

Hillcrest Calling

Volume XXXXVI, No. 4

He is not here; he has risen,
Just like he said

April, 2018

Matthew 28:6



The Thief on the Other Cross

I don't belong here. I really don't. Paradise is the last place I expected to end up after all I've done. Let me tell you my story.

I am — I *was* — an armed robber, I guess you'd call it. Me and Jake and the others would live in caves in the Judean hills near the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. We made our living by violence. We wouldn't take on people in the big groups that passed. They traveled together for safety. But a family alone would be an easy mark, as well as anyone fool enough to travel by himself.

Brandishing a strong staff would usually do the trick. Threaten them with a beating and they'd give up without much of a fight. But I've been known to

break a few bones in my day, God forgive me. I don't think I actually killed anyone, but then I never stayed around long enough to find out.

The first time I meet Jesus is when I am invited to a party in his honor in Jericho at the home of a rich tax collector named Zacchaeus. I am introduced, we shake hands, and Jesus looks me in the eye for a *long* moment. He can see right into me, who I am, every crime I have ever committed. Then he smiles this big friendly smile. "You know," he says, "there's forgiveness for you in my Kingdom. How about it?" I drop my eyes, say something non-committal, and shuffle away. The next day I'm in the crowd, hanging on every word he says. Jesus is talking about his Kingdom, comparing it to a mustard seed, calling it the Kingdom of Heaven. I want so much to go up to him after he has finished and take him up on that forgiveness thing, but I just can't bring myself to do it.

I wish I had. It isn't much later when me and my friend Jake -- the guy on the third cross -- get caught by a Roman patrol. The others run off, but they catch us, beat us silly, drag us into Jerusalem, and throw us in prison. No mercy for the likes of us.

And so it happens that on the same day that they crucify Jesus, they crucify me and Jake -- one of us on his left, the other on his right. This isn't any normal crucifixion. Mobs of people are there just because of Jesus. Self-righteous Pharisees are swaggering and mocking. "If you're some kind of messiah," one sneers, "come on down from that cross. If you're a savior, save yourself — *if you can!*"

Jake begins cat-calling, too, if you can imagine that. I yell over at him, "You miserable thug, don't you have any fear of God? Can't you see that we're going to die just like he is? Show a little decency! We're getting exactly what we deserve, but he ain't done nothing wrong."

Jake quiets down and the Pharisees lose interest. But I can't get Jericho out of my mind. I can't forget Jesus' eyes, his words, his invitation. And so I call over to him, though it's getting hard to breathe and talking makes it that much harder.

"Jesus!" I say. He turns his head towards me. "Jesus, I was there in Jericho. I met you at a party at Zacchaeus' house. Remember?"

He looks at me for a moment and then nods his head just a little. He *does* remember.

"I never forgot what you said. I wanted to say yes, but just couldn't. And now look at me — look at *us!*"

He is in bad shape — exhausted, in excruciating pain, back oozing, breath labored. He isn't going to last long. I can see that. But somehow I can see *beyond* all that. He *was* the Messiah, *is* the Messiah, no matter what those priests and Romans and Pharisees have done to him. And when he dies, he will be with God. In a few hours, maybe less, he will be vindicated. He will reign in that Kingdom he told us about.

"Jesus," I call again, quieter now.

He opens his eyes. They are the same eyes, the same piercing, loving, honest eyes.

"Jesus," I say, "when you come into your Kingdom, would you remember me?"

His words are labored, his lips parched, but I can still hear him pretty well. "Truly, I say to you...." His voice cracks, then is stronger for a moment. "Truly, this very day you will be with me in Paradise."

His eyes droop. He is fading quickly now. But I believe him. *I do!* That's what gets me through those next few hours until they break my legs to kill me. I *do* believe him!

And then I find myself here in heaven, in Paradise. I sure don't deserve to be here, but here I am anyway. I guess that's what a man like me gets when the King himself grants a pardon. Full forgiveness.

Pretty amazing, don't you think?

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson



April Challenge Schedule

April 1st

5¢ For each piece of candy you eat Saturday

April 8th

1¢ For every electrical outlet in your home

April 15th

25¢ For each meal you eat from restaurants the week before

April 22nd

15¢ For each coffee pot in your home

April 29th

5¢ For each plant in your home

March Challenge Results

As a congregation we:

Own 49.56 homes

Own 537.4 bookshelves

Own 295.4 suitcases

Watched 159.4 hours of TV on Saturday, March 24th.

This is an entertaining way to help make change in our community! Please continue to help us with these challenges!

LET'S MAKE CHANGE!!!

Missions

The food pantry, Meals on Wheels, Rare Breed meals, and Ronald McDonald House meals are some of our ongoing missions that regularly need volunteer help. If you feel called to help with any of these please speak with the pastor and your talents will be utilized.



