned it. Before the events in Matthew 26 happened, Jesus had told his followers that the words He spoke to them are spirit and life. Some didn't believe him and left. He asked the disciples if they wanted to go away as well. Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." (John 6:68-69)

Now Peter was on a "precipice" in the courtyard outside Jesus' trial. He had a few minutes to choose his words. Which way would he go? God already knew Peter's heart, just as He knows ours. He knows our past, present, and future. His grace is sufficient and His forgiveness is complete. Because Peter loved Jesus, he was heartbroken over what he had said. His repentance affected the world through his words in the Bible we read today. He became the battle-ready "Rock" which Jesus had called him.

We tend to become like that which surrounds us. May we, like Peter, become what God tells us we are: forgiven, set free from the power of sin, battle-ready. For years my prayer for myself and my loved ones is that our sense of significance and self-image be a reflection of the Lord's thoughts toward us. Because I can choose which thoughts to dwell on in my mind, I am often convicted to ask Him to take them captive to His obedience. He has never failed to then bring words of life to mind - ammunition for the battle within me. Like Peter, I've lost some battles, but God has won the war giving us the final victory. Live in that truth.

*Prayer: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my ROCK and my Redeemer.*