Lenten Devotional 2016
Note from the Editor:

It is my honor to introduce you to the 2016 Susquehanna Lenten Devotional. I am glad that you have received or picked up a copy to help grow during the Lenten season alongside the SU community. This devotional is different than those of the past, as it has a theme. Each of the authors chose a question asked by Jesus in the Gospels, and wrote a reflection on what it meant to them.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus asks many questions, some more straightforward than others. As you read and reflect on the questions, please take a minute to really focus on what the question is asking. Asking yourself the tough questions is a way you can grow spiritually. There is no truly right or wrong answer as each person views them differently, and a question may mean something different each time you read it.

The world is constantly looking for answers, but sometimes the important part is the question. Questions are often overlooked, in life and the Bible. Jesus asks us the questions that go deeper than most answers can. This Lent, I would like to encourage using the questions as a start for reflection, prayer, or discussion among friends and family. It can be just a minute or two of thought or prayer, or it can be something you think and wrestle with all day.

I would also like to thank all of the writers for making time to write a submission for others to use in their Lenten journey. This time of year is busy as everyone is getting back into the swing of things after the holidays and snow. I understand that we all have had different life experiences and may not immediately relate to every contribution, but see where it takes you. I hope your Lent is filled with opportunities to reflect and ask yourself the big questions burning in our hearts.

Charlie Frekot ’18
Deacon of Spiritual Nurture
Mary saw that the stone in front of tomb had been moved. She went and got the disciples, and they were all amazed. After they left, she stayed and wept, which is understandable. Little did she know, someone saw her doing this. They ask, “Woman, why are you weeping?” Of course, instead of looking at who it was, see assumed it was someone she expected, like a gardener. Then she heard, “Mary!” She turned around and saw the risen Lord.

To me, this is very relatable. I like to make assumptions about how things are going to end, or how things play out. If I was in Mary’s position, I would have thought it was just some random person there too. I think that is where this gets good. She sees Jesus, alive, there as she was crying. When we cry, Jesus probably won’t be there standing in the flesh to comfort us, but someone else will be. Jesus’ love can be felt working through others. Sometimes, we just have to turn around and look. I can be pretty stubborn and keep things all bottled up, afraid to show emotion. I assume that no one will be there when I need them, someone to comfort me if I start to cry. Life isn’t easy. Negativity, death, and injustice surrounds us every day, whether we look for it or not. This question asks us to look for the positive and the comfort within the madness of school, work, home life, or whatever else cause us pain. Turning around to see the good news is what we are called to do, not just settle for what we assume is true.

Charlie Frekot is a sophomore religious studies major. He is also the current Deacon of Spiritual Nurture, President of Lutheran Student Movement, and involved in Pre-Ministry.
**Introduction**

Lent begins with a solemn call to fasting and repentance as we begin our journey to the baptismal waters of Easter. As we hear in today’s readings, now is the acceptable time to return to the Lord. During Lent the people of God will reflect on the meaning of their baptism into Christ’s death and resurrection. The sign of ashes suggests our human mortality and frailty. What seems like an ending is really an invitation to make each day a new beginning, in which we are washed in God’s mercy and forgiveness. With the cross on our brow, we long for the spiritual renewal that flows from the springtime Easter feast to come.

**Prayer of the Day**

Almighty and ever-loving God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever,

Amen

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**Wednesday, February 10th**

**Ash Wednesday**

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 Psalm 51:1-17

2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10

Matthew 6:1-6,16-21

*For this Ash Wednesday, and first day of Lent, please take a look at these verses, and focus on the questions within the text, and what questions you may have of your own. Also, the introduction to the day and prayer of the day are here for more reflection.*

**Saturday, March 26th**

“For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed what can they give in return for their life?”

Mark 8:36-37

WALL STREET. Some love it. Some hate it. Some look to it as a way of making enough money to never have to worry again. Some see it as the cause of so much trouble and anxiety in our country and in our lives. MONEY. We need it. But how much of it do we need? Some go to college so they can get a good paying job and live a comfortable life. Some go because they want to change the world.

What motivates us? What makes us tick? What do we want people to say about us when our time comes to leave this earth? Do we want to be known as one who was shrewd in business and made a healthy profit in all our dealings? Do we want to be known as a person who put the needs of others first and did all they could to improve the situation in life for those who were most vulnerable, most in distress?

In mid-January we saw the largest Powerball jackpot in history. I wish I could say all I thought about doing if I won was helping others in need. Truth is, I did think of those things, but I also thought a house at the beach would be really nice! May God help us to discern what to do with the gifts we have been given. May God guide us to use our time, talents and treasure to best serve all and not just ourselves.

Fr. Dan Powell is in his 4th year as the Catholic Campus Minister at Susquehanna University. He is also the Pastor at St. Pius X Roman Catholic Church in Selinsgrove, Pa.
There are a few cases where Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, comes through in the gospel texts. Even as the gospels were eventually written in Greek, and even as they've been translated for us into English, these Aramaic phrases remain like ancient linguistic gemstones. And one of those phrases is Jesus' dying words, which also happens to be the words of Psalm 22. “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” Who manages to quote the Bible in their dying breath? Jesus does.

These are mysterious and difficult words. How are we to understand that Jesus, whom Christians believe to be God’s son, the second person of the Trinity, could be “forsaken” by God?

There’s a lot at stake in how we understand what’s going on here, and a lot of very bad (and damaging) theology has resulted.

Is God at this moment abandoning Jesus as a “punishment” for humanity’s sins? Is God turning God’s back on his Son at this moment of his deepest need? While many Christians have interpreted this passage in precisely this way, I say NO.

Jesus is experiencing the feeling of forsakenness that we human beings experience at the extremity of pain and abandonment and death. Jesus’ cry is the cry of the Syrian refugee dying alone at sea. Jesus’ cry is the cry of grief of the father of who has lost his son to a heroin overdose. Jesus’ cry the cry of the prisoner alone for all the world. Forsakenness is the sorrow of all humanity in the face of death and heartbreak and loneliness. And Jesus is one of us.

God is not turning away at this moment. If they were the case, the story about Jesus would be bad news, not good. No, God the Father, the one Jesus calls Abba, is right there in vulnerable, suffering love – just as a loving parent does. This is the mystery and wonder of God as revealed in Jesus: a God who suffers with the world, a God who is mysteriously present in the world’s deepest anguish, a God of suffering love.

The Reverend Scott Kershner is Chaplain to Susquehanna University. Having grown up and gone to college in Minnesota, Scott has been hopping between time zones ever since. Seminary first brought him east to Yale Divinity School and his first call to St. Stephen’s Church in Brooklyn, NY. From 2010 to early 2014, Scott served as pastor at Holden Village, a Lutheran retreat center in Washington state. Scott is married to Lori Hayes Kershner, and together they have a son, Soren.

Jesus raises this question in response to an inquiry from a young man of privilege that was seeking guidance about how he might receive heavenly reward. The meaning of this encounter and its implications for Jesus’ conception of self and connection to God is a source of varying theological interpretations.

There is a quality about this exchange that reminds me of Victor Hugo’s novel, Les Miserable. Specifically, it brings to mind the transformational encounter between Jean Valjean and a bishop who shields him from being returned to prison for theft. Valjean is struck by the kindness of the cleric. The incident impacts Valjean and his virtue grows. In part, the importance of the encounter is that Valjean wrestles with the source of the goodness that led to the act of grace by the bishop. For me, the bishop’s act is a reflection of that which is transcendent; of that which reflects the grace of God.

