

Birthdays: Sally Murphy, Joyce Holmes, Suzanne Pearson, Addison McGee, Caden Ferrera

Anniversary: Chris & Ashley Anderson

Friday's Calendar

7:00 a.m. AA "Hour of Power"
9:00 a.m. A Way Out
9:30 a.m. Friday Life Group
10:00 a.m. Friday Bible Study
12:00 p.m. NarcAnon "Clean at Noon"
8:00 p.m. Friday Night Young Peoples' AA

Today's Ministry: Hospital Visitors

Saturday, March 4

Deuteronomy 7:17-26 *"The LORD your God will drive those nations out ahead of you little by little. You will not clear them away all at once, otherwise the wild animals will multiply too quickly for you."* (v.22)

One of Janis Joplin's biggest hit songs was titled "Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz." It's a tongue-in-cheek lament by a somewhat shallow soul, wondering why God hasn't gifted her with material wealth. It's also plagiarized from the Bible. From Moses. From Deuteronomy, to be exact.

Deuteronomy is the elderly Moses' last chance to instruct the Israelites, who are about to enter the Promised Land without him. One question he addresses is, "Why didn't God just conquer and give us the Promised Land right away?" Switch out "Mercedes" for "Promised Land" and you've got a hit song!

Right now many of us are suffering financially, and some are questioning why God is allowing it. One reason might be the verse above—too much too soon invites "wild animals" into your life. A modern example: 70% of lottery winners go bankrupt. And Janis Joplin, who had a fortune, overdosed on heroin at age 27.

If you or a loved one are going through tough financial times, know that God isn't punishing you or abandoning you. He might just be trying to protect you from wolves.

Psalms 30, 32; Titus 3:1-15; John 1:43-51

Birthdays: Victor Martinez

Anniversary: Steve & Nicole Winchip

Saturday's Calendar

7:00 a.m. AA "Hour of Power"
9:00 a.m. Shepherd Group
9:30 a.m. AA Step Study for Women
10:00 a.m. Appraisal Saturday
12:00 p.m. NarcAnon "Clean@Noon"
5:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite II
5:30 p.m. St. Mary's Fashion Show
6:30 p.m. NarcAnon "Kleen N Krazy"
8:30 p.m. NarcAnon "Not Alone"

Today's Ministry: Lay Readers

By Ruth Owen

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"Growing into Jesus - Reaching out with love"

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St. Mary's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Growing into Jesus - Reaching out with Love

Good News Daily

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Sunday, February 26

John 12:24-32 *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."* (v.24 NKJV)

When Jesus was nearing the end of his earthly life and words became precious, he chose to talk about...seeds. I doubt this is what the crowd expected. Probably "Death to Rome" would have been more welcome. Of course, Christ was foreshadowing his resurrection. But he was also doing much more.

When we face a situation where there is no good way forward, we are also a "dead seed". An unexpected divorce. A cancer diagnosis. Job loss, financial ruin, depression, addiction, despair. All of these make us feel as worthless as that fallen grain of wheat. We feel like we are already dead.

Yet Christ assures us that this is *exactly* when new life begins. You may think you are despised and discarded, but Jesus knows how precious you are. On the other side of every "dead seed" is a new and glorious field of wheat. All we have to do is let God love us and grow.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Psalms 148, 149, 150; Hebrews 12:18-29

Sunday's Calendar

7:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite I
9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite II
9:00 a.m. Contemporary Family Worship Service
9:10 a.m. Sunday School
10:30 a.m. Empty Bowls Project
10:15 a.m. New Member's Class
10:15 a.m. Mimosas & St. Mary's, Meeting Room #3
10:30 p.m. Art Book Sale
11:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite II
11:00 a.m. Special St. Mary's Thrift Store Sale
4:30 p.m. Financial Peace Class
6:00 p.m. Youth Confirmation Class
6:00 p.m. Youth Group

Today's Ministry: Eucharistic Visitors

Monday, February 27

Psalm 25 *Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish.* (vv.16-17 NLT)

Recently I read an article about a woman who'd once won a weight loss reality show and gained thousands of adoring fans by turning from a fat person into a slim one. Her success had made her a star. But as time went by, she steadily gained back almost all the weight she'd lost. She was ashamed. She was lonely. She hid from the public, until a TV interview forced her to "come out" as a big fat failure.

Yet instead of condemnation, this woman received overwhelming understanding and encouragement. Many said she gave them the courage to honestly face their own failures. The outpouring astonished and freed her. It helped her to give losing weight another try.

I believe God spoke through those fans. There was no condemnation for this woman, just understanding and encouragement. As Paul wrote, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). We can turn to God with our troubles.

Is there a secret failure in your life? If so, don't waste your life hiding it. Don't settle for being lonely and afflicted. Our loving Father wants to set you free!

Deuteronomy 6:10-15; Hebrews 1:1-14; John 1:1-18

Birthdays: Ken Wall, Heidi McNabb

Anniversary: Jason & Jennifer Hart

Monday's Calendar

7:00 a.m. AA "Hour of Power"
5:30 p.m. ACA Meeting (Adult Children of Alcoholics)
6:00 p.m. Life Group
6:30 p.m. Life Group

Today's Ministry: Facilities Committee

Tuesday, February 28

Hebrews 2:1-10 *So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it.* (v.1)

Pixar's movie *Up* features a scatterbrained dog who has been gifted with human speech. Every time he starts to explain something important, his head swivels and he yells out the word "Squirrel!" Distracted by his way-too-fast prey, he completely loses his train of thought. It made me laugh, but it also brought home a truth. My life is full of squirrels. And if I focus on them, they can distract me from God's truth.

