



Society of St. Andrew
GLEANING AMERICA'S FIELDS
FEEDING AMERICA'S HUNGRY

Daily Lenten Devotions
scripture readings • reflections • prayers

Redeemed

Dear Friends in Christ,

February 22, Ash Wednesday, kicks off the Lenten season and leads up to the celebration of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday! Oh, the joy to come when we sing “Alleluia, He is risen!” But first, we must journey to the cross with Jesus. Jesus died on the cross on Good Friday to save us from our sins. We are redeemed by the blood of Christ! Unimaginable, the title and theme of this Lenten booklet is “Redeemed”! The writers of these offerings read and prayed about Ephesians 1:7-8

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding”

Based on this or another scripture about the riches of God’s grace, these devotions were written to feed your spiritual hunger and inspire you to consider and thank God for your own story of redemption.

Praying, fasting, and assessing our spiritual health during Lent, we journey to the cross throughout the 40 days of the season. While using the tools of prayer, self-examination, confession, and repentance, we gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of what Jesus did for us and exactly what redemption means to us today.

As your spiritual hungers are stirred and sustained by these devotions this season, please give back to The Society of St. Andrew to meet the physical needs of those less fortunate. With a monetary contribution, you provide healthy nourishing food for people in greatest need, right here in the United States.

Thank you in advance for using and sharing “Redeemed” devotional materials, for telling others about The Society of St. Andrew’s gleaning and feeding ministries, and for making a generous gift to feed families in need. Together, let’s share the riches of God’s grace!

Blessings for a holy Lenten season and joyous Easter!



Chesley R. Vohden
Director of Church Relations
church@EndHunger.org

Not to Be Served but to Serve

Scripture: Matthew 20:28

My parents were solid, hardworking farm people, raising four children on our small family farm in northern Minnesota. In the midst of all the work of running a farm, they also pushed us to get good educations. All four of us graduated from college. They also made sure we all knew that “book smart” wasn’t the only way to be intelligent. Knowledge for the sake of knowledge didn’t get the gardens planted, the fields harvested, or the chickens fed. What mattered was what we did with that knowledge, how we made the world a better place and cared for our families and our communities.

The great labor leader and civil rights activist Cesar Chavez said, “The end of all knowledge should be service to others.” I love that quote. I believe knowledge is the key that opens up opportunities for each of us. I also know that if we don’t use that knowledge for good – to be of service to those in need – that knowledge means nothing. We are here, as Jesus told his disciples, not to be served but to serve. What we do with those gifts – knowledge, power, love – is what redeems us.

Prayer: Lord, let me live a life that offers my gifts to the world, making it better even in the smallest ways. Amen.

Jean Siers – Salisbury, MD

Thursday, February 23

Redeeming Love

Scripture: Exodus 6:6

I confess that I buy enough Starbucks coffee to warrant having the app on my phone. I also confess I like earning points for purchases, and I admit there is a certain pleasure or joy at redeeming those points for a “free” coffee or maybe even a pastry item. For us today, redemption means the exchanging of one item, like money or earned points, for another item.

In the worldview of the Bible, redemption is a far more serious business. The work of the God of Israel is one of redemption. In Exodus 6:6, it is written: “Therefore tell the Israelites: ‘I am GOD. I will bring you out from under the cruel hard labor of Egypt. I will rescue you from slavery. I will redeem you, intervening with great acts of judgment.’” (The Message).

Today, we live in a messy and painful world, but God has acted for us, not only through sacrifice but out of his steadfast and unyielding love in Jesus Christ that we might have a kingdom life with him for eternity.

I believe life became worth living because God acted to redeem us from our alienation and bondage so He might be with us forever.

Prayer: Redeeming God, we give thanks to you for redeeming us. Grant that we might live lives of worth to your glory and to obtain life with and in Jesus Christ who reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

Andy Brock — Reliance, VA

Friday, February 24

Better Than Free Toys

[Scripture: Psalm 130:7](#)

My mother used to pass on to us kids green or red stamps that were given out by grocery stores after purchasing food and other items. We spent hours wetting the stamp's backs and pasting them into books which could then be exchanged for merchandise. My brother and I were happy to "redeem" the books. It never occurred to us Mom had to spend a lot of money so we could have "free" toys.

Whenever I first think of "redemption", I think of green or red stamps. Not good theology you might surmise, but when I consider all that God has done for me through Christ Jesus, I see a link. Out of love, our mother gave us the stamps. That she did not think of what she may have needed, reflects grace. At no cost to my brother or me, we received joy from our new toys.

Love, grace, and joy are not byproducts of God's redemption. They are redemption. Older now, and hopefully wiser, I more clearly see the value of God's gift of a Son who sacrificed his life on a cross to ensure forgiveness of sins and life eternal. Unlike the temporary happiness experienced when I turned in books of green or red stamps for toys, the love, grace, and joy I now know is permanent. Thanks be to God!

Prayer: Gracious God, help us to see the great gift of your redemption in the ordinary experiences in life. In the holy name of your Son, we pray. Amen.

Chris Suerdieck — Emmitsburg, MD

God's Plan

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:11

A man in our men's Bible study group has an uncanny ability to see value in things where others see no value at all. He used this talent recently, shopping wisely, while touring on an annual event called "The Longest Yard Sale in the World" (which runs 690 miles and passes through six states from Alabama to Michigan).

With so many tempting items on display, many people search and are distracted by the glitzy appearance of things, then base their decisions solely on what they see, with no thought about what the value might be. But God is so very different. He peers past our outer appearance and gets to the heart of the matter.

Years ago, after having drifted for a while from my Christian upbringing, God searched me out, pulled me back, peered past my sinful outer surface appearance, and went straight for my heart. He saw me and knew the purpose He had created me for. He brought me back to His loving arms.

I was saved and redeemed by His grace, and washed clean by the blood of Christ. I now work daily to walk in the plan that He has for my life.



Prayer: Loving Father, thank you for peering past my surface appearance, for seeing my value, and for blessing me with your redemptive grace. Help me to be what you created me to be. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Denny Engle — Gautier, MS



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The Best Food to Those Who Need it Most

The Society of St. Andrew began in 1979 in the hills of Virginia and has grown into the largest field gleaning organization in the country. Working in a collaborative effort with thousands of farmers, tens of thousands of volunteers, and thousands of feeding programs in all 48 contiguous states, SoSA provides healthy food to those who have little or no access to it.

This nutritious, but excess, bounty is sent directly from the point of surplus (field or packing facility) to food banks or feeding programs that will share it directly with people in greatest need. The Society of St. Andrew's remarkable and efficient programs have proven extremely successful at providing nutritious food to those who need it most.

Your gifts make this possible!

2021 STATISTICS

**Over 46 million pounds of
nourishing food shared**

**2.8 billion servings shared
in our 43 year history**

9¢ a pound

Less than 5¢ per serving

Overhead: 2%



A Redeemed Captive

Scripture: Ephesians 1:7-8

Sally was an African-American woman forced to live in slavery in Antebellum North Carolina.

After many grueling decades, she experienced redemption from slavery. The literal bonds of her enslavement were visceral illustrations of the spiritual bondage to sin, to which we are all ensnared.

Akin to the experience of millions of people during this tragic period, she experienced many injustices. She was separated from her husband and children; suffered physical abuse; framed and scapegoated by others; and even punished for attempting to escape her captors.

Despite being powerless to change things, Sally remained hopeful. She used limited freedom to run a small store and even accepted Christ as her Savior. Although uplifted by this newfound joy, she still struggled internally. Often praying, will I ever see my family again?

When she was 60 years old, her son surprised her by using his saved money to purchase her freedom from physical enslavement. Sally was free at last! And reunited with her family.

Although not enslaved like Sally, we are all enslaved to sin. Jesus says everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. All have sinned, and therefore, all are slaves to sin: they are without Jesus Christ and without hope. Redeem means to buy back. Jesus bought us back from sin and death and released us from bondage through his death on the cross. Let the redeemed people give thanks!

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the riches of your grace! Amen.

Tom Thomas — Forest, VA

A New Ministry

Scripture: Philippians 4:11

I grew up in a Christian home. As a young adult I felt God calling me into full time Christian service, but I said “Ask me later”. Asked the third time, I said “Yes, Lord, but I have no idea how you can use me now.” My finances were in shambles, and my health had begun to suffer. So I prayed for guidance and received my answer but in an unexpected way. It turned my life upside down. I had been praying Wesley’s Covenant Prayer every morning and knew I wanted to be more than a “Lip Service Christian.”

Now, God has given me a new ministry not only to congregations who worship within four walls, but also to people who are hurting and struggling. I can relate to what people are going through. I know their pain when they are hungry, hurting, or afraid of what may come next.

I have been there, and I can share with them my experiences and my faith. Because of this I can be in service with God, going when and where He leads me. Life isn’t always easy, but God always shows me His promises are new every morning. I just need to trust and obey.

Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for everything I have experienced. Let me use my life to glorify you every day and in all things. Amen.

Bonnie-karen Byrne — Fieldale, VA

Almsgiving for Lent

Scripture: Proverbs 19:17

When I first endeavored to take the Lenten journey, I studied the tenets of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (giving to and helping those who are in need). I purposed in my heart to fully ensconce myself in this journey seeking opportunities to give and show mercy. I already served as a volunteer at a Women’s Shelter so I increased my hours there which required me to work more directly with the homeless women.

I arrived early eager and ready to serve, and after serving the women lunch I sat down next to a guest and began making small talk. The woman who I held conversation with expressed gratitude for the lunch and indicated that she hated

being homeless, to which I replied “I’m sure not having a place to call home is what you hate the most!” She replied “No. What I hate the most is that I’m invisible to people”.

Her heartbreaking reply caught me off guard, it convicted me, causing me to wonder if I’d ever caused anyone to feel this way. I silently repented, asking the Lord for forgiveness. I also prayed for the homeless woman who’d blessed me with the immeasurable gift of a redeemed heart!

Prayer: Lord help me to acknowledge the humanity of everyone that I encounter, being kind, and loving as you command in Jesus name. Amen!

Tracy Porter – Pasadena, CA



Wednesday, March 1

Why We Do Good Deeds

[Scripture: Titus 2:14](#)

It can be difficult to tell the story to children: the story of the Son of Man allowing himself to suffer and be killed as the Lamb of God, in fulfillment of scripture. Children ask questions; they did when I was in my teens (working as a camp counselor); in my 20’s (Senior High youth leader); 30’s (4th and 5th grade ministry coordinator); 40’s (Christian Educator); 50’s (solo pastor); in my...well, I’m not quite there yet.

First, we teach children that Jesus welcomed children unto himself; we sing Jesus Loves Me. Then we tell children that Jesus was whipped and nailed to a cross; we sing Just As I Am. Whether we’re 4-year-old sinners (sorry for biting our sister) or 64-year-old sinners (the list gets longer), our minds spin as we try to reconcile the mysteries of grace reaching across the chasm of human sin to redeem us.

What children can understand is that God has a big family; we are God’s children, and when we do mean things or make bad choices, God sees what we do through Jesus, who was right with God. So, no matter our age, we do good deeds – we bless others – in Jesus’ name because we are thankful for what Jesus did for us on the cross. Children like being helpers. Making the connection of why we help others, gives God the glory.

Prayer: Gracious God, when we do good deeds, may they be out of gratitude for your forgiveness and grace. Amen.

Kay Yates Brungraber — Chambersburg, PA

Thursday, March 2

The Air of Redemption

Scripture: Isaiah 44:21-23

During Lent 2018, my husband and I were part of a pilgrimage group to Israel. Early one morning, we journeyed to Bethsaida. Standing among remnants of the famed “pools” now covered in grass, our leader read about the healing Jesus performed at this site. She prayed each of us would experience our own moment of resurrection and redemption as Holy Week and Easter drew closer.

Before leaving, our spiritual guide took out a small, glass bottle. With little warning, she proceeded to anoint everyone with a mixture of olive oil, nard, and myrrh. I had never been “anointed” before. With my eyes closed, I felt a slight pressure as a cross was made on my forehead. Overcome with feelings of honor, humility, and unworthiness, I noticed a tear dripping down my face. I opened my eyes for a minute, and noticed other people were crying.