Similarly, I think acts of altruism, where self-interest is overcome by commitment and love of others as reflections of a source of “goodness” that reveals the presence of a benevolent and loving God. History gives us plenty of exemplars. Those who sheltered and saved Jews during World War II; those who helped slaves reach toward freedom and emancipation via the underground railroad in the American Civil War; and the incredible commitment and love of Mother Theresa to the “poorest of the poor” in India are all examples of altruism. Similarly, for me, these are reflections of a loving creator and the embodiment of “good.”

Thursday, February 11th

“Why do you ask me about what is good?”

Matthew 19:17

L. Jay Lemons is a native Nebraskan and has served as Susquehanna University’s 14th president since arriving on campus in January 2001. He and his family reside at Pine Lawn and feel richly blessed to be part of the Susquehanna community.
When a woman anoints Jesus with costly oil his disciples react negatively. They see her actions as wasteful and would have preferred the oil to be sold and the money to be given to the poor. Jesus scolds them, saying what she did was a good deed, because the poor will always be there for them to help, but Jesus will not. Now it is clear that the woman saw an opportunity and took it. She was unaware of the trouble it might cause because she was not focused on the negative possibilities. She was only concerned with blessing and anointing Jesus. In life we must take the opportunities to do good as well. Although we do not have the blessing the women had, Jesus is right to remind us that the poor will always be here. We can help in His memory and name, continuing his good deeds through our hands. During Lent, we can reflect on ourselves fully and also be perceptive to other people needs. We can also be on the lookout for opportunities to help others. Other people will judge us, and everyone thinks they have the best way or the right guidance. However, we should reminds ourselves not to judge those who do good in different ways, but to embrace it and pass it forward.

Christiana Gianetta is a sophomore at Susquehanna University. She majors in History and Religious Studies. She is President of Asian Cultural Association, Vice President of Religious and Spiritual Life Council, member of Zeta Tau Alpha and Lutheran Student Movement.

In Mark 5, the Bible tell us of when Jesus restores a demon-possessed man, raises a dead girl, and heals a sick woman. According to Mark 5:3, the demon possessed man “lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain.” When Jesus sees this man, he asks the question, “What is your name?”

The man said his name was Legion. If Jesus asked you for your name, what would you respond with? I know my answer. Actually, my answer could potentially be the same as yours;

Child of the one true King.

The question “What is your name?” reminds me of a Matthew West song called “Hello my name is.” If you have never heard the song, I would encourage you to listen to it, but this is the chorus:

Hello, my name is child of the one true King
I’ve been saved, I’ve been changed, I have been set free
“Amazing grace” is the song I sing
Hello, my name is child of the one true King

Thanks to God’s amazing sacrifice and gift for each and every one of us, we can call ourselves children of God. With that knowledge we are all sisters and brothers in Christ. When Jesus asks in Matthew 12:48, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” we can say with confidence that if we do our best to do the will of God, we are all brothers and sisters with Jesus and with each other.

What have you done today as a child of God?
How have you helped your brothers and sisters?

Janelle Geist ('14) is currently pursuing her PhD in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. She served as the Deacon of Service for two years during her time at Susquehanna.
Several years ago this text was the driving words of a building initiative in my congregation as we adapted the site and made the structure accessible. We spent time in conversations about welcoming and hospitality and what it means to include and make a place for all people. It seems that this verse is apropos as a driver in building community today as we find ways to discuss the continuing racism that runs both on and under the surface of our communities and nation and as we struggle with the broader sense of our humanity whether that be conversations of gender, religious tolerance, or compassion for refugees. What does it mean for Jesus to say God’s house shall be a house of prayer for all nations? Is it about having a voice, is it about God’s listening ear, is it about the reconciliation and wholeness and restoration that we as Christians see at the heart of the gospel message?

Prayers are expressions of needs or exclamations of joy or groans of sorrow. They are shared with one who listens and understands; who empathizes and stands alongside another. Could it be that we are called to be a house of prayer—ones who listen and seek to understand; ones who are open to another perspective and another story that is different than our own? Could it be that even shared languages of faith and of things unknown and beyond could help us listen for God’s voice?

How can each of us seek after such a place, such a moment of grace-filled listening where our prayers rise as incense, where indeed all are invited and all are welcome so that the deepest needs and deepest joys might find expression, even as God has already made a place for all peoples.

Wednesday, March 23rd

My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations.”
Mark 11:17

Rev. Robert Doll ’88 is the pastor of Sharon Lutheran Church, Selinsgrove and serves as the Dean of the Middlecreek Conference of the Upper Susquehanna Synod. He is married to Dawn (Lejda) Doll ’88 and has three daughters: Rebekah ’13, Victoria ’17, and Hannah.

Saturday, February 13th

Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected?"
Mark 9:12

What does this verse mean to me? It’s the second part of the verse that really affects me. “Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected?” Growing up in the church, we would talk every Easter season about the crucifixion of Christ. It didn’t really hit me until I came to college what the whole story really meant. Peter being a friend and follower of Jesus, rejected Him three times. Back when I was little I was angry with him for doing so. But now I see why he did it… He was scared. Although he loved Jesus, Peter would have died for saying he loved him, He was afraid to die, but so was Christ. He begged and pleaded with God to not let this be the way, but sometimes God’s answer is no.

It isn’t just Peter’s actions that mean so much to me, but it is the suffering of Christ, and why He did it. Christ loves each and every one of us; the sinners, the evil doers, the liars and cheaters so much that He was willing to die for us before we were even born. He died so that we could have a better life while we reject him like Peter because we don’t have the courage to stand up to a society that doesn’t believe and be different like Jesus was different. He was given vinegar instead of water, pierced at the side, given a crown of thorns that added to the humiliation and the pain He was enduring. Why would anyone go through all of this, for me? I’m just a girl from a small town that no one really knows, and not in a million years would I think I’m that special to have someone die for me who I’ve never met in person. But He did, and did so out of love. It was the only way to give me hope of a better life after I die, to then be able to be reunited in Heaven with my Lord and Savior. To give me the chance to say thank you while looking into His face.

It is by this message that I am challenged to live like Jesus, to live my life for Jesus, and to thank Him every day for what He did for me.

Sarah Hixson is a sophomore Art History major, with a Museum Studies and Studio Art double minor. She is also the Worship Leader and Large Group Coordinator for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, a member of Gospel Choir, and a sister of Sigma Alpha Iota; a professional, international music fraternity for women.
**Sunday, February 14th**

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*For this devotional, Sundays will have the daily readings from the Revised Standard Lectionary, the introduction to the day, and the prayer of the day. I invite you to reflect on the RSL that you will encounter on Sunday Worship.*

**Introduction**

These forty days called Lent are like no other. It is our opportune time to return to the God who rescues; to receive the gifts of God’s grace; to believe with the heart and confess with the mouth the wonder of God’s love in Jesus; and to resist temptation at every turn. This is no small pilgrimage on which we have just embarked. It is a struggle Jesus knew. It is a struggle Jesus shares. The nearness of the Lord, in bread and wine, water and word, will uphold and sustain us.

**Prayer of the Day**

Lord God, our strength, the struggle between good and evil rages between us, and the devil and all the forces that defy you tempt us with empty promises. Keep us steadfast in your word, and when we fall, raise us again and restore us through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

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**Tuesday, March 22nd**

“Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand?”

Mark 4:21

Today’s “Jesus question” challenges us to acknowledge ourselves as God’s lamps—created to be on the lampstand to shine. Each of us was created with a purpose and blessed with unique and beautiful talents and skills. We were made to be shared with the rest of God’s Creation! Often we shirk away from the amazing creations that we are—avoiding our calling by allowing fear and social pressures to keep us from being those lamps.

Take time today to read the excerpt below and reflect on yourself as God’s lamp. Are you allowing yourself to shine out into the world? Or are parts of your light covered by a basket? What makes up your lamp—are you brass or plastic? Do you sparkle or have blobs of “lava”? Who has God created you to be in this world and how can you be allowing that to shine through you more each day?


"...Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

Each of us is fearfully and wonderfully created by the God of love. May you allow that powerful creation to resonate and shine within and through you and into the world. God Bless.

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Katie McCoy ’15 is a middle school vocal music teacher in Southern Maryland. While at SU, she studied music education and was active in religious life. She served as the Deacon of Worship and then the Deacon of Spiritual Nurture, as well as participating in LSM and Tuesday Night Watch.
Monday, March 21st

“A Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and take your mat and walk?’”
Mark 2:8-10

In the story in the second gospel of Mark, Jesus is teaching to a crowd of people in the town of Capernaum. A paralyzed man is brought to Jesus, but because the crowd is too thick they had to dig a hole in the roof and lower the mat down to where Jesus was. Jesus then proceeded to forgive the sins of the man. Some who were there criticized Jesus, asking him how he could forgive sin when only God could do such a thing. Jesus responds to this criticism by asking: “Which is easier to say to paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and take your mat and walk?’”

This question seems, at first glance, simple. Of course it would be easier to tell this man that his sins are forgiven than to ask him to get up because he is physically incapable of walking. You could not ask someone to do something that they cannot do. But then, right after this question is asked, Jesus says to the paralytic to get up, take his mat and go, and indeed, he does just this.

With this knowledge in mind, the question suddenly becomes more complex. Now, it is no longer impossible for the paralyzed man to walk, so what is easier to say, then: ‘your sins are forgiven’ or ‘Stand up and take your mat and walk?’ I think that Jesus is trying to point out that the average person has more difficulty with the former than with the latter. In the passage, people in the crowd assert that only God can forgive sins. But, by asserting that, are these men also saying that it is impossible to forgive each other’s wrongdoing in our own lives?

When we quarrel with others or when someone does wrong by us, the instinct is to deny that person. So, sometimes it is easier to tell someone to do something impossible rather than to forgive them of that transgression. In fact, isn’t asking someone to be perfect, to never transgress against you, expecting someone’s best behavior at all times, akin to asking a paralyzed person to walk? They are both impossible demands and by not forgiving others for being human, we are continuing to hold everyone to impossible standards of perfection. In this passage, Jesus reminds us that forgiving others the way God forgives us is not as hard as it might seem.

Alyssa Coleman is a junior Biology-Creative Writing double major. She is the Membership Liaison for Lutheran Student Movement as well as a member of the Improv Troupe on campus. She wishes the best for everyone this Lenten season and to never forget that you are always loved.

Monday, February 15th

“How many loaves have you? Go and see.”
Mark 6:30-44

There are times when life seems to ask us for things we don’t have. Times when it is easy for us to relate to the worn out apostles we find in this passage. The apostles here have returned to Jesus after a time of traveling, a series of mission trips where they shared Jesus’ teachings, and they are tired. They are frazzled, spent, worn out, and just when they think they’re going to get a break, this big noisy crowd shows up.

To Jesus, these people are like sheep without a shepherd, in need of compassion, teaching, and nourishment.

To the apostles, these people are a headache. Or they would be to me, I think, if I were in their sandals. When Jesus says, “You feed them,” he is actually asking the apostles for two things that they don’t have: food enough for 5,000 families, yes, but also compassion. “You feed them,” he says, and he invites the apostles to see these people as he sees them.

Their brusque response: “Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread?” Do you hear some sarcasm there? Some whininess? Some frustration? I do. It seems like Jesus is asking for the impossible. But look at his next question: “How many loaves have you? Go and see.” When the apostles place what little they have in Jesus’ hands, that little bit becomes much more than sufficient: with just five loaves and two fish Jesus equips the apostles with more than enough to feed those 5,000 families.

Where in your life do you feel like Jesus is asking you for things you don’t have? Are you lacking energy? Are you lacking compassion for others? “How many loaves have you?”

In your prayers today, bring what you have to Jesus.

Ryan Rickrode ’11 studied creative writing and religion at Susquehanna, then headed west to the University of Montana to earn his MFA in creative writing. He now works for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, supporting the students involved in SU’s InterVarsity chapter, and also serves as an adjunct professor in SU’s English and Creative Writing Department.
Tuesday, February 16th

“Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?”

Luke 15:4

In this verse, God takes the form of our shepherd and we, his people, are the sheep. I always found it interesting how God uses the comparison of us to sheep and he to a shepherd. A shepherd is obviously a sheepherder, however; shepherd in the verb sense means to guide or direct in a particular direction. Similarly, God guides and directs us in a particular direction. Sometimes the path is not always known or clear to us but always clear to him. I think we are naïve in our direction just like how sheep are not always sure where they are going. They rely on the shepherd to guide them.

In this passage particularly, Jesus is saying that if one of God’s sheep (one of his people) has lost his way, God will not rest until He finds them. He loves us so much, so deeply, so profoundly, that we can never wander too far out of his reach. He is always there to guide us and direct us. He will always meet us in our times of sorrow; always find us when we may be lost. A beautiful verse which served as the theme of a servant trip I went on to Costa Rica comes from Romans 8:39 saying, “nada podrá jamás separarnos del amor de Dios.” In English, it translates to “nothing can separate you from the love of God”. It really is something I hold dear to me when I feel I’ve messed up or done something unforgivable. Nothing in the world, nothing you could ever do could bring you further or closer to God. You are given this undeserved, unimaginable gift of grace. It is nothing you earn, and there is nothing you can ever do to deserve it. God’s love is so gigantic and amazing and nothing can ever separate you from it.

Maeve Schurz is a Sophomore Religious Studies major and Psychology minor. She serves this year as the Student Assistant to the Chaplain. She is the Public Relations Chair for Dance Corps, Vice President of the Pre-Ministry group and a member of Lutheran Student Movement and Kappa Delta Sorority.

Sunday, March 20th

Introduction

The voice of the suffering savior, Jesus, can be heard in the prophet Isaiah’s words and the pleading of the psalm. We are invited into the agony of our Lord in the extended reading of the story of Jesus’ passion. In the second reading, we who have put on Christ in holy baptism are urged to let the mind of Christ be our own. Lent leads us to this holy moment. Embrace it.

Prayer of the Day

O God of Mercy and Might, in the mystery of the passion of your Son you offer your infinite life to the world. Gather us around the cross of Christ, and preserve us until the resurrection, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen
The Contours released their hit single "Do you love me" long before I was born, but the catchy tune wedged itself into my memory well enough to be the first thing that came to mind when I read John 21:15-18. Presumably, Jesus had learned the mashed potato in the three days before resurrection and decided to come back simply to get down, but John the disciple tells the story a little bit differently. Instead of asking Simon Peter if he loved him now that he could dance, Jesus asks him to go and feed his lambs. Other than offering a beautiful opportunity for a cover album, this passage tells us a lot. Why does Jesus have to keep telling Simon Peter the same thing over and over? What is so important, and what is it that Simon Peter was missing?

I think the answer comes earlier in John, in chapter 10. In chapter 10, Jesus spends a lot of time talking about sheep. This seems like pretty simple stuff, then all the sudden in verse 32 people are picking up stones and trying to kill Jesus. If you thought the idea of Jesus doing the mashed potato was ridiculous, just imagine somebody being stoned for talking about sheep. Jesus is not being threatened because he made controversial statements about sheep, it's because he made controversial statements about our relationship with God. When Jesus asks Simon Peter to feed his sheep he's asking him to redefine his relationship with the people around him. As we prepare our hearts for Lent, let's prepare our hearts for the radical reformation Jesus offers us through his discussion of sheep, and our proclamation of love. Let us take on feeding lambs like Simon Peter, and let us never stopping looking for a new way to understand the complex messages hidden in discussions about sheep.

Wesley McDonald is a Junior International Studies major. He is currently studying abroad in Amman Jordan where he hopes to learn about what makes hummus so delicious, learn arabic, and take a biblical tour of the area. While at SU Wesley enjoys pushing the limits on how many activities he can get involved in and being the residential expert on apples.

This verse discusses a conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees. Jesus has just returned from feeding the four thousand, and the Pharisees begin to argue and attack Jesus. Seemingly frustrated with the conversation, Jesus asks, "Why does this generation ask for a sign?" He then goes on to say, “Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation.” I think this is where the answer lies. Our generation, similar it seems to that of the Pharisees, lives in a time of privilege. Often times much of what we have is given to us, but Jesus wants us to search for the answers we seek rather than ask for them to be given to us. Preceding this interaction, Jesus does exactly what the Pharisees are asking for, and performs a miracle by feeding four thousand with only seven loaves of bread, but because the Pharisees do not actively search for God on Earth, they miss the sign, and end up asking again and again. I think we can learn from this, and instead of getting lost in the asking as the Pharisees, may we instead be consumed with the search. May we follow Christ, wherever that may lead us, ever mindful of signs of God’s love that will inevitably follow.

Wednesday, February 17th

"Why does this generation ask for a sign?"  
Mark 8:11

Darren Hamric is a sophomore Religious Studies major from Lancaster, PA. He is a transfer student, so this is his first full year here at Susquehanna. He is a member of Alpha Phi Omega and Lutheran Student Movement.
This verse drew me in because I looked at it and immediately felt like God was talking to me. I’ve always struggled with my faith- not in the sense of having it, but in the sense of how much I have. On New Year’s Eve, I brought in the year at my best friend’s church, as I’ve done for the past few years. The main point of the sermon was to walk by faith in 2016 and I knew it was something I wanted to try and start applying in my everyday life in order to build my faith. As a senior in college, there’s a lot about the future that I don’t know, and it’s scary. I don’t know if I’ll get any of the jobs I’m applying to, which friends I’ll actually stay in contact with after graduation, how I’ll get the money to pay off my student loans, or even if I’m ready for the real world. What I do know is that I’m going to walk by faith this year, even if I am scared. So far, He’s shown me the sermon on New Year’s Eve about walking by faith and now this verse in Matthew, which wants me to confront my fears. When I walk by faith, I’m not going to be scared. There’s nothing to be scared of when I know that He’s looking out for and guiding me through. That is faith.

Jelani Spencer-Joe is a senior, Public Relations major. When she isn’t on social media or applying for post-grad jobs, she’s an active member on campus. She’s involved in SGA as the Diversity Liaison, a Global Ambassador, mentor, and member of Lutheran Student Movement, the Black Student Union, and various other clubs.

When Abraham Lincoln proclaimed, “A house divided against itself cannot stand,” in 1858 he borrowed a phrase attributed to man who lived nearly 2000 years earlier and over 5000 miles away. That saying, credited to Jesus of Nazareth, is just as relevant today as it was 150 years ago and even 1800 years before that.

Today our world is still divided, and consequently it is still tumultuous and unstable. Millions of refugees are fleeing civil war in Syria, while the Islamic State continues to spread fear and hate in the same region. Domestic terrorism continues to haunt the United States and other nations across the world.

Yet, many people stand fast to their convictions that we must continue to fight violence with more violence. Multiple presidential candidates have called for the destruction of ISIS, even if it means the death of nonmilitants. Weaponized drones continue to receive widespread support in the United States despite the fact that reports indicate they have likely killed thousands of civilians in recent years.

Perhaps it is time that we, as a society, recognize the power of the words Jesus said two millennia ago, which were echoed by Lincoln a century-and-a-half ago. Two verses earlier in Mark, Jesus, after being accused of using the power of demons to drive out demons, challenges the logic of his accusers. He says, “How can Satan cast out Satan?”

To me, this quote questions the existence of necessary evils. Our culture often justifies the idea that sometimes we must do whatever it takes to defeat evil. However, I think Jesus would point to the evil that can be revealed within us when this ideology is embraced. Perhaps it is time that we stop trying to defeat our enemies and instead embrace their humanity.

Justus Sturtevant is a junior economics and journalism major. He writes for the Crusader student newspaper and has served on the executive board of the Lutheran Student Movement at Susquehanna.
The waves are crashing into your boat as it violently rocks back and forth; the dark clouds billow overhead threatening your ultimate destruction. You glance sideways and see Jesus, the one you left everything for, asleep. You’re convinced that the one you have come to trust to guide you has failed you in your greatest time of need. He obviously does not see that you are about to face your death. Fear bubbles within your chest. But then Jesus awakes and rebukes you for your lack of faith before silencing the storm. The one who led you into the boat, the one who was asleep when everything took a vicious turn, questions your trust in him. Did you so soon forget that you have seen him heal many, make the paralyzed walk, and even cast out demons?

When life seems to come crashing down do we forget, doubt even, the fortitude of blessings we have been given by grace? Are we so caught up watching the waves crash in that we see nothing but our sickness, failure, rejection, loneliness, and pain? It’s so easy to only see the destruction of the present time, to feel as if God is asleep on us in our deepest time of need. But, has God not come through for us before? Have we not been sick and then made well? Hurt and then healed? Hungry and then fed? Lonely and then comforted? Our Creator loves us beyond measure. Even in what feels like his absence, he is there with us in the storm; all Jesus asks of us is our faith. How amazing is it that we can sit unafraid, our soul at peace, in our storm of trouble—trusting that we are not alone and that this too will pass?

Alexis Bishop is a sophomore Political Science and Creative Writing major with an Honors minor from Northern New Jersey. She is a small group leader of SU’s Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, has an assistantship with Brent Papson in which she work with the SU Leadership Passport (SULP) program, and a member of Alpha Phi Omega.

Friday, February 19th

“Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his property, without first tying up the strong man?”
Mark 12:29

Confusion. Addiction. Loneliness. Unloved. You can’t do anything. These are lies and lifestyles that we constantly feed into. And here’s the thing: Jesus did not come and die so that we would continue to live in these patterns. He did not rise from the dead so that we would continue to think negatively of ourselves and the world around. He came so that we would find Him and know that He dwells in us and loves us so much. Jesus is stronger than the strong man that binds us to these lies, sins, and thought patterns. That man is Satan. Satan strives to pull us away from the Lord. We need to keep pursuing Him, even when it is difficult. Satan’s power on this Earth began to shake when Jesus was born, and Satan worked hard to try and make Jesus’ life and teachings as difficult as possible. After being baptized, Jesus was tempted in the garden by Satan. Through Jesus’ power, knowledge, and love for God, His father, He was able to overcome those temptations and walk out victorious. Jesus overcame Satan’s most powerful weapon, death, when He rose from the grave three days later. Let us remember that this same power lives in us, and Jesus has the power and desire to bind up Satan’s power in our lives, as long as we keep pursuing and running to Him. He wants nothing more than for us to run into His arms.

Chloe Johnson is a senior Early Childhood Education major with a Religion and Honors minor from Little Silver, NJ. On campus she is involved with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and Alpha Phi Omega. Next year Chloe will be going on the World Race, which is an 11 month mission trip to 11 different countries, and she cannot wait!
In our lives many times we wait for the right moment before we do something. Often we work through every possible thought before making a decision. Sometimes we do this and things work out for the best but other times things do not go as planned. Analysis Paralysis is the name given to the condition when a person is unable to make a decision because they are constantly analyzing and revising their plan instead of implementing a decision. This kind of decision making often results in us making the wrong choice or making the right choice at a time that is too late for the decision to be effective.

In this verse Jesus says “Look the fields are ripe for the harvest.” He is telling the disciples to go out and do the harvesting. Jesus is looking for his disciples to take action and to go out and harvest rather than wait. If we apply this verse to our everyday lives, we can see that Jesus is not saying to wait and to be weighed down by analyzing every solution but to make a plan and enact that plan. Jesus can provide a foundation and the words but it is up to us to do the work.

In this passage, Jesus is speaking about judging others, which is a tendency inherent to human nature and is often unavoidable. It is clear that the passage does not refer to simple judging, however, but instead refers to looking unfavorably on the character and actions of other people such that rash and unloving judgements are made. Jesus asks us to consider how we can judge others when we are blind to our own faults. He implores us to look inward and examine our faults, character, and actions before judging and correcting the faults of someone else.

In Siddhartha, Hermann Hesse stated, “It is not for me to judge another man’s life. I must judge, I must choose, I must spurn, purely for myself. For myself, alone.” I think this quote exemplifies the meaning of the passage from Matthew. It is human nature to judge others but perhaps it is to our benefit to think about our own faults before we try to fix someone else’s.

Rachel Snyder is a junior ecology major and music minor at Susquehanna University. She is the Deacon of Social and Environmental Justice and an active member of Lutheran Student Movement.
When attending a wedding and the banquet that follows, the transformation of water into wine is probably not what many would expect. Then again, Jesus was full of the unexpected.

Reading about Jesus, it becomes clear that He has an enormous capacity to crush the impossible. Similarly, it becomes clear that Jesus questions much like we mortals question. In this scripture, Jesus asks Mary why she involves Him when the wine has run out at the banquet. Neither the question nor the situation is earth shattering but the concept of Jesus questioning the situation may be surprising to many.

Rather than surprising, I find great comfort in the idea that Jesus has questions. It makes Jesus more approachable. It makes Him more like you and me. The thing is, we all have questions. We question what is best for us, for our families, we question which way is the right way, we question our current situation and so much more. Jesus, too, questioned.

To know that He who died for my sins, The One chosen by God to die on the cross, was just a little bit like me gives me great comfort and relief. When my time comes, I know that Christ knows what it is like to be human. He knows what it is like to be like me.

Troy Spencer is a sophomore religious studies major. On campus he is active in Lutheran Student Movement and Alpha Phi Omega. He is from Hummelstown, PA, where he lives with his mom, dad, two sisters, and two brothers.
Monday, February 22nd

“Why do you call me good?” Mark 10:18
“Why do you think evil in your hearts?” Matthew 9:4

I believe that we consider Jesus good because we know that we are not. “Why do you think evil in your hearts?” Matthew 9:4. To me this question is like asking a dog why it ate the treat laid out in front of him. As imperfect mortals, it is impossible to be pure without God’s guiding hand. We seek out the tangible proof of everything, and in doing so, we lose faith along the way.

We are not of pure mind, we are all sinners, and therefore often house evil and fear in our hearts. This is why God placed Jesus on the Earth. Unlike us, he has no evil in his heart. He is the prime example of selflessness and the main provider of God’s eternal love. Nevertheless, just because we can never be as good as Jesus, and we can never fully rid ourselves of the evil within, does not mean we cannot strive to be one of God’s perfect messengers and examples of His glorious love.

Monday, March 14th

“If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?” John 3:12

Over the course of my education, I’ve learned that most subjects are cumulative – new material requires understanding of the old material. Lessons from kindergarten are the building blocks to lessons taught in high school. We get it.

When Nicodemus goes to Jesus one night, he asks how someone can be reborn after growing old. From a biological standpoint, such a phenomenon is impossible. Any literal interpretation is simply weird. Jesus is referencing a spiritual rebirth through what we recognize as baptism. He explains this renewal using a metaphor about wind (John 3:8), something we have all felt and experienced. This metaphor is a sort of building block; a foundation to a more abstract concept. “We speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen…If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?” (John 3:11-12). The earthly things are wind and water, and the heavenly things are the Holy Spirit and life through Jesus, respectively.

Some of us were baptized as infants. Some were baptized as adults. Some are awaiting baptism. Regardless of where we are in this symbol of faith, it is a very abstract idea to understand. It is like calculus. Jesus treats spiritual rebirth as a cumulative subject, and he uses a building block to explain such a non-concrete notion.

Sometimes the more complicated material is some of the most beautiful. Knowing that we are able to be reborn through water, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus’ resurrection is perhaps the most beautiful aspect of our faith. May it serve as a reminder to us during this Lenten season to keep learning.

Sarah Eckersley is a first year Biology major with a Psychology minor. She is involved in multiple campus clubs/activities such as dance, LSM, Tuesday Night Watch, Hand bells, multiple choirs, and People Serving People and other service clubs.

Victoria Hogan is a junior music major, chemistry minor, and official flip-flopper of academic pursuits, having recently been a biochemistry major and music minor. She enjoys drawing, serving others, violining, and making up words.
**Sunday, March 13th**

**Introduction**

The Lord our God makes all things new. In the first reading God promises it. In the gospel Mary anticipates it, anointing Jesus’ feet with costly perfume in preparation for the day of his burial. In the second reading we recall the transformation of Saul, the persecutor, into Paul, the apostle. In baptism, God’s new person (you!) rises daily from the deadly mire of trespasses and sins.

**Prayer of the Day**

Creator God, you prepare a new way in the wilderness, and your grace waters our deserts. Open our hearts to be transformed by the new thing you are doing, that our lives may proclaim the extravagance of your love given to all through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. One God, now and forever.

Amen.

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**Daily Scriptures**

- Isaiah 43:16-21
- Psalm 126
- Philippians 3:4b-14
- John 12:18

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**Tuesday, February 23rd**

“*What were you arguing about along the way?*”

Mark 9:33

The disciples were united by desires to follow Jesus and participate in the kingdom of God, but even communities centered on Christ have their tensions. This is a lesson many of us have learned. Perhaps, like me, you also learned it at Susquehanna! Feelings get hurt. Differences emerge. Tiredness and irritability set in. Conflict erupts.

This happens regularly in relatively comfortable, low-risk environments. Imagine the chaotic potential underlying the intense journey of the disciples! Their minds and hearts were overloaded with experiences of God. They had miracles to process and puzzling teachings to contemplate. In this chapter alone, some of them witnessed the Transfiguration, all saw Jesus cast out a spirit, and all heard Jesus speak mysteriously on betrayal, death, and resurrection. Can we be surprised that the overwhelmed, exhausted disciples snapped at each other as they traveled?

I'm sympathetic to their inclination, and I think Jesus is too. Rather than condemning them, he simply reoriented them by teaching truth: “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all” (9:35).

Though there are conflicts into which God calls us, the disciples' quarrel clearly didn't qualify. Their silence signaled an awareness of that. When we find ourselves in arguments blossoming out of ego (or maybe out of too much walking and not enough alone time), we must allow ourselves to be reoriented by Jesus. Let's look expectantly for that gift. Let's seek out reminders of the nature of the kingdom and the nature of the God we follow.

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Megan McDermott graduated in 2014 with a degree in Creative Writing and Religious Studies. Following graduation, she participated in Saint Hilda's House, an intentional Christian community in New Haven, CT, and interned at a soup kitchen. She is now in her first year of study at Yale Divinity School, where she is undertaking a Master's of Divinity degree with a diploma in Anglican Studies.
The apostle often given credit for this gospel, Matthew, was a tax collector. In the book of Matthew, Jesus’ teachings are intertwined with what it means to be a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. As Christians, Jesus teaches us to love at all costs. Matthew, a tax collector himself, dropped his money bags and followed Jesus as one of The Twelve. What might be the cost to you to drop what you are holding on in order to love with abandon?

On our campus, and with our growing population in the world, we are surrounded by increasing diversity. At SU, we have different states, countries, and religions represented. Everyone comes from somewhere different, and yet we are called by Jesus, the King of the Universe, to love one another as brothers and sisters. This means forgetting what wrongs have been committed, what stereotypes have been created, or reaching out to those you may want to avoid, and to instead love.

So the cost for living and loving as such here and now? The cost might be great in our culture. Popularly (just put yourself in Matthew’s sandals), time (in between your classes and fifteen clubs), money (she can get a Guest Meal from someone else). To those whom you give love and kindness, they will be thankful and will give all the more.

God did not put us in this location (Acts 17:26-27) to love our sports team/club/best friend only. As Christians, we are on a specific mission: Show those around you the love of Christ so that they will go and do the same. Our Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), given to us by the Messiah, does not discriminate based on race, religion, class, team, major. We are called to be lights, and with Christ living in our hearts, we have a great responsibility to those around us to shine that light.

Challenge yourself today. Allow the Maker of the Heaven to love through you, even when it’s difficult, so that this campus might catch a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven through your love. Be encouraged as you pictured Jesus Christ loving over the ones who nailed his hands to the Cross. Go and do.

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Wednesday, February 24th

“For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?”
Matthew 5:46-47

Elizabeth (Bizzy) Morrell is an avid coffee drinker, loves to explore new activities, books, and music, and is always up for an adventure. She is a senior marketing major and a sister of Alpha Delta Pi from Scarborough, Maine. Bizzy can often be found working in “Deg,” saying hello to everyone, or singing worship as part of the SU InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

Saturday, March 12th

“This past winter, I went on my GO trip to Israel. While we were staying in the Galilee region, we went to the sight where Jesus gave his sermon on the Mount, and we did a text study focusing on the beatitudes and the above verses.

Worry is a daily activity that most people partake in. I know that I worry way too much; from my classes, to how I look, and about my future. I could go on for a while. As we read through the verses on top of the mountain, overlooking the Sea of Galilee, I couldn’t help but feel as if everything was going to be okay. My favorite line in these few verses, is when Jesus asks, “Are you not of more value than they?” We worry about what we are going to wear or what we are going to eat, but what Jesus is saying that God will sustain us, as we are of so much value to Him. We spend a lot of time worrying. In the last verse, Jesus, to me, is asking why we do this. Why do spend so much time worrying, because we really don’t get anything out of it. We don’t add any time, we waste it. That lost time, could be used for so much more, like doing God’s work.

There is a sense of comfort in these verses. I feel like they give of a reason to take a minute to breathe and not worry. We will probably never not worry, and that’s okay. It’s a normal human feeling, but we shouldn’t let our worries control ourselves. I want to challenge you that we are worrying, to take a moment, like I did on that mountain. Step outside and just take in the surroundings. To look and listen to the birds above and know that they are being cared for by God and that you are too. That we are in the hands of God and everything is going to be okay.

Allison Graybill is sophomore Chemistry major. She is the President of the Religious and Spiritual Life Council (RSLC) as well as the Worship Coordinator of Lutheran Student Movement (LSM).
The verse I chose is Matthew 16:26 and it reads “For what will it profit them if they fain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?” What I believe is being conveyed in this statement is what comes out of living your life for just worldly possessions and ideas will not fulfill your happiness. Only what is right, in this sense what God wants of you will. People go all their lives striving for success and worldly pleasures because that is what society leans towards. However, it is truly satisfying when we look into our soul and realize that this world is not our goal. Our goal is to reach heaven, and focusing on this world is not what God wants us to do. He knows that our souls yearn for far more fulfilling things that the world cannot produce. So this verse proclaims that we live our life for not our own on this Earth, but for our Lord.

Stephen Baier is currently a sophomore and an Accounting major with an Economics minor. He is involved with the Catholic Campus Ministries and this past winter break he went to the Dominican Republic on a Mission Trip.

Thursday, February 25th

“The parable of the sower, which begins the fourth chapter of Mark, is one of the few parables fully explained by Jesus. We are told a story of a farmer whose seeds are scattered, and the places that they fall will decide their fate. When the disciples ask Jesus, essentially, “What’s with the parables?” His response is to tell them that they are receiving the Kingdom of God and ask them the question, “Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables?” The parable of the sower is explained for us: the seeds are the Word, and the locations that they fall upon are the people who will receive the Word. Some will fall to temptations, some to the worries of life, but some will grow and be fruitful. So this one is pretty cut and dry; we, as God’s people, are to attempt to make ourselves to be fertile soil for God to act through. But what about the other parables, what are we to do about those which are not clarified by Jesus? To me, the question is answered previously in the same chapter of Mark. Before asking this question, Jesus says that He teaches in parables so that “they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!” To me the reason we are given these parables is so that we can constantly apply the Gospels to our own ever-changing lives, so that when relationships are on the rocks, or we are tempted by a pesky sin, or in my case organic chemistry really makes you doubt your will to keep going, Christ’s teachings comfort us in each situation. So how are we to strive to be fertile soil for God’s Word? We apply our own understanding of the parables that Jesus taught us to our own lives, and watch the seeds grow.

Jonah Winakor is a sophomore biology major and honors minor, looking to go into the medical field. He is also the Deacon of Worship serving the university’s Chaplains office, and part of several clubs and organizations on campus including History Club and the Pre-Health Club.
**Friday, February 26th**

"Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?"

Mark 8:17-19

Do you remember the time we spent the night walking through the graveyard and then laid on the soccer field watching the stars twinkle off in the distance? Do you remember the time we went hiking and it took us two hours to find our way back to the path? Do you remember the time we… (fill in the blank with your own stories)..? It's a common conversation starter with friends and family as you sit reminiscing about the glorious or the not so glorious past events, but for the disciples and Jesus the question of remembrance is of a more incredulous tone. Do you not remember?

But do we remember the miracles that have happened around us? In 2015 alone, we re-engineered the polio virus to treat cancer, created a method of brain to brain communication, used 3D printing medically, had 4 new elements join the periodic table, discovered a new planet in the solar system beyond Pluto, grew human vocal cords and contracting muscles from scratch, discovered more than 200 new species of plants and animals in the Himalayas, discovered evidence of water on Mars, a space probe reached Pluto and discovered geological features, a new vaccine was created to block HIV, and Audi invented an E-diesel fuel among many other things. So my challenge for you this Lenten season is to remember more of the miracles happening around you every day that point to the abundance of God.

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Tori Doll is a junior biochemistry major with a music performance minor. She is a part of RSJC and Lutheran Student Movement as well as a member of the Cross Country and Track and Field teams. She is also a member of the University Choir and Sigma Alpha Iota.

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**Thursday, March 10th**

Have you never read the scripture, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this is the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes’?

Mark 12:10

All of us have reached a point in our life where we have felt rejected. It has happened to each and every one of us – perhaps you were not accepted for something you applied for, yet you were so confident about it; perhaps you were the one in your friend group that always felt excluded; or maybe you were dismissed and sometimes put aside by others because of your passions and interests.

We have all been discouraged and hurt by these feelings of rejection. However, this piece of scripture reminds you that no matter how many times you are rejected by others, you will end up where you are meant to go. In the eyes of God, you are meant to serve an important role in this world. Of course, you will encounter many people and go through many places that turn you away, but these are only meant to strengthen you so that you may hold up anything and anyone around you when you are called upon by God to do so.

In the eyes of our Lord, we are wonderful and have great potential. When we feel rejected, we should remind ourselves that He has great plans in store for us. The Lord will never reject us, as long as we never reject Him. It is by his hand that we are able to become such supportive, powerful, and important people in this world. It just shows you that even if you feel rejected by others, and you have to stand alone with God, He will undoubtedly give you all the power you need to support yourself as well as those around you.

Alyssa Miville is a freshman with a major in Psychology. She is actively involved in many clubs on campus, including the Wellness Club, Circle K, Habitat for Humanity, and Student Activities Committee. She served on the Religious and Spiritual Life Council and is currently secretary of Lutheran Student Movement.
In Mark, through a series of cryptic and oft-quoted sayings, Jesus is addressing issues about teaching, healing, and the very real bickering among the disciples that has just taken place over who is the greatest among them. Jesus lifts up the importance of the faith of a child, and gives a long list of offending body parts that should be cast away, cut or plucked, lest they interfere with the faith of any child of God. Conjuring these options is rather vivid, but the gruesomeness of the images stresses the danger of infighting and power struggles. Then, in a more nuanced shift, the chapter culminates with some words about salt. Salt? Yes, salt. Okay, salt is good. I get that. It brings out the flavor of food, heightens my sensation of taste. Somehow the vegetables have more zip, I can taste the egginess of the egg, oh, and when I make bread, it brings out the taste of the molasses and honey and floury yeasty goodness. When salt is missing, the difference is palpable: taste is just a slumbering whisper of what it could be. But if salt loses its own saltiness, it must lose its very essence. How can you season it? Jesus, I don’t know.

And then he admonishes his disciples: have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another. Oh, right: don’t even go to the place of offending eye or limb. Live the salt of your essence within yourself. Cultivate that kingdom of God within and live a life of peace with each other.

Lori Hayes Kershner is an artist, wife, mother, and frequent baker of the communion loaf for Sunday morning worship at the university chapel. She lives in the Chaplain’s residence with her husband Scott and their son Soren.

Lent is the season of repentance. This last word can be somewhat unsettling characterized as it is by the idea that the church is for souls that need saving from the fiery furnaces of hell. But this is not (thank God) the divine mission of the church. Nor is the church one of personal fulfillment, in which repentance would be based in personal failures: our lack of meeting certain goals, being a “good” person, living a life of “well-being.”

Repentance, like church, is following Jesus as a way of life. As the church, as persons who take his message to heart, who respond to it, you are his disciples. Jesus charges followers in this way, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news” (Mark 1:15). The Greek for “repent” is metanoia, which means to “turn around.” But turn around from what?

In light of today’s question from Jesus, “The wedding guests cannot fast/mourn while the bridegroom is with them, can they?” we are to turn around from whatever way of life that keeps us from following Jesus in his mission to reconcile all things to our Heavenly Father. Whatever keeps us from seeing our rootedness to the land, the water, the skies, to plants and other animals, to our community, to all persons, to our identity as children of God. Whatever keeps us from doing the work of being in solidarity with every person, especially those society systematically devalues, of responding to the needs around us.

There is a time to fast, and a time to lament, but Lord Jesus lives, the bridegroom is with you, so turn around—repent!—from sin, being curved in on yourself, death, pain and suffering, and give witness to the living Lord!

Tommy Natalini is a recent graduate of Susquehanna. He is currently serving as ministry intern at Unity Lutheran Church in Milwaukee.
Sunday, February 28th

Introduction
The warnings are plentiful and blunt on the third Sunday in Lent. Lent is a season of repentance. Cut it out or get cut down! The warnings are accompanied by God’s invitation to attentiveness: “Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live.” The landowner’s ultimatum is forestalled by the gardener’s readiness to till the ground one more year. That is good news for all of us. Thanks be to God!

Prayer of the Day
Eternal God, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son. Help us to hear your word and obey it, and bring your saving love to fruition in our lives, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Tuesday, March 8th

“With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it”
Mark 4:30

When I read this scripture, I think of a memorable sermon from my former pastor. He explained, the original audience would have found the comparison in the next verse between the kingdom of God and a mustard seed to be utterly weird. (It is rather like a cedar of Lebanon, surely?) The tree is much more dignified and familiar; a grand, proud symbol. But no, the kingdom is like the tiny seed of a pervasive shrub-weed; likely a nuisance for farmers or vineyard owners. When I come to think of it in this way, I too see the oddity.

As in other ways, Jesus surprises us, guiding us toward truth in a way that is beyond unexpected; it is strange. However, the element of surprise is more than a rhetorical device to catch our attention. To begin to understand, or at least leave the too-limited confines of what we think we understood, we have to be taken out of the commonplace, the normal, and the world.

Jesus invites us inward to the weird by making us pause and hesitate... So how is the kingdom of God like a mustard seed?
To me: it is readily present and only needs tending or just the opportunity to blossom into something great in each of our hearts, minds, and communities. Its beginnings are perhaps easily overlooked, plain, or unexciting. I could go on, and you’ve likely thought of some comparisons yourself, so I’ll end with this last feeling. The kingdom of God, like the proverbial mustard seed, is both full of wondrous, innate greatness and impressively durable.

Jordan Miller is a senior business management major and has lived in Northumberland, PA since 2012. He is a member of the campus club Lutheran Student Movement, Hillel, a proud resident assistant, and enjoys building houses with Habitat for Humanity. He grew up in the Lutheran church and is currently loving his very informative Introduction to Judaism class.
Monday, March 7th

“And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” Luke 18:8
“Will you lay down your life for me?” John 13:37-38
“Have I been with you all this time, Phillip, and you still do not know me?” John 14:9

In Luke 18 we see a persistent woman who had great hope for justice. She had confidence in the judge's authority to deliver her. She was relentless in her petition and he commended her for it. Clearly, this woman had faith. Hebrews 11:1-2 describes faith as “confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” Assurance, according to Dictionary.com, is "full confidence; freedom from doubt; certainty." The persistent woman was certain of her breakthrough because she had full confidence in the judge's sovereignty; this illustrates great faith in Jesus, the King of kings.

However, if we are honest, we can be more complacent than persistent. Instead, we can be a lot like Peter and Philip. Although Peter professed that he would lay down his life for Jesus, Jesus challenged him and revealed his true heart. When Peter denied Jesus three times he allowed fear of persecution to paralyze him. He lacked assurance in Jesus’ prophecy and promises. He couldn’t guarantee that Jesus would conquer death, that he would do even greater works than Jesus (John 14:12), and that he was already victorious, else he wouldn’t have shrunk back. Likewise, Philip had been following Jesus but still didn’t know Him. With certainty, he had received Jesus’ teaching but not the truth and revelation that He was the Almighty God. Some of us are following Jesus with our mind, we can acknowledge Him and even quote scripture. But are we following Him in our spirit (James 2:18-20)? If we have full confidence that God is holy and righteous (much different from the judge in Luke), how many mountains could we move? How would our (and those surrounding) lives change?

Prayer: Lord, Author and Finisher of our faith, in-crease our faith; we only need a mustard seed size.

Monday, February 29th

The passage takes place as Jesus is speaking with the disciples, and he can tell that they may be hearing different things about him or are questioning who he says he is. This becomes even clearer with the answers that they give him, saying that people have many different speculations as to who he is. Perhaps the crowd or even the disciples are questioning their faith in God and Jesus, as so many of us do throughout our faith journey.

Yet the part that is more relevant to us, is when Jesus asks “But who do you say I am?” If we ask ourselves who we say Jesus is or what we may call Jesus, we may find ourselves answering in the exact way that Peter does, “God’s Messiah.” Other common responses may be Savior, Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, Lord of Lords, or Forgiver of Sins. We hear these all the time, but does this really answer the question? Sure, these common answers tell us who Jesus is or names him in other ways. But they don’t really define what Jesus means to us.

So, who really is Jesus or what does he mean to you? Yes, all of those normal responses are correct, but each of us has a relationship with God and Jesus that defines who he is for us. When I examine my relationship with Jesus, I would say that for me he is a guide in my life or a comfort always walking with me. While this may be my definition of who Jesus is, he may be something else for others. During this season of Lent, I encourage you to examine your relationship with Jesus and figure out who he is for you. What role

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Jasmia Small-Jarrett graduated from SU May 2015 with a B.A. in Sociology and Psychology. She is currently living in Sunbury, PA, interning at Higher Hope International Ministries (h2church), and pursuing a license in Biblical Counseling. Jasmia has faith that God will use her to bring healing, shalom (peace), and justice to broken spaces where shalom is violated.
Tuesday, March 1st

“You of little faith, why did you doubt?”
Matthew 14:31

The verse found in Matthew 14:31, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”, is a phrase that God has probably said to all of us multiple times. As Christians, we are taught to rely on the Lord during difficult trials and tribulations in our lives. When we need help, we pray to God. We trust that He will answer these prayers. What we tend to forget is that He does not answer our prayers on the basis of when we want them answered. He will answer our prayers when He deems it the best time. After all, God knows best right? Although subconsciously we know that God has the best plan, we sometimes doubt Him when he doesn’t answer our prayers right away. I know I have stopped and wondered, “God where are you now when I need you?”.

What I try to remind myself, and to others, is not to doubt our God. We as human beings cannot see the greater plan that He has for us. Just as Peter doubted Jesus on the water and began to sink, we tend to sink in our lives when we doubt God. Fortunately for us, the story continues. Jesus did not let Peter sink into the sea, and He will not let us sink in our own lives either. We will always fault when it comes to doubting God, but one thing we can do to help this is to make our faith stronger. By building our faith, whether it is through church, youth group, or reading the Bible, we build a better connection with God. As we do this, we will start to remember more often that God does know best.

Hannah Johnston is a first year student from a small town in Maryland. She is currently a Communications major with an emphasis in Advertising and Marketing and an Honors Minor. At SU, she is involved in Lutheran Student Movement, Community Food Action Team, the campus garden, the Lanthorn, and the Crusader.
Saturday, March 5th

"Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"
Luke 10: 29-37

The story of the Good Samaritan is one of the most famous parables from the Bible. Jesus uses this story to raise the question of who exactly is our neighbor and how should a neighbor act. Being a neighbor to someone has nothing to do with proximity or even being friends with someone. A neighbor always helps when someone is in need. Samaritans in the ancient days were seen as inferior people. The Jews did not think very highly of them. Jesus uses the example of a Samaritan to show that a neighbor can be anyone. The message would not have gotten across if He hadn’t used such a controversial figure in his story. Being merciful to just people in your comfort zone is not what Jesus is after. A neighbor isn’t someone who only looks after people he knows and trusts. Being a neighbor is about universal love. Loving everyone in the world equally is the concept that Jesus is going for.

I think the world today is so wrapped up in protecting their own people that we forget about all of the other people out there that may not be our own but are still important nonetheless. God loves everybody the same and we should strive to be like Him and to love everyone the same too. During this Lenten season, think about whom you can be a neighbor to.

Jean Heneks is a senior chemistry major with a minor in Religious studies. She is involved with RSLC, LSM, Alpha Phi Omega, Zeta Tau Alpha, and other clubs on campus.

Wednesday, March 2nd

"What are you looking for?"
John 1:35-39

When I first read this passage, I was surprised that Jesus asks what the disciples are looking for. My first instinct was that Jesus is being kind of snarky, wondering why these people are following him. But as I thought more about it, I began to realize that maybe Jesus isn't being snarky at all. Maybe he's pulling the classic "teacher" trick, asking a question that he already knows the answer to, simply to make his students think more deeply about their current situation. I think that Jesus knows that they are looking for the Lamb of God, just as John said. But Jesus wants these followers to really think about what they want and what they are seeking.

As we continue in this season of Lent, perhaps we should be asking ourselves, "What am I looking for?" I've often asked myself this question, and some of the answers have surprised me: love, acceptance, change...ultimately, all things that can be found in Christ. Isn't that the point of it all? Everything that we are looking for here on earth doesn't even compare to the promise of what is waiting for us in heaven. We can cling to these words of Jesus: Come and see. The beauty of God is constantly unfolding before us, surprising us at every turn. What are we looking for? We are living our lives in a constant pursuit of God. Perhaps the most beautiful thing of all is that God is always inviting us to "come and see" what we have been looking for all along.

Amy Sowers graduated from Susquehanna in May 2015 with a B.A. in French. She is now living in Milwaukee, WI working as part of the Lutheran Volunteer Corps for one year. While at SU, Amy was actively involved in Lutheran Student Movement and served as the Deacon of Service for the 2014-15 academic year.
Lent is time for reflection not only on who we are but also how we are contributing to our “generation.”

Christ calls into question the faithfulness of the current generation. He asks the same question to each subsequent generation. Since we are part of this generation, Christ asks each Christian the same question, are we willing to “buck” our generation and continue to follow Him and His law or will we chose to “follow the crowd.”

If we chose to follow the crowd, we are accepted in this current life, but is that what “true” Christians should seek? Or should we instead seek to be accepted by Christ by following His will even if that leaves unpopular or an outsider in this generation?

We all know individuals who chose to live their lives by choosing not to follow the crowd. Some of these people, like Dr. Martin L. King Jr., chose to initiate change in their generation on a large scale and others, many who work in obscurity, choose to change their generation in smaller, more local ways.

During this Lenten season it is incumbent upon us to reflect and ask ourselves tough questions about our intentions, our actions, and our life. Are we living as a “true” Christian and not following the crowd or do we chose, by our intentions, our actions, and our life following this generation? In this Lenten season, Christ challenges us to change our generation by “Thinking Globally, Acting Locally.”

Each day in Lent is an opportunity to make our daily lives one that makes changes in our generation “locally” in order to help turn our generation “globally” back to Christ.

Thursday, March 3rd

“You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you?” Mark 9:19

“But to what will I compare this generation?”
Matthew 11:16

Friday, March 4th

“What does it mean to be well? To me there are many different elements that contribute to ones wellbeing. The first that comes to mind is ones’ physical and mental health. Being able to be in an environment with a sustainable way of living or a consistent income is also a major element of being “well” so to speak. Another underestimated part of good health is having support from friends and family that care about you. In my personal opinion this is what it means to be well. Without balance between all of these aspects, something is lacking. To come across someone who has all of these aspects of “wellness” is very rare, but many people can appreciate having at least couple of these things. It is important to have some form of wellbeing in life. If not, life becomes hard and may seem like more of a curse than blessing. To waste such a valuable gift would be a tragedy. There is so much uncertainty in life and it can all change in an instant. We have been given the wonderful blessing of life and to not be well or find some way of being well would ruin such a wonderful blessing.

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