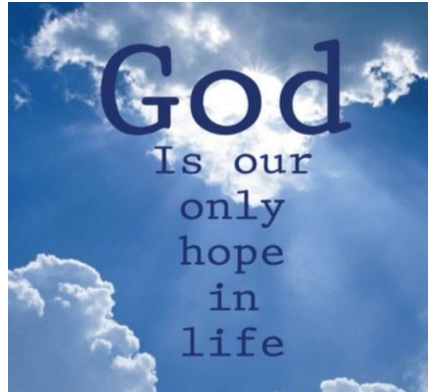


CALVARY CURRENT

Special Edition for March 2021



*Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God. (Psalm 42:11)*

CHURCH NEWS

1. Calvary's Worship & Ministries

We have completed the installation of the live-streaming equipment. We plan to launch both "in-person" and "live-streaming" worship service on the first Sunday in May!

2. Calvary Virtual Church on Sundays: Opening our virtual door at 10:30 am!

By computer: CalvaryUMCnc.org -> Click Virtual Church Info under Worship

By phone: Call at 301-715-8592 and enter Meeting ID: 854 324 5409#

*Our zoom service is recorded and posted on the church website.

3. Special Prayers

For June Severs, Preston Savage, Gaynell Lail, Ted and Brenda Alexander, Mary Arnold, Mike Earnhardt, Margaret Bumgardner, Mason Butler, Wade Cobb, Daisy Dunlap, Henry and Laretta Forrest, Betty Matthews, Betty Pinion, Kathleen Shaw, Ray Smith (Calvary); Jackie Davidson, Faye Austin, Dina Edwards, and Dean McLendon (Communities).

For healing of our nation and the world from the COVID-19.

4. Let's be a generous & cheerful giver!

*Mail your offerings to Calvary UMC at 512 West Blvd. Charlotte, NC 28203.

*Use "bill pays" at your online banking or visit "Conference Online Giving" at

<https://www.wnccumc.org/online-donations-to-churches> (Calvary UMC, Charlotte / Metro District / Pastor Jae Lee / Your email address)

*Special offerings:

For Repair & Replace Funds (R & R) and Music Funds by Rachel Graves.

To Calvary UMC in honor of Harding Shinn by Ron Shinn.

"PRODIGAL GRACE" (Mark 12:1-8)

Preached on March 14 by Rev. Jae Lee

One of my high school teachers always emphasized, "seize the day." He used to say to us, "You might think that your school time would not move quickly enough at your age. When you go to college and become adults, you will learn how fast your time goes." Nowadays, I often find myself speaking to a friend, "time flies." A church friend shared his wisdom with me: "When we were in our 20s, our life travels with the speed of 20 miles per hour, in 40s, with 40 miles, and in 60s, with 60 miles." If we are in our older age, we will agree that time flies, and we do not want to waste our precious time!

How about our energy or money? It will be the same. No one wants to spend one's passion or money on non-essential things. In this sense, the parable in Mark 12 is bizarre and weird. It speaks to us about a person who has wasted precious time, resources, and lives. It is a parable of Jesus Christ who told the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders as they did not accept him as the Messiah.

We understand that Jesus often uses parables when he teaches the kingdom of God. The parable of a vineyard owner does not make sense to us at all. Let's imagine that we have a beautiful and fruitful vineyard. We are the owner of the vineyard and have to travel around the world. So, we make a contract with tenants who take care of the vineyard. When the harvest season comes, the tenants will give us a particular portion of the profits according to the contract.

Everything is obvious. When the harvest comes, we send a person who will receive our share from the tenants. However, the person who represents us is beaten by the tenants and comes back with empty hands. What would we do? Probably, we will call the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department and report the illegal behavior and violence of the tenants.

However, the vineyard owner in the Gospel of Mark does a bizarre act. He sends another servant to the vineyard. This time, the tenants are even worse. They beat him and insult him by hitting his head. The "foolish" landowner does not recognize a toxic situation. That is why he sends another servant to the vineyard, and this time, the tenants kill his servant.

You and I can see that the vineyard owner wastes his time and resources with the wicked tenants. Above all, he destroys the precious lives of his servants. Despite this, the landowner continues to waste his time, energy, and resources for the evil tenants. The tenants harm the landowner's servants and hurt his heart and good intention.

Finally, the owner thinks that the tenants will welcome and respect his son and pay their portion to him. That is why he sends his only son to the vineyard. How foolish, how lavish, and how extravagant the landowner is! Betraying the landowner's expectation, the tenants kill his son, trying to deprive the landowner's vineyard.

In this parable, we can easily see that the vineyard owner is God, and the tenants are the world who have not welcomed the prophets and the Son of God who have been sent for the world. In this seemingly absurd parable, we wonder why God chooses a foolish way of handling the people. Is God too naïve? Why does God lavishly send prophets to be beaten and persecuted by the people? Why does God waste and sacrifice even God's only Son, Jesus Christ, for the world?

I believe that we already know the answer. It is God's goodness to wait for us to repent and come back to the Lord. That is why God is lavish, extravagant, and wasting God's time, energy, and resources for us! God chooses the most vulnerable way of saving us: God wastes God's time with patience. God waits for our return to God, providing us with prodigal grace until we accept it!

From our human perspective, this parable does not make sense at all. However, God lavishly shows us God's endless love by giving up Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, for our salvation. It is the extravagant grace of God for you and me and all people in the world.

Why does God choose this way? Ephesians 2 gives us a clue: "But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ... so that he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. By grace, you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."

Only God can give us lavishly because all belong to God. Out of the richness of God, God can willingly waste God's love until we accept it with our hearts and realize how much God loves us who do not deserve that love!

Dear church, do we sense the prodigal grace of God? God loves us even when we fail to love God and love others. God extends God's forgiving hands and embraces us when we close our inner doors and avoid the compassionate eyes of Jesus. God patiently waits for us until we turn around from our self-oriented life and ask for God's help.

Furthermore, God wants us to waste our time, energy, and money for God's purpose and missions. God wants us to be part of sharing God's extravagant grace with others. As God gave us the greatest gift, Jesus Christ, out of God's richness and goodness, God also wants us to freely and generously share Jesus with others by our kind actions, caring love, and faithful presence!

Wasting our time, energy, and resources in this sense has a different dimension with God's prodigal grace. It is a holy wasting to carry out the missions of our loving God in the world. Are we willingly join our prodigal Father and joyfully waste our love for others? Amen!

SPECIAL WORSHIP SERVICES

As we will faithfully keep the Holy Week (March 29-April 3) to prepare Easter Day on April 4, we will have a **Holy Thursday Evening Service on April 1 at 7pm** via zoom. On **Easter Sunday**, we will

celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ together with other Western North Carolina's United Methodist churches, listening to our Bishop Paul Leeland's sermon.

UMCOR SUNDAY

March 21 is United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) Sunday. UMCOR is an outreach organization of the UMC that locally and globally reaches out to the people in need. Calvary asks for your generous donations for UMCOR so that we may become a part of communal efforts to support our sisters and brothers in the world. You may make a check to be payable to Calvary UMC and write UMCOR on the memo. Your generous giving will become the only hope for someone!

UMW GENERAL MEETING

Calvary's United Methodist Women (UMW) will have its general meeting on April 11, Sunday, at 1:30pm via zoom. Please plan to attend the general meeting and contribute to the local community with your participation and support. UMW will meet once a quarter.

BOTH "IN-PERSON" AND "LIVE-STREAMING" SERVICE

Calvary needs your help! Are you willing to operate the live-streaming service through YouTube or Facebook? It will be an excellent opportunity for you to learn how to connect our worship service to the world's viewers through live-streaming. In April, there will be training sessions for those who will operate the system. To begin both in-person and live-streaming service from the first Sunday of May, Calvary needs your help! Please let Pastor Jae know by March 31.

BLESSING CABINET

Thank you for your generous and thoughtful donations for Calvary's Blessing Cabinet. Blessing Cabinet has provided food for those who need daily meals during the pandemic. Blessing Cabinet locates behind the church building, and anyone can stop by and take food as much as they need. Your donations are always appreciated. If you like to know more detailed information, please feel free to contact Brenda Alexander at 704-541-6766.

MUSIC FUNDS

Since last October, we have used music videos from the Pastor Koo family, who permitted us to use their music videos for our virtual worship services. Every Sunday, we have been blessed with their inspirational music. Church Council decided to send the Koo family a love offering of \$150 per quarter to appreciate their musical gifts. If you want to donate money for Music Funds, please make a check to be payable to Calvary UMC and write down Music Funds on the memo. Pastor Koo serves two United Methodist congregations in Vermont.