One Great Hour of Sharing

Around the world, millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education, and opportunity.

Each gift to One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) helps to improve the lives of people in these challenging situations. The Offering provides us a way to share God's love with our neighbors in need. In fact, OGHS is the single, largest way that Presbyterians come together every year to work for a better world.

One Great Hour of Sharing, received during the season of Lent, makes a difference in the world through three impactful programs: Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)

*Works alongside communities as they recover and find hope after the devastation of natural or human-caused disasters

* Receives 32% of funds raised

Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP)

*Takes action to alleviate hunger and the systematic causes of poverty so all may be fed

*Receives 36% of funds raised

Self-Development of People (SDOP)

*Invests in communities responding to their experiences of racism, oppression, poverty and injustice and educates Presbyterians about the impact of these societal ills

*Receives 32% of funds raised

Today, projects supported by One Great Hour of Sharing are underway in more than 100 countries.

Three ways members can give:

-Through our congregation

-Text OGHS to 20222 to give \$10

-presbyterianmission.org/give/oghs

Hillcrest will receive this offering on Easter Sunday, April 1st.

GIVE TO
ONE GREAT
HOUR OF
SHARING.





SPRINGFIELD GOSPEL CHORUS

Uniting our community in song is the mission of Springfield's newest choral ensemble, the Springfield Gospel Chorus. Under the co-direction of two outstanding music educators, Mark Lawley and Alberta Smith, the choir includes singers from a wide variety of backgrounds and professions with members ranging in ability from an earned doctorate in music to some who do not read music at all. At its very core the Springfield Gospel Chorus desires to set aside anything that might divide and, to lift the name of Jesus in jubilant song! Come and enjoy this exuberant choral performance.

Our own Nancy Hackett and Jim Downing are a part of this wonderful chorus. There are probably others you might know, including Judy Hollingsworth. Several people from Hillcrest attended the first concert last Fall and really enjoyed it. Come out and spend an uplifting afternoon with the Springfield Gospel Chorus on Sunday, April 8th at 3:00 at Central Christian Church located at 1475 N. Washington Ave. at Division St.



Thank You

All beautiful prayer warriors and pastor,
Please know that I thank you for your beautiful hearts and your prayers were heard and felt! I dreaded my birthday from the moment Becky went to Heaven because I didn't know how to do a birthday without her. But I woke up the morning of March 2nd with a feeling of peace and calm in my heart that I hadn't experienced since Becky left us. Thank you all! I know the power of prayer!
God Bless you,
Callie
I will cherish my "prayer blanket" forever!

Of Note

The sacrament of Communion will be celebrated on Easter, April 1st.

The stated session meeting will be held Thursday, April 12th at 6:00pm.

The Men's Breakfast is April 14th, 8:00am at the Golden Corral on North Kansas.

The church will be serving dinner at the Mercy Ronald McDonald House on Monday, April 9.

Book Club will meet on April 16th at 7:00pm. They will be reviewing "The Coincidence of Coconut Cake" by Amy Reichert.

February Financials:

Beginning Balance	\$5,500.23
Increase/Decrease	-\$1,166.16
Ending Balance	\$4,334.07

Reminder: Our church premises is weapon free, carrying firearms is prohibited.

Why we need Easter

No one is exempt from tragedy or disappointment — even God was not exempt. Jesus offered no immunity, no way out of the unfairness, but rather a way through it to the other side. Just as Good Friday demolished the instinctive belief that this life is supposed to be fair, Easter Sunday followed with its startling clue to the riddle of the universe. Out of the darkness, a bright light shone. ...

The cross of Christ may have overcome evil, but it did not overcome unfairness. For that, Easter is required, a bright clue that someday God will restore all physical reality to its proper place.

—Philip Yancey, Disappointment With God

Ashley House Dinner

Eleven women from the church hosted eight girls and young women from Ashley House on March 21st.

We had a very nice dinner at Jimm's. Thank you to everyone who donated to sponsor one of our guests.

We were also able to give the girls a very nice shawl as a gift.



HILLCREST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND LIFEQUEST/
 WALNUT LAWN CHURCH OF GOD PRESENTS
COMMUNITY EASTER

EGG HUNT

**MARCH
31st**

LIFEQUEST/WALNUT LAWN
 CHURCH OF GOD
 720 E NORTON RD
 SPRINGFIELD, MO 65803

**10:00
AM**

Bring a basket to collect eggs and enjoy a fun day with your neighbors!

COOKIE CREATION CENTER INFLATABLES
 TODDLER PLAY AREA FACE PAINTING

A VISIT FROM THE EASTER BUNNY

For more information

www.hillcrestpcs.com
hillcrestchurch@gmail.com

www.yourlifequest.org
thespringfieldchurch@gmail.com

FREE EVENT



Hillcrest Presbyterian Church
818 East Norton Rd.
Springfield, MO 65803-3646

