



Sonny's Sayings

I have a “news feed” on my phone that sends me articles from different magazines and newspapers around the internet, and lately, one topic keeps coming up in my “feed:” gratitude. Article after article will scroll across my screen on gratitude. For example, this morning, I saw Shape magazine’s article titled, “Gratitude Benefits Everything In Our Lives – Here’s How.”

Generally, these articles speak about the benefits of gratitude: reducing stress, being more forgiving, lowering blood pressure, and so on. They’ll also give tips for how to establish a lifestyle of gratitude, and many of these tips are helpful. However, what is sometimes missing from these articles is that sometimes our circumstances don’t allow for their “tips,” or that our life situation may make gratitude a hard sell.

But the Bible is full of the practice of gratitude, even from people who are in dire straits. Probably the best example of this is David in the Psalms. Several of his “psalms of lament” speak about horrible life situations in which he finds himself. Take Psalm 10 for example. He begins in verse 1 with lament: “Why O Lord do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?” David even names the situation that causes his lament in verse 9: “Their eyes stealthily watch for the helpless; they lurk in secret like a lion in its covert; they lurk that they may seize the poor; they seize the poor

and drag them off in their net.” But even in such a situation, David still finds his gratitude at the end of the Psalm. In verse 17 and 18, he writes: “O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed, so that those from earth may strike terror no more.” There are other Psalms like this, such as Psalms 6, 38, 42, 43, and 130.

But what is different is that, often in the articles that cross my newsfeed, the way to gratitude lies “within,” as if we can find our gratitude within ourselves, sometimes a task too tall, if our personality is prone to darkness, or our situation seems too dark. What the Bible offers is different. It doesn’t shy away from acknowledging the mystery of our suffering, and how God sometimes seems to “allow” it, but it also boldly claims that when it feels that God is far off, God is actually right there with us. And that God’s presence in our suffering, the assurance that we are not alone, is the reason for our gratitude.

This is especially valuable when thinking about Lent and its themes of wilderness, temptation, and hunger. How does one endure? We are grateful, as David was grateful. We focus and rely on God’s presence with us, as David did. And we wait for the Lord, who “will strengthen our heart,” as David wrote. May the rest of Lent be a time for you of drawing near to the God who always holds you and loves you in the mystery of life.

Blessings - Sonny

Potpourri

by Elaine Hardy

Note from the editor:

*Elaine reached out to me a few days ago and expressed a desire to resume her column. Long time readers of the Herald have always enjoyed **Potpourri** by Elaine, which has been sorely missed in recent months. Elaine, we're glad that you are back with us and able to share your column! --BJM*

Lent, Holy Week and Easter or Resurrection Sunday are the focus of this month as Easter comes early this year based on the moon's cycle. During this Lenten season, are you giving up something (social media time, basketball on TV or favorite shows on HGTV) to allow time for reflection? During Sunday worship on February 25, the Serendipity Sunday School Class shared a Lenten prayer they composed. Perhaps you could try your hand at writing a prayer or poem, a good exercise for any season.

Online Lenten devotionals of scripture, prayer and gentle instrumental music may be found at d.365.org/

Halifax Urban Ministry. In addition to donations of staple food items for families with food insecurity, consider donating foods which could be used in an Easter meal—canned veggies (sweet potatoes, green peas or beans, corn), canned fruits or a cake mix and frosting.

Hopping Down the Bunny Trail.

- 1.Which country started the tradition of the Easter bunny?
- 2.Besides bunnies, what animal is considered an Easter symbol?
- 3.What color were Easter eggs first dyed?
- 4.Before commercial dye products were sold, how were eggs dyed?

continued at the top of the next column

5.For whom were jeweled-encrusted Faberge eggs, now worth

millions, crafted in the late 1800s and early 1900s?

6.Which two U.S. states produce 95% of all Easter lily bulbs grown in the world?

