

Interactive lesson



picture from <https://wholesale.wfpastic.com.au/p/Plastic/Takeaway-Containers/Food-Buckets/Food-Bucket-With-Handle-5L-Clear/PAIL5CNL>

What is this? <Let them respond; then fill with fake snowballs>

Is it full now? <Let them respond; then add big chocolate bars>

Is it full now? <Let them respond; then add small candy>

Is it full now? <Let them respond; then talk about being able to add sand >

Would that make it full? <Let them respond; then talk about adding water>

So what is the point of adding all these things to the bucket? <Let them respond>

If we want to fit in the big things, we have to add them first. Otherwise, the bucket will be filled with smaller things.

The same is true about our time in life. If we want to do something important to us, we have to prioritize it and schedule the less important stuff after it.

How do we know what is important? <Let them respond>

How does God make sure that we know what is important? <Let them respond>

If it is important to the Creator of **everything**, then it must be pretty important. Know that you are important to Almighty God, enough that you are marked with the Word of the Lord, beloved – as shown through Jesus. May you truly know the Holy Spirit in your heart and keep God’s love foremost in all you do.

<Hymn “Christ for the World We Sing” UMH #568>

<NT Reading – Hebrews 5:5-10>

Gospel lesson

Today’s Gospel reading takes place immediately after Jesus’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The Pharisees had just said to one another, “You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!” And sure enough, those from the rest of the world were among those flocking to Jesus.



picture from <https://www.freeimages.com/fr/photo/grain-field-nr2-1545447>

John 12:20-33 (NRSV)

²⁰ Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks.

²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

²² Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

²³ Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

²⁴ Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

²⁵ Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

²⁷ "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say-- 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.

²⁸ Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

²⁹ The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

³⁰ Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine."

³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out.

³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

³³ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn "Come and Fill Our Hearts" TFWS #2157>

Message: Written on the Heart



LENT WORSHIP SERIES

Written on the Heart

REND YOUR HEARTS: CLAIMING THE PROMISE

picture from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/rend-your-hearts-claiming-the-promise/fifth-sunday-in-lent-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/fifth-sunday-in-lent-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Redeemer of the world, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,

- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,
that Your Word may be written there for always. Amen.



**Rend Your Hearts:
Claiming the Promise**



- ♥ February 21 – This is the Sign
- ♥ February 28 – Walk Before Me
- ♥ March 7 – All These Words
- ♥ March 14 – Look Up and Live
- ♥ **March 21 – Written on the Heart**
- ♥ March 28 – The One Who Comes

As we near our great celebration, we think today about what it means to have the Word of God written on our hearts. Discipleship Ministries offered this summary:

“That the gospel is countercultural is beyond debate. But texts like this one are so subtly against our way of thinking that we might not even realize the pull to deny this proclamation even as we preach it. Yet, how can we make such a claim about a magnificent vision of the kin-dom of God? It seems something that we all long for on a regular basis, particularly during a time of unrest and division. This is a utopia worth claiming, so why would we be reluctant?”

The psalmist today cried out for a clean heart, a right spirit within, to stay in the presence of the Holy Spirit and have the joy of God’s salvation. There is the true utopia, with God. Only in God may we live.



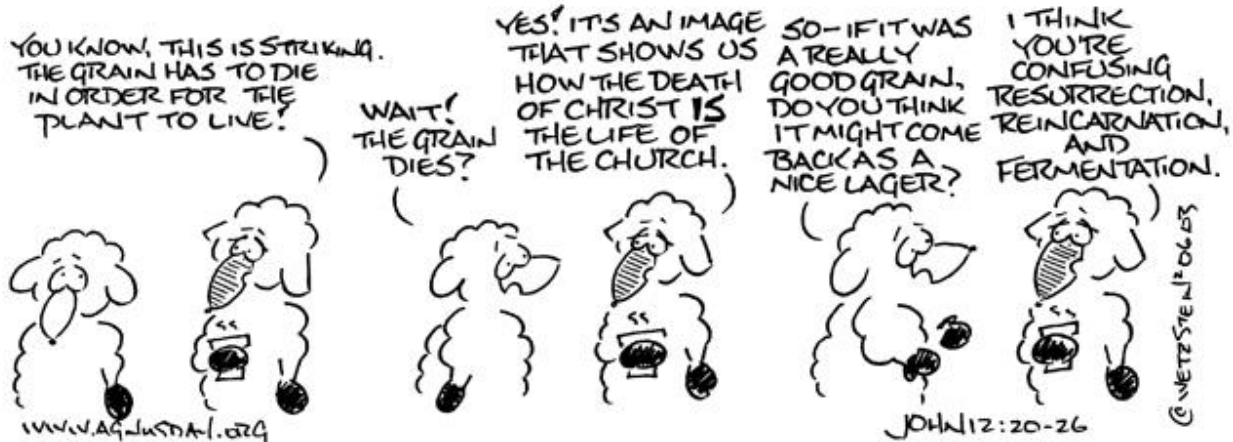
public domain picture from
[https://wikioo.org/paintings.php?refarticle=8Y2UCV&titlepainting=kreuzigung&artistname=Tiziano_Vecellio\(Titian\)](https://wikioo.org/paintings.php?refarticle=8Y2UCV&titlepainting=kreuzigung&artistname=Tiziano_Vecellio(Titian))

But Jesus said we have to die in order to live. And when Jesus was lifted up from the earth, it was on the cross. Who wants to die like that? I do not know anyone both physically and mentally healthy who wants to die. So why was it OK for Jesus to go along with that instead of trying to get away?

Well, first of all, Jesus did not really want to be crucified. As written to the Hebrews, “Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death.” We will hear next week how He prayed at Gethsemane for some other way for His mission to be fulfilled. Yet although He knew what was coming, he did not try to escape it.