The great apostle Paul suffered his own "squirrels". He faced all manner of distractions and despair, not the least of which was the "thorn in his side" which was a constant torment for him. He named it a messenger from Satan, because it tried to take his eyes off God. But here is the *very big thing* that Paul discovered: by keeping his focus firmly on God's truth, the thorn had no control over him. He had a thorn, but the thorn didn't have him.

"Squirrels" happen, but you don't have to let them control you.

Deuteronomy 6:16-25; Psalms 26, 28; John 1:19-28

Birthdays: Ruth Mary Race, Jeanne Ralicki, Stephanie Paul, Matthew Gallo, Caden Tucker

Anniversary: Dave & Nancy Van Holle (Leap Year Couple)

:Tuesday's Calendar SHROVE TUESDAY

7:00 a.m. AA "Hour of Power"
9:00 a.m. Beth Moore Bible Study
10:00 a.m. Tuesday Bible Study
12:10 p.m. Holy Eucharist and Healing
1:00 p.m. Bridge Club
5:00 p.m. Pancake Supper
6:30 p.m. Vestry Meeting
7:30 p.m. NarcAnon "Just for Today"

Today's Ministry: Finance Committee

Wednesday, March 1

Jonah 3:1—4:11 *When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, he changed his mind and did not carry out the destruction he had threatened. This change of plans greatly upset Jonah, and he became very angry.* (vv.3:10—4:1)

When I was young, I fell in love with the story of Jonah. I mean, he was swallowed by a giant fish! But when I got older I read the rest of his story—and discovered one of the most honest examples of God's love ever written.

Post-fish-swallowing Jonah *finally* obeyed God and preached to the wicked city of Ninevah. Apparently the prophet was wildly successful, because the citizens turned from their evil ways, so much so that God decided not to obliterate them after all.

And what did Jonah do? Praise God for His forgiveness? Take a vacation after a job well done? Nope. Jonah got angry at God for choosing mercy—until the Lord reminded him that He's God and Jonah isn't.

Jonah was a good man who made terrible choices. Perhaps you've made some terrible choices, too. If so, take heart. Like Jonah, the Lord hasn't given up on you. This story is not about God saving Ninevah. It's about Him saving Jonah.

Psalms 95, 32, 143; Hebrews 12:1-14; Luke 18:9-14

Birthdays: Barb Hendry

Anniversary: Shawn & Maureen Miller

Wednesday's Calendar ASH WEDNESDAY

6:30 a.m. Men's Bible Study
7:00 a.m. AA "Hour of Power"
7:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist/Imposition of Ashes
12:10 p.m. Holy Eucharist/Imposition of Ashes
1:00 p.m. Waters Edge Recovery
4:45 p.m. Mary's Kitchen
5:30 p.m. AA "Daily Reflections"
5:30 p.m. Imposition of Ashes in the Pittenger Center
7:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist/Imposition of Ashes
7:00 p.m. Life Group
8:30 p.m. NarcAnon "Klean and Krazy"

Today's Ministry: Flower Guild

Thursday, March 2

Titus 1:1-16 *Even one of their own men, a prophet from Crete, has said about them, "The people of Crete are all liars, cruel animals, and lazy gluttons." This is true. So reprimand them sternly to make them strong in the faith.* (vv.12-13)

In the ancient world, Crete was not considered a center of shining intellectual and moral values. In fact, it was about as far away from that image as possible. Using a modern illustration, you can think of Crete as a sort of first century "Mos Eisley Spaceport" from *Star Wars*. As Ben Kenobi says, "You will never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy."

Crete was a worthless mess with little potential for success. Decent folk stayed away. And yet, Paul sent one of his most valuable evangelists, Titus, to this "wretched hive" to preach the Good News and plant churches.

Is there a "Mos Eisley" in your life? Is there a place, a person, a relationship, or a situation that is so deeply broken that everyone (including you) has given up on it? If so, think about what Paul wrote to Titus. Crete was full of lazy liars but, as bad as they were, Paul knew God hadn't given up on them.

Where others see "wretched hives of scum and villainy," Jesus sees potential.

Deuteronomy 7:6-11; Psalm 37:1-18; John 1:29-34

Birthdays: Peter Dayton, Josephine Gallo

Thursday's Calendar

7:00 a.m. AA "Hour of Power"
10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist - Rite II
10:30 a.m. Altar Guild Meeting
12:30 p.m. Overeaters' Anonymous Meeting
6:30 p.m. Life Group
7:00 p.m. Choir Rehearsal
7:00 p.m. AIAnon "Stepping Stones"

Today's Ministry: Heritage Society

Friday, March 3

Psalm 31 *I am ignored as if I were dead, as if I were a broken pot.* (v.12)

Have you ever been broken? I mean the kind of broken when you're an old clay pot that's been tossed into the middle of a six-lane highway? You've been run over by countless cars and crunched down by sixteen-wheelers. Eventually you are not even recognizable as a pot anymore. You've been ground down to a handful of dust in the middle of the highway. You might think you're so broken that you can't be fixed. Perhaps you even believe that since you are reduced to a handful of dust, there is no way the Lord can put you back together.

If this is what you think, then you might want to take a look at this passage: "Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person" (Genesis 2:7). God can do a lot with a handful of dust.

Deuteronomy 7:12-16; Titus 2:1-15; John 1:35-42