(see page 6 in the pink column for the answers)

Easter Parade. Those of us of a certain age remember singing “In your Easter bonnet, with all the frills upon it. . .” Bakers, you can easily make an attractive Easter bonnet cake for your celebration. Bake a thin round cake layer (recipe of your choice or box cake mix) to the brim, then bake a crown in a small or medium metal mixing bowl.If you are not a decorator, after frosting just use poly-silk flowers from the dollar store to decorate the hat.

Easter Wish.

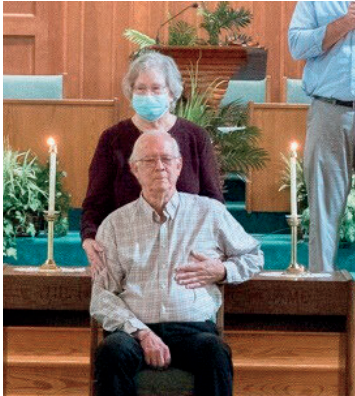
May the glad dawn
Of Easter morn
Bring joy to thee.
May the calm eve
Of Easter leave
A peace divine with thee.
May Easter night
On thine heart write,
O Christ, I live for Thee.

A Personal Note. *Thank you for your prayers and expressions of concern following my stroke last year. The partial vision loss, unfortunately, is permanent, so if you feel I have ignored you, please know I just don't see across the aisle or the parking lot.*

This month we had so much extra content that we decided to add an extra page!

Deacon Ordination and Commissioning

Last month, we ordained Lee Gallman as a Deacon and officially commissioned our entire deacon body including new elected deacons: Marty Petty, Pope Hamrick, Lee Gallman and Jim Hitson.



Church Conference Voting Results

On Sunday, February 25, a church conference was called to vote on two proposals:

Motion 1 - the hiring of two singers.

Motion 2 - authorizing the Trustees to finalize a lease agreement.

Motion 1 - did not pass.

Motion 2 - passed.



Meyer's Musings

With all the wonderful extra content this month, I decided to shorten my *musings* to ensure we had enough space to fit everything in. I think this is a wonderful sign of a healthy church when there are so many events and happenings that, as editor, I have to “get creative” or add pages to ensure we fit everything in.

I wanted to expound a little further on the subject of listening that I mentioned in last month's article. Musically, this might be referred to as the coda, an ending to the basic structure of what I shared.

Today in class, I gave an oral report on a book I recently finished reading called “Hearing Beyond

the Words” by Dr. Emma J. Justes. The main thesis is that listening is connected to hospitality and the traits that make one good at hospitality transfer to the art of listening.

To show hospitality, one is present and available, offering what they have, being vulnerable, available and showing humility to their guest.

When we think about what makes a good listener, the traits are essentially the same. Think about someone that you are able to go to and just be your authentic self. Do you recognize any of these traits in them? How about when someone comes to you to talk? How do you make them feel? My hope is that you are coming from a place of showing hospitality. After all, this is one of the biggest themes in the Bible, showing radical hospitality to the stranger. Something to reflect upon in the days ahead.

On the journey, BJ

MARCH 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2 Birthdays <i>Phyllis Davis Kenna-Marie McCulley</i>
3	4	5 Birthdays <i>Ellen Clontz Betty Comer- Henry Holly Inglett</i>	6	7	8 Birthday <i>Susan Shoopman</i>	9 Birthday <i>Linda Seaman</i>
10	11 Birthday <i>Anna McDonough</i>	12 Birthdays <i>Tim Lauxman Richard Pelletier</i>	13 Birthdays <i>Anne Jones Dan Williams</i>	14 Birthday <i>Jill Matthews</i>	15 Birthday <i>Carolyn Gibson- Neimann</i>	16
17 Birthday <i>Jim Rademacher</i>	18	19	20	21 Birthday <i>Emily Queen</i>	22	23
24/31 Birthday <i>Beth Burrows (24)</i>	25 Birthday <i>Jamani Moore</i>	26 Birthdays <i>Leah Pokorny Michael Weaver</i>	27	28 Birthday <i>Rosenell Mounts</i>	29 Birthday <i>Jenny Inglett</i>	30 Birthdays <i>Paulette Amos Alice Rippey</i>