Why? Because Jesus wanted better life for all people, through fulfillment of God’s covenant. It was not about His own life; it was about serving God and humanity. The flesh part of the Word-made-flesh had to die for the Word to be written on people’s hearts.

Or, as Jesus put it, "...unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."



<https://www.agnusday.org/comics/69/john-1220-33>

The covenant with Abraham was for the Israelites, renewed in the time of Moses with laws so that the people could flourish in the way they lived. The new covenant was transformational, bringing all people into reconciliation with God, not just the Israelites. It was for people to have eternal life with their Creator, not just a better subsistence on this earth. It shows us how living in love for God and for one another is so much better than the sinful egocentricity more typical of humanity.



picture from <http://www.sawtrymethodist.org.uk/docs/SMC-Notices-20180513.pdf>

And that law of love is written on our hearts.

I have spoken about my aging mother, how she is no longer able to take care of herself independently. I do not know if I have spoken about how, when stressed, her behavior devolves - sometimes to the approximate level of a two-year-old in an adult body.

Dealing with that has been particularly hard for my sister in Southern California. She is an introvert, and in the years leading up to the pandemic she was subjected to some extremely embarrassing public situations when trying to help my mother with things like banking or visiting the doctor's office.

After one particularly frustrating day, my sister vented to me. After validating her feelings and helping her to calm down, I told her I would call Mom to see if I could help her at least treat my sister a little better.

When I spoke with my mother, she was aware of the argument she had with my sister and somewhat repentant, but I had to be careful not to trigger Mom lest she devolve into another rant. My heart was aching for both her and my sister; after all, when you love people dearly, you want them to get along, don't you? Silently, I asked God for help.



picture from <https://www.guideposts.org/faith-and-prayer/prayer-stories/pray-effectively/set-it-and-forget-it-prayers>

I was inspired to ask her to pray over the phone with me. I wanted to pray for her, for my sister, and for God to guide them both with patience for one another. I guess she heard that despite her outbursts that we had talked about earlier, she was loved.

What was awesome to me about the experience, though, was when my mother prayed aloud. I do not think I had ever heard her speak to God about the private concerns on her heart before, and it was beautiful.

None of her requests were for herself; rather, it was all for those she loved, expanding on what I had first said to include all of her children and their families, and others whom she loves. I could sense the love of God written on her heart, being poured out for the wellbeing of others in one of the few ways left to her.

I think something fundamental changes in a person when they accept the love of Jesus in their hearts. Like a permanent etching, it becomes part of them.

Because God loves them, they are able to show beautiful love to others in ways they were unable to before.

The entire world is lifted up as a result. So, I pray that each one of you is able to celebrate being part of the glorious new covenant, with the Word of God written on your hearts and ready to claim your place in the kingdom of heaven.

Now let us respond with

The Apostles' Creed, Ecumenical Version

UMH #882

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic** church,
the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting. Amen.

***universal*

<Doxology UMH #95>

<Prayer of Dedication and Pastoral Prayer>

Let us pray:

God of compassion, when we failed to keep Your commandments and rebelled against that which would bring peace and joy to our lives, Your love was so great that You offered us a new covenant – not written on tablets, but on our hearts.

Remind us how You love us so much that the sacrifice of Your Son on the cross for us was not too great a cost, that we in return may bring our lives, our love and devotion to Your altar.

Guide us with Your wisdom and help us with these concerns on our hearts today:

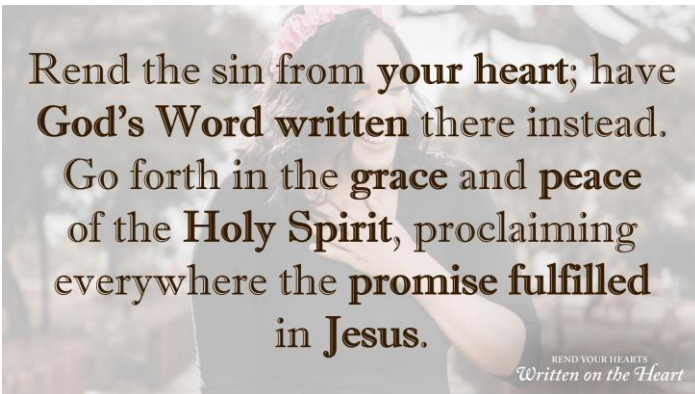
- Healing touch and comfort for all who are ailing.
 - Coronavirus victims – isolated; school; out-of-work; health care workers (especially: Marie Curri, Laura Davis, Nicole Marshall, Vince Marshall, Heidi Newton, Jennifer Tibbens-Scalzo) & those serving critical needs
 - **Victims of Atlanta shooting** – 3 Asian spas
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- Thanks for
 - Oscar L. Bartholomew, Sr. - died 3/17/2021
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- Hold those who cannot be with us in Your loving embrace until we see them again.
 - Travelers
 - Family far off
- Social unrest - dismantle racism and reform problem systems
- Guide our Leaders - local, state, federal, international, and especially of Your church.
- Help us to be fearless in talking about You as a normal part of daily living.
 - Inspire each one of us this week to invite one person to come know You better.
 - Help us to encourage one another toward faith in You and toward living together in true Christian community.

All these things we pray as You taught us to pray,
<Lord's Prayer>

<Hymn "Make Me a Captive, Lord" UMH #421>

<Benediction>



background from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/rend-your-hearts-claiming-the-promise/fifth-sunday-in-lent-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/fifth-sunday-in-lent-year-b-graphics>

Rend the sin from your heart;
have God's Word written there instead.
Go forth in the grace and peace of the Holy Spirit,
proclaiming everywhere
the promise fulfilled in Jesus.