Suddenly, a gentle wind moved across the pools. I closed my eyes again and took a deep breath. Those sweet, earthy fragrances had mingled in the air, and filled my airway. I held my breath for 10 seconds before exhaling. I repeated this twice. This was my redemption “moment.” I breathed in purification and released distress and worry.

Prayer: God, our Redeemer, allow us to breathe in your grace and accept your love in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Kelly Deschlos-Estes — Glen Allen, VA

Grace

Scripture: Micah 6:8

How many of us have made one or more super colossal, extremely stupid, really bad choices? I'm talking about the "dire consequences" kind of choices, the "hold your breath and cringe" kind of choices. If nothing catastrophic actually happened almost immediately, we slowly exhaled, and then what?

More than likely, our spontaneous words included "thank you" and something about the awesome, amazing grace of God, grace so powerful and yet so personal, its main ingredient had to be love. Grace infused with love erases our bad choices, leaving each of us with a clean slate and fresh chalk. What a concept!

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for your love, grace and forgiveness, which are examples of how we should live our lives. Amen.

Carolyn P. Maness — Lynchburg, VA

Recycling and Redemption

Scripture: Romans 8:28

I heard the guitar playing late one night in Soweto, South Africa. So I followed the sound until I found the source. He was standing on the corner, playing a guitar he had made from an old oil can, a piece of wood, some bottle caps, and guitar strings. He played it like Eric Clapton or Jimmy Hendrix.

When he was through playing, I handed him a few dollars, and we began talking. I asked about the guitar, and he said, "I pick up things in the trash and try to use them. It's amazing what people throw away, and amazing what you can do with it. You just have to use your imagination. We throw away too many valuable things."

Ever feel like your life is in the trash heap? It's amazing what the One who made you can do with your life. God is in the business of recycling and redemption. What you thought of as trash, can be used to make great music.

Prayer: Dear God, help me to see that the things I think of as trash in my life are chances for you to make something wonderful for this world. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Michael Henderson — Florence, SC

Released from Captivity

Scripture: Genesis 50:20

About 20 years ago, I studied the Genesis story of Joseph in depth, and it continues to reach deep into my soul enriching my understanding of God's acts of redemption. To be sure, I don't believe that God makes bad things happen; humanity, collectively and individually, does that well enough on its own. I do believe that where we have failed, God's grace is lavished on us to redeem, to release us from the bonds of sin.

In my own life, God has redeemed my failings, allowing me to minister more effectively to each child of God in their own need. God has written over the wrongs with good, such as when the date associated with memory of a failed love became my ordination date or when I made a "wrong" decision, and it led to a different way of serving God.

In each situation, in every failure, I know God will redeem "according to the riches of God's grace." In the words of the First Nations Translation of the New Testament, "By paying the highest price, offering his own lifeblood, the Chosen One released us from a great captivity caused by our bad hearts and broken ways. He poured out all of this overflowing kindness on us, showing how wise and understanding he is." (Ephesians 1:7-8)

Prayer: Creator God, thank you for sending the Chosen One to provide redemption and release from the captivity of our sin. In your wisdom and kindness, you have set us free! Amen.

Annemarie E. Kalke Delgado — Beulah, WY

Monday, March 6

But I Didn't Know I Was Lost

Scripture: Ephesians 4:7

Mommy, Daddy and Timmy were walking through one of the popular county summer fairs in England, looking at all the booths and displays. Suddenly Mommy asked: "Where's Timmy?" They both looked frantically and then Mommy said "There he is, way over there with a group of spectators watching a performance." They ran up to him and Mommy said "Oh Timmy, we were so worried; we thought you were lost!" And Timmy replied, "But Mommy, I didn't know I was lost!"



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Preventing Waste, Feeding Hungry People

With your help, The Society of St. Andrew (SoSA) addresses this crucial issue in two ways. In each, SoSA gathers up food that would otherwise be wasted. This fresh and nutritious food is then provided, at no cost, to food banks, pantries, and programs to feed or provide food to those most in need.

SoSA distributes food donated from a variety of sources including farms, fields, orchards, packing houses, and grocers. This is accomplished through the coordination of thousands of volunteers and events, each year.

Volunteers serve in a variety of roles. This includes gleaning fields and orchards, delivering packaged produce to hunger relief agencies, and unloading and distributing truckloads of food directly into the local community. In 2021 alone, SoSA distributed more than 46 million pounds of good food to families who might otherwise have gone without.

Often the food is surplus, inconveniently-sized, or cosmetically imperfect. Sometimes, it's marketable but the farmer or grower wants to share it with the local community to address urgent needs.

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According to Joe Lovino, “Prevenient grace is God at work before we have any inkling of grace of any kind. When we consider circumstances that resulted in our coming to faith in Jesus Christ, we begin to see the hand of God working in our lives long before we were aware of the Spirit’s presence. Prevenient grace prepares our hearts and minds to hear and receive the gospel of Jesus Christ and to respond in faith. Persons in our lives who showed us the healing, forgiveness and restoration available by faith in Jesus Christ, came to us by God’s Prevenient grace.”

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/god-at-work-before-we-know-it-prevenient-grace>

Prayer: Oh generous and patient Heavenly Father, we ask you to help those millions of floundering souls with no idea anyone is looking for them and to be more sensitive to the searcher’s presence and purpose. Then, with great gratitude, join the rest of us already destined for your kingdom. Amen.

Darwin McAfee — Front Royal, VA

Tuesday, March 7

The Mysteries of God’s Grace

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 12:9

I will soon be embarking on a new adventure called retirement. As the time quickly approaches, I have more opportunity for reflection and thanksgiving. There will no doubt be many changes and challenges ahead. Still, I know my Lord will continue walking with me.

Looking back, I believe it is a miracle I was born. My mother had numerous miscarriages and lost an infant daughter who lived only three days. As she neared the end of her child bearing years, she delivered me when she was forty. I am the youngest of three boys. God’s grace brought me here from the very beginning.

My early years were full of challenges, as they are for many. A number of dysfunctional family dynamics impacted me greatly. I struggled with my moods and had many self-doubts. I questioned why painful events kept happening. However, I trusted God was always with me.

When it was time to choose a career path, I continued to have self-doubts. Yet, through an on-going series of blessings and opportunities, God led me to a path of becoming a psychotherapist. He knew my challenging experiences, coupled with higher education would help me bring compassion and care to my many clients over the years. His amazing grace was sufficient!

Prayer: “For the love of God is broader than the measure of our mind, and the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.” Amen.

(From “There’s A Wideness in God’s Mercy” by Frederick W. Faber)

Bob Brooks — Fredericksburg, VA

Wednesday, March 8

Forgiveness of Our Sins

Scripture: Matthew 6:12

Most of us recite the Lord’s Prayer on Sunday mornings, and we express our gratitude to God for forgiveness of our sins and to Jesus Christ for redemption by His blood. Then we go along our way and tend to forget about the second part of the prayer—“as we also have forgiven our debtors”. Forgiveness is wonderful when we receive it, but how hard it is to forgive others!



I was recently reminded of the importance of forgiveness. Two friends had a broken friendship at least 20 years ago and hadn’t spoken for those many years. One passed away a few months ago, and I was reminded of their break over a misunderstanding so long ago.

As I grieved for my deceased friend, I wondered about the other one. Weeks

passed, and I had occasion to hear the other friend mention their relationship. They had seen each other months before in the grocery store and had spoken about the incident. Forgiveness was asked for and received between the two ladies. What

a relief that the moment occurred to bring healing! What if the one friend had passed without that encounter?

I am reminded not to miss those chances to ask forgiveness and to grant it. We are not promised tomorrow. Wouldn't it be terrible to meet Jesus and have him ask about times when we did not forgive others!

Prayer: Father, please gently remind me when I need to forgive others, as you have forgiven me so many times. Amen.

Linda M. Mays — Appomattox, VA

Thursday, March 9

The Family of God

Scripture: Galatians 4:4-7

After a long, expensive, and challenging process, a young couple at our church adopted a beautiful baby girl. Watching her grow and observing the love her parents had for her was such a blessing to the whole church. In fact, we feel like we had all adopted her!

There is something so special about adoption: choosing to bring a child into the family with all the rights and privileges. In several of Paul's letters, he reminded believers that through Jesus' shedding of blood, we have been purchased, redeemed, and adopted as children into the family of God. Never forget you have been chosen, and nothing can separate you from God's love.

I am reminded of a song by Bill and Gloria Gaither:
"I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God;
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by his blood!
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family, the family of God."

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for paying the price to make it possible for us to become children of God. Amen.

Joyce Duncan — Forest, VA

Full Redemption

Scripture: Psalm 130

To be redeemed is to be restored, reclaimed, or renewed. To be redeemed is to be bought back, cashed in. When I served a church in the Shenandoah Valley in the 1980s, there was a sign in front of a store across street that advertised S&H Green Stamps. It brought back memories of when my mother used to collect these stamps at the grocery store and then redeem them for products from their catalog. I couldn't wait for her to redeem them. It often meant something of special value for the family.

We redeem air miles, coupons, and warranties for something of value. The Bible teaches that we have been redeemed, that we are of the utmost value to God. The psalmist says, "For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to be redeemed." We have been redeemed through the Lord's infinite mercy. No sin can separate us from God's amazing grace.

Because of Jesus' atoning love on the cross, we have been reclaimed and renewed as children of God. The prodigal did not come home a servant. He came home a son. I thought of asking the store owner if the church could borrow the S&H Green Stamps sign on Sundays and place it out front, so that all who enter in may know that with the Lord there is full redemption!

Prayer: Thank you, Holy God, that we who trust in Christ as our Savior have redemption through his atoning sacrifice and the forgiveness of all our sins, in accordance with the riches of your grace. Amen.

Bill Jones — Waynesboro, VA

Saturday, March 11

Clipping Coupons

Scripture: Romans 3:23-25

As a child, I remember my mother collecting coupons from everything, every bag of flour, box of cereal, and soup label. After each grocery trip, there were the Green Stamps to be licked and pasted in booklets, and many times, that was my job. A special place in the kitchen for all of the coupons was off limits. Kids were not allowed to play in the coupons 'because they were like money.' When Mother collected enough, then they were redeemed for prizes, usually some gadget for the kitchen.

Growing up in the church, I heard all of the ‘church’ words – redeemed, sanctified, forgiven, faith, righteousness, but I did not put it all together until I was an adult. I suppose I had child-like faith of believing what the adults told me and not asking for proof or questioning what any of it meant. Then, one day, it was like a light came on, and I understood there was nothing I could do to earn God’s love or



redemption for my sins. The only requirement was faith and trust in the power of Jesus. The coupons were in the Holy Word of God and the stamps were already pasted in the book by the blood of Jesus. Jesus gave his life in exchange for mine and yours. We have been redeemed.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for the gift of faith to be redeemed without cost. All honor and praise are yours forever. Amen.

Doris Hedrick – Natural Bridge Station, VA

Sunday, March 12

Tell It!

Scripture: Psalm 107:1-3

Katie watched her mother bite her lower lip and furrow her brow as they drove to the post office. So much depended on the check being in today’s mail. If it was, then bills could be paid and groceries bought. If it wasn’t, then the worry lines on her mother’s forehead would deepen as she weighed the urgency of each payment and mentally tallied the cost of each grocery cart item before she reached the checkout line.

Katie understood her father’s work on commission as a sales rep meant there was never the assurance of guaranteed income. His weekly hard work did not automatically meet sales quotas. Cold calls did not necessarily turn into actual orders. Travel expenses were not always offset by shipped products. Plus, the company’s expected payments were often delayed, needlessly it seemed, by the vagaries of the postal service.

Anticipation and dread knotted in Katie's stomach as she pulled the mail from the box and flipped through the bills and fliers, looking for a thin business envelope with the company logo that could contain the check. She practically skipped back to the car. "The check came!" she announced, brandishing the mail like a trophy. Her mother's smile lit up her whole face. The burden of worry and helplessness was lifted for the month! What good news to tell Papa when he got home!

Prayer: Gracious God, in Christ you deliver us from hopelessness. We are grateful and will give a bold testimony to your redeeming work. Amen.

Kathleen Overby Webster — McGaheysville, VA

Monday, March 13

Grace for a Prodigal Father

[Scripture: Ephesians 1:7-8](#)

A man in a church I served was surprised to learn his father had moved into a nursing home nearby. The father had abandoned his family when my church member was a young boy. The boy had grown up never knowing his father, or even where he was. Now the father had returned home, to die. He was suffering from terminal cancer. The man visited his father. Every day.

I stopped by one afternoon to visit and have never forgotten what I saw and heard. The pain caused by the cancer made the father grit his teeth horribly and constantly. I had a hard time handling it even during my short visit. Yet, the son sat quietly and peacefully at the foot of the hospital bed, a comforting presence. He was sitting there when his father died.



The love and mercy the son showed his father has always remained an image of the grace God extended to me, to us, through his Son.

Prayer: God, I marvel at how great your grace is, that through your Son you came alongside me when I was in the agony of sin and offered me your love. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Norman Tippens — Hampton, VA



Tuesday, March 14

Reminders in the Rain

[Scripture: Colossians 3:2](#)

The day after my sister-in-law's funeral, I stood in my bedroom and stared out the window at our drenched backyard. The March deluge that had accompanied us to her graveside slowly sputtered out as the front moved away to the east.

I watched the water carve deep rivulets in the lawn, like tears running down the cheeks of a grieving face. The loss of my brother's wife left a gaping hole in our family. She had been my sister-in-Christ, my creative kindred-spirit, my loyal friend.

As I stared glumly at the flooded land, a slight movement, perhaps from a bird or a tree branch, caught my attention. I raised my gaze to the edge of our woods and drew in a breath of amazement.

Over the past few difficult days, without my noticing, the early-blooming foliage had awakened. Bridal veil, flowering quince, and forsythia lifted their limbs to heaven—leafy arms filled with bright flowers of yellow and white, my sister-in-law's favorite color combination.

"Eyes up, believer," they seemed to say. "Like spring banishes winter, Christ banished death. Look up!" How I needed that gentle reminder. Beyond the grave lies the promise of beautiful life for followers of Jesus. He went to the cross to make it so. Look up!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for your promise of eternal redemption. Help us remember, no matter what befalls us, to turn our eyes upon you. Amen.

Audi Lehman — Hernando, MS

Wednesday, March 15

Grace upon Grace

Scripture: Ephesians 1:7

In John 1:16, the Apostle tells us this about Jesus, "From the fullness of His grace we have all received grace upon grace." Paul further helps define this grace in Ephesians 1:7, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

We are redeemed—forgiven— and will receive grace upon grace. The word translated "grace" in the New Testament comes from the Greek word *charis*, which means "favor, blessing, or kindness". Jesus died for our sins so we can live in him and through him. God sent his one and only son as a perfect sacrifice to take our place on the cross. This is the gift of salvation, the gift of undeserving grace.

His grace is sufficient for all needs. The good news of the Gospel is the free and full forgiveness for those who are in Christ Jesus according to the riches of God's grace.

During Lent, let us walk with Jesus to Calvary. Like the disciples, will we sleep instead of staying awake and praying? So many times, Jesus has redeemed each of us from the suffering he knew. Let us be faithful and accept His love, and let us stay near Him the entire journey.

Prayer: Father, strengthen us as we walk with Jesus to the cross. Keep us faithful, remembering what He has given to each of us. Amen.

Deb Broadwater — Moneta, VA

Redemption through Knowledge

Scripture: Ephesians 1:7-8

Sometimes we are redeemed through greater understanding. Have you ever looked back at something you said or did that you thought was right at the time and realized your error? That you could not SEE the entire picture? That you could not grasp another perspective? That you lacked understanding you now have?

I have. Often. I mess up. I think I'm right, but I'm not. I don't see the whole picture. I can't fully grasp someone else's perspective. I look back at how I acted or what I said or did and inwardly cringe at my own idiocy.

I can learn. I can make a different choice the next time that includes my new understanding. My new perspective. Sometimes, I can even go back and apologize for my previous choice. I can be redeemed through new wisdom and understanding.

This is what I think of when I think of redemption. I think lifelong learning and deeper knowledge of my fellow people and the human condition enables me to more fully live the vision of a life of grace and peace here on earth.

Prayer: A prayer for redemption: Lord, we ask for deeper understanding. For a wider perspective. For more knowledge. That we may be redeemed for our incorrect words and actions and be wiser in the future. Amen.

Jennifer K. Horne — Bedford, VA

Contemplating Wisdom and Understanding

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:30

As we take time to reflect on Jesus' sacrifice on the cross this Lenten season, the wisdom and understanding that comes from redemption is a meaningful focal point. Several scriptures enlighten us about redemption, so we might better understand what a grace-filled gift God gave us by offering Jesus to pay our debt with his blood. With our heartfelt and true repentance, we can be saved from the bondage of sin. We are forgiven. Our

alienation from God is eliminated. We are adopted into the family of God, for eternal life. We are redeemed!



While further pondering the relationship between redemption, wisdom and understanding, I remembered a discussion between mentors and confirmands during a confirmation retreat many years ago. Our discussion leader asked the teens to write down the first word that came to mind when they thought of Jesus. Several fitting descriptions were read from the confirmands' notes: friend, teacher, love, peace... The name we heard the most, however, was redeemer. These young followers of Jesus were already very wise. They understood how our redemption is the beginning of understanding the ways of Jesus and that Jesus is our wisdom, our guide, and Savior.

Prayer: Gracious and merciful God, thank you for loving us so much that you gave your only Son for us – who, by his blood, paid our debt and gave us the understanding of being children of God. May our lives always honor and glorify you. Amen.

Julie Erickson – Olathe, KS

Redemption in an Irredeemable Time [Scripture: Luke 15:32](#)

When I was young, I thought I knew it all. At the age of 22, with no job and no firm plan, I moved to a college town with my best friend from high school. What was supposed to be a fun time for me, quickly turned into a downward spiral. When I finally got a job, I was horrible with the money I earned. I skipped rent and was asked to move out by my friend, had nowhere to stay except couches in friends' apartments, and failed at efforts to regain any sort of financial responsibility. I began to lose hope, and I certainly lost sight of God and the faith that was such a big part of my life just a few years earlier. I began to give up on myself.

But God didn't give up on me. Like the son who squandered his fortune and returned home to his father expecting to face disgrace, I instead found grace. I found hope. I found love. I found redemption. God put people in my path who helped me out of the ditch and onto the road, people who helped me rediscover within myself a beloved child of God. I felt for myself God's grace.

Prayer: All-loving God, thank you for the gift of grace and redemption which you so freely bestow on your children. In times of hopelessness, fear, and doubt, remind us to turn back to you for the strength and love you extend with open arms. Amen.

Matt Rhodes — Lynchburg, VA

Redemption [Scripture: Isaiah 44:22](#)

I am guilty. Like many people, I have done things I regret, and though I try to embrace the principle that 'regrets are a waste of time' – I tend to wallow in it, wrenching myself up over things that happened years ago. There are times I cannot sleep, horrified over past mistakes, things I could have prevented from happening but didn't until it was too late.

It is a serious struggle, but I am eventually comforted by knowing God forgives all who are honestly sorry – truly repentant – for what they have done to wrong others. While these 'wrongs' may seem minor to someone else, in my mind they can be earth-shattering, unimaginable and often bring me to tears.

Who am I to judge that whatever I have done is no worse than what someone else has done? I remain agitated until I can convince myself I am forgiven. Whatever I have done in the past cannot be undone. All I can do is learn from my mistakes, try to make up for them, and pray for forgiveness.

We are redeemed by Jesus Christ – we have redemption through his blood. For years I had no clue what that meant. Finally, I get it. After all, I am a child of God, and I know He loves me.

Prayer: Heavenly God, thank you for watching over us and forgiving us. Guide us toward the right path to do your will. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Kathi Wise — McLean, VA

Monday, March 20

Gratitude for God's Redeeming Love [Scripture: Psalm 107:2](#)

When we think of redemption, it may be of a coupon that is about to expire. So we quickly redeem it for something new we have wanted. We also use the word to describe paying a debt or making things right. When I make a mistake, I try to take action to correct my mistake, to atone for my error, to make things right, hopefully redeeming myself.

The Bible is often called the story of redemption. That may be the story of our own life, indeed of persons everywhere. Considering the errors, the sins, of all humankind, we know these cause alienation from God. Things need to be made right. Reconciliation with God is required. In short, redemption is needed: a new way, a new life.

The New Testament affirms this has been accomplished through Christ, who has atoned for the sins of all through his death on the cross. Thus, Christ has provided for the redemption of all of us. Our response to this marvelous truth may be expressed in the lines of a favorite Lenten hymn: "From my stricken heart with tears two wonders I confess, the wonders of redeeming love, and my unworthiness."

Prayer: Dear God, as we live these days of Lent, please keep ever before us the One who has given his life for the redemption of all of us, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Hasbrouck Hughes — Williamsburg, VA

Lavish Love

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:20-23

My grandmother worked in her flower gardens every day spring, summer, and fall. Her beautiful gardens surrounded our farm house. Besides the flowers, there were apple trees, damson and plum trees, and a young raspberry bush that had never borne fruit.

One summer day I was in the house when she came inside. I could see her hands were cupped closed in front of her. As she approached, she slowly unfolded her age-worn hands and offered me the first fruits of her raspberry bush. I will never forget the love on her face, the heartfelt generosity in her gesture.

To this day, the memory of her outstretched hands brings tears to my eyes. It was an offering filled with love. It reminds me Christ loves us that much and more. His generosity, his willingness to give himself for us, is beyond anything we can understand. As Ephesians 1 states, God “lavished” his love on us through his son Jesus Christ.

God was sacrificing his first fruit, his only Son, so we might be saved. (1 Cor. 15) I hope everyone reading this has had someone in their life who has loved them dearly. But always remember, we have a Savior who has that love for us plus more than we can ever ask or imagine.

Prayer: Father, thank you for your great love for us. Help us to love one another. Amen.

Regina K. Carson — Chesterfield, VA

Looking Back

Scripture: Romans 2:4

The last 18 months have been transitional for my family. Both of my parents died peacefully in their sleep. My siblings, who helped in their final years, moved to other states to begin the next phases of their lives. It has been exhausting, overwhelming, and at times painful to sort and dismantle the remnants of our parents’ lives, as well as move three households.

These experiences opened the door to many conversations with my siblings. As we were sorting belongings, we found certificates, post cards, photographs, ribbons

and in one instance a jean jacket. Each find would trigger a reminiscing story. Sometimes a sibling would offer a similar memory or ask a question, a question that reflected a personal sense of pain or misunderstanding. Then, we would explore, discuss and in a few cases ask for forgiveness or redemption.

God saved us from Original Sin, but what about the smaller sins inflicted on those around us as we grow up—pride, sloth, envy, and wrath to name a few? I discovered I was the instrument of pain caused by some choices and actions. It hurt to hear a sibling's view, but it allowed unexpected healing of small, festering hurts.

Are there similar stories in your life? Could you have been part of the problem?

Prayer: Lord, open our eyes to see. Open our hearts to forgive and ask forgiveness. Today, may you feel the blessings of God's kindness, forbearance, patience, and redemption. Amen.

*Kimberly Kertis —
Harrogate, TN*



Redemption

Scripture: John 21:1-19; Ephesians 1:7-8

Redemption involves transformed life. John's Gospel shows how the risen Jesus touches Peter so he may be healed and redeemed.

Peter has failed. At the Last Supper, Jesus feeds Peter and washes his feet. Peter boasts of his faithfulness. The next morning, seeing Jesus arrested, Peter denies any knowledge of his master. Peter leaves to weep in hopeless despair.

Back in Galilee, Peter goes onto the lake to fish. He catches nothing. Jesus from the shore guides him to an abundance of fish. The Peter who ran in disgrace now runs to share in the food and new life the risen Jesus offers.

Jesus calls on Peter to love his Savior and humanity. Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? Can you care for your fellow disciples in my name, being my presence? Feed my sheep.

This is redemption. Our failures do not ruin us. The darkness of sin does not destroy us. God in Christ is with us to fill us with new life and light, which we share, as did Peter, with all around us. God redeems us, loves us, and calls us. Feed my sheep!

Prayer: Guide us, O God, in these days of Lent. Let the story of Jesus call us from our dark days and fears into redeemed, forgiven, and full life. Walk with us through the Cross into Resurrection with Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bill Olewiler — Fleming Island, FL

Laughter

Scripture: Psalm 126:2-3

I have heard that liberation begins with a laugh. I think there is truth to that. It's the laugh of freedom that comes when you realize it's not all up to you and it's not all about you. It's the laugh of release that erupts when you recognize how blind you have been to your self-idolatry and how tangled up you have become in your own ego. It's the laugh that bursts forth when you stumble onto God's grace despite yourself and step into a surprise of unearned, unexpected joy. It's

the laugh of realizing that what really matters in life is what also matters to God. It's that emboldening laugh that springs forth when you catch your first glimpse of how powerless the powers of this world are before our Lord. It's the laugh that even comes sneaking in after the tears when the light breaks through the door and touches your face with the truth, that with Jesus, all exiles will one day come home and crosses won't ever get the last word.

Prayer: Merciful God, may we laugh today as those who have been touched by your grace and released from burdens inflicted by self or imposed by others. May we laugh the laugh of those who have caught a glimpse of the promise that in Christ our mourning will one day turn into joyous dancing. May we laugh as those who can't wait to share Good News! Amen.

Christopher Crotwell – Hattiesburg, MS

Saturday, March 25

Redeemed

Scripture: Colossians 1:13-14

Recent news announced efforts to bring two people home to the US from their prison terms in Russia. Diplomats and politicians are working to identify how to rescue and transfer these two in exchange for Russians being held by the US.

Less attention is given to stories like the women in Houston who are brought into a safe place after being trafficked for sex. Redeemed Ministries works to give women a safe place and counseling to start their lives over. Recently, their stories inspired the development of a new 8 bedroom home and help for others in recovering from being trafficked. (www.redeemedtx.org)

While not touted in headlines across the world, in every age, Christians find ways to lift up and act on behalf of individuals caught in webs of addiction, business or personal failures and low self-esteem. The Good News of the Gospel erupts as people point the way to Jesus as “redeemer”, tell stories of their own lives and fill the airwaves with songs like Big Daddy Weave’s “Redeemed” (www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8bsjdzMt24).

In this season of Lent, may you examine how you have been transferred into the Realm of God, redeemed by Jesus Christ and given opportunity to share the reality of redemption with others!

Prayer: Holy God, open our eyes and ears to the Good News of redemption. Amen.

Linda McKiernan-Allen — Indianapolis, IN

Sunday, March 26

Let the Redeemed of the Lord Say So

[Scripture: Psalm 107:1-2](#)

As I lay in the hospital bed with a chest tube painfully inserted in my right-side and drainage tubes due to a collapsed lung, I prayerfully asked the Lord to heal my body and save the life of my unborn child. I thought of my illness and how grief-stricken the last three years of my life had been since the death of my forty-four-year-old mother who was also my best friend. I missed her so much.

I recalled my mother, a woman of faith, laying in her own hospital bed asking to be turned so she could face the window. She openly prayed aloud asking the Lord to cover her family and loved ones, and she ended her prayer with “you can come and get me, Lord, I’m ready.” I thought of her living witness and how she often confessed her failings and shortcomings with a repentant heart that was covered by the blood of Jesus.

I prayed aloud “Lord, I know I’ve sinned, I repent, and I’m forgiven. I know I’ve been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and I know I’m healed”.

Ten days later, my lung was healed, and my baby was safe! As I reflected, I thought of how the yoke of sickness was broken when I verbally spoke of my redemption and healing!



Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for your grace, mercy, and redemptive power in the matchless name of Jesus. Amen!

Tracy Porter — Pasadena, CA

Monday, March 27

Redeemed for What?

Scripture: Psalm 71:23

The purpose of a redemptive act is to save a person or thing from captivity or loss. As Christians we believe we have been redeemed by God by the blood of Christ. For what purpose? How do we respond? How do we show thanks for this unmerited love?

Our response can take many forms. We know we are all to put God first, others second, display the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, and use wisely the gift the Spirit gives us, etc. But how does this apply specifically to me or to you.

One of the ways in my life has been to share time and resources in the fight against hunger. At one time this included gleaning at a Harvest of Hope, the UT farm, a farmer/neighborhood garden/orchard, etc. As things changed, it became more about helping at food drops, gleaning at farmer's markets and retailers, repacking food, etc. Through it all, it has been the opportunity to support The Society of St. Andrew with prayer and gifts.

In a sense all these activities lead to saving (redeeming) food from loss, i.e. redirecting it to God's children who for whatever reason would otherwise go without.

Prayer: Dear God thank you for redeeming me. Help me to live my life so that it is a pleasing response to your love. Amen.

Alvin Jenkins — Margville, TN



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Tuesday, March 28

Please and Thank You

Scripture: Ephesians 1:10

Recently, I had the privilege of leading my family in a service of thanksgiving for the life of my mother, Lottie Wade. As I reflected upon her nearly 98 years of life, I felt compelled to share her simple childhood teaching of how to live with others and with God...to say “please and thank you”.



Through the Great Depression, World War II, the Atomic Bomb and subsequent wars and terrors, she trusted God's promises. During her own personal bouts with cancer, spinal meningitis, a debilitating stroke, the grief of widowhood and the passing of many loved ones, she relied upon His tender mercies. I

pondered how many countless petitions of “please” she and we had offered before God's throne of grace during nearly a century of life.

Then I marveled at how many times over those years, especially in the past weeks with Hospice care, we had occasions to say “Thank You” for God's grace working wonders in our lives.

More significant than the physical/financial blessings God showered upon her and our family are the spiritual blessings celebrated by Saint Paul. God the Father has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing so we should be holy and blameless before Him.

Redemption, forgiveness...the seal of the Holy Spirit...all the immeasurable riches of His grace lavished upon us.

How else could we respond to God, even in our grief, but to say “Thank You”?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you love us so. Help us to be your trusting and thankful children. Amen.

William Nash Wade — Strasburg, VA

Redeemed

Scripture: Ephesians 1:7-8

When learning of SOSA's Lent 2023 theme, Redeemed, a picture immediately came to mind. Over eight years ago, there was a porn shop on our town's main street. Obviously, this was very upsetting to many of us. Eventually this shop closed and the property sold. Soon, a huge banner appeared over the front door proclaiming in large letters, "Redeemed." Hallelujah! I thanked God for this redemption.

The definitions of redeem include purchase, to get or win back, to free from what distresses or harms, to free from captivity by payment or ransom, or to extricate from or help to overcome something detrimental. How perfect and appropriate!

The new shop in this space is a faith-based, non-profit which sells handcrafted items, made by victims of human trafficking from around the world as well as those who are local. These crafts employ, empower, and support these survivors. 100% of the profits fund this mission which includes educating youth on the dangers of human trafficking and empowering and mobilizing communities to counteract this injustice.

Prayer: Father God, we thank you for your gift of grace and redemption. Amen.

Carolyn Store Purdy — Harrisonburg, VA

Bottle Cap Movies and Galilean Preachers

Scripture: 2 Kings 5

Growing up, we kids collected Double Cola bottle caps. We didn't drink many sodas but found caps strewn on the ground beside the road. We'd eagerly pick up those caps, hoping we'd find enough. Enough was ten—as many as it took to get into a bottle cap summer matinee at the Center Theater.

Somebody's mom would drop us off, and we'd march up to the window, announcing, "We have bottle caps!" "You gonna redeem them caps for a show today, kids?" the raspy-voiced attendant asked, giving us a colored paper ticket

in exchange for our caps. We'd run in to take our seats, not wanting to miss any of the pre-show entertainment in front of the lush velvet curtains.

In an instant, with the transfer of just ten caps, a boring summer day was redeemed, transformed into incomparable adventure by a Laurel and Hardy comedy or Daniel Boone drama. And we'd re-live it through the next week, roaming, running, hiding, and yelling around every corner of the neighborhood. For only ten bottle caps, redemption was ours.



Do you remember Elisha and Naaman? Formerly a man of power, Naaman is isolated by leprosy and anxious to be healed—redeemed, if you will. He desperately hopes the prophet Elisha can make him whole. But Elisha isn't who Naaman expects! He sends a courier, telling Naaman he'll be healed if he only bathes seven times in the River Jordan. Naaman is outraged! Being healed—redeemed—can't be that easy! Yet it is.

A week of glorious make-believe couldn't be as inexpensive as ten bottle caps, dug from the roadside dirt. Yet it was!

A life of discipleship couldn't be as simple as walking beside a Galilean preacher. Yet it is.

Prayer: Lord, in your call, we find our purpose, our joy, and our way. Claim us as your own, and redeem us to do your will. Amen.

Lynette Johnson — Buena Vista, VA

The Old Center Theatre in Huntsville, AL

Friday, March 31

Redeemed for What?

Scripture: Ephesians 2:8-10

Most evangelical believers cut their teeth on Ephesians 2:8-9. We learned these verses in Vacation Bible School as children and memorized them in witness training classes as adults. They are the key biblical words on which our understanding of our relationship with the Creator and Redeemer God is based. We cannot purchase this relationship (which, of course, doesn't keep

people from trying); we cannot earn it and we do not deserve it. That we have been redeemed by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the Father of Jesus is all of grace.

What I want to know is redeemed for what? Now that we are redeemed, now what? That's where verse 10 comes in. We have been redeemed "to do good works." My understanding of "good works" is more than volunteering in the nursery during worship. Rather, it's what Jesus did—minister to the sick and imprisoned, feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and so forth (see Matthew 25).

Ephesians 2:10 says clearly we have been graced by God so we can grace others. One of the best ways to do that is serve people at the point of their need. There is no better expression of grace than to serve a person in need in Jesus' name. To be that another way, we are never more like Jesus than when we serve others.

Prayer: Lord of grace and love, make us faithful conduits of your grace, so that those who need to know how much you love them, will indeed make that discovery through endless mercy. Amen.

David Crocker — Lenoir City, TN

Saturday, April 1

All Things Can Be Redeemed!

Scripture: Psalm 25:1-7, 20

When reading this Psalm, it reminds me of the depth of the word, "redeemed." The past tense of this word is a relief – it is a completed act!

Psalm 25, we can see that a reputation can be redeemed (v 2-4;). Our daily walk, and our past can be redeemed (v 4-7.) The most heart wrenching words are: "Guard my life and rescue me; do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you (v 20.)

Moving toward current times, many people who find they need assistance with food for themselves and their children, may feel shame! They are crying out to God to rescue them. Some are those are the newly needy, the working poor, whose rising utility bills, food bills, and fuel for their cars in numbers rising much faster than their paycheck! People who have never before needed assistance are walking a brand new path as they seek help.

The Society of St. Andrew works to redeem healthy fruits and vegetables, and this food redeems the health and self-worth of people in need.

Prayer: Dear Lord, you created us as beings with many needs – physical health, spiritual health, and appropriate “self-worth” health. Thank you for redeeming all these areas of our lives. Thank you for providing good food in a safe atmosphere, to take care of the physical and “self” health of those who are hungry. Amen.

Betty Easter – Bedford, VA

Palm Sunday, April 2

Mutual Support in Community Scripture: Deuteronomy 24:18–22

In Deuteronomy, redemption not only frees Israel from slavery but also establishes Israel as a covenantal community. Covenantal community includes mutual support that embraces all in the community, including those who live on the edge of survival.

The passage calls those responsible for land to leave sheaves, olives, and grapes in the fields for aliens, widows, and orphans. When people wonder where they will get their next meal, they may not be fully available to participate in community. Gleaning offers