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The News of the Wesleyan-Anglican Connection & Epworth Chapel on the Green, in the World's Smallest Newspaper

We Receive God's Grace in Vain, If We Are Not Changed, or If We Don't Forgive, or If We Hinder Another's Walk in Grace

Our response to Jesus' selfless love "must not be cavalier," the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said in his Ash Wednesday sermon, as if we could look on at what Jesus has done and flippantly respond, 'My, my, isn't that nice of Jesus to take on human form and suffer and die for our sins.' The Apostle Paul [2 Cor. 5:20—6:10] says, . . . Do not receive God's grace in vain."

"Jesus Weeping Over Jerusalem", by Kevin Beck, www.presence.tv/cms/ In the Gospel lesson Sunday, Luke tells of Jesus' sorrow over the lack of repentance by those in Jerusalem who, he predicts, will weep when they are shut out of the Kingdom of God. In the Epistle lesson Paul weeps over the shameless self-serving disobedience he saw.

"One way you can receive God's grace in vain is to be *stirred*, but not *changed*, in your Christian life. . . . You can have a mountain-top experience, and then come down from the mountain and go on living the same old way.

"Another way we might receive God's grace in vain is to experience God's forgiveness . . . and at the same time refuse to grant forgiveness to others."

A third way to receive God's grace in vain would be to put a "stumbling block in anyone's path," Pastor Thelander said. "In a world where things, and people, are so easily taken for granted, we are given a gift tonight: a gift of 40 days, a period where we ask the Holy Spirit . . . to reveal to us areas in our lives where we may be taking God's grace for granted, a gift of time for reflection and renewed commitment, so that our lives will not be the occasion for another's stumbling.

"That gift is given to us tonight in the tangible form of ashes upon our foreheads. They are a reminder that we are human—all too human. They remind us that it is all too easy to take God for granted, to receive his grace in vain."

In This Battle of Cosmic Proportions, We Are Tempted to Take the Easy Way

As the devil's temptations of Jesus in the wilderness show, "we are engaged in a battle of cosmic proportions," the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said in his Lent 1 sermon Sunday. "It is a struggle for our lives, for our very souls. Sometimes it involves traveling through the desert, where everything must be stripped away from us so that God has our complete attention."

In response to temptation, "Jesus *chooses* to let go of his supernatural power and control, and *chooses* to live within the boundaries of human life and existence," Pastor Thelander said, so that he could fulfill his mission in God's way and time. "Of all the temptations Jesus ever faced, it never occurred to me until this week that perhaps the most brutal one involved the temptation to grab back onto the power of his divinity, when God had sent him to be born, suffer, and die as a human being."

"Our society offers us countless ways to be distracted from God's purposes." We might be tempted "to do *wrong* things for *right* reasons," or "to do *right* things for *wrong* reasons," or "to do good and noble things that are not God's plan or are not in God's time for us." The devil tries to get us to choose the easy way, to compromise, and to accept his offer of a short cut, and he wants to convince us "that we can attain (p. 2→)

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Sunday
10:00 a.m.:Word & Table service
11:30 a.m.:Refreshments, conversation
11:45 a.m.:Post-service discussion.
6:00 p.m.: Lenten Evensong, with no tea or refreshments.

We welcome donations for The Harbinger.

Tuesdays 5:30 p.m.: Lenten Evening Prayers, then soup & bread supper.
Thursdays (except 3/15), 7:00 p.m.: Lenten Evening Prayers
Thurs., 3/15, 7 p.m.: Psychological & Biblical Aspects of Forgiveness, NNU

For the poor: Ground beef, chicken, sausage, bacon, fresh produce, canned fruits and vegetables, canned spam and tuna, cold cereal, milk, butter, cheese, cooking oil, pancake mix, syrup, chili powder, paprika, oregano, garlic powder, diapers, baby wipes, bathroom tissue, hand and body soap, shampoo, conditioner, razors,shaving cream, cold weather clothing.

Readings, 3/4, 10 a.m.: Gen. 15:1-18; Ps. 16:1-15; Phil. 3:17—4:1; Luke 13:22-35. **3/4 6 p.m.:** Ps. 8 (sung); Jer. 1:1-10; 1 Cor. 3:11-23. **3/11:** Ex. 3:1-15; Ps. 103:1-11; 1 Cor. 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9.

Prayer Emphases: Belgium; Calvary Chapel Churches; Whitney Friends Church, Boise, and the Rev. Vern Barnett; The Rutherford Institute; parishioners on Winstead Court.

(Sermon, cont'd.) the *end* God has in mind for us without following the *means* God has in mind for us. The Good News today is that Jesus shows us that it is possible to choose God's way . . . . You may have to travel through the heat of the desert to do it, but by God's grace *all* things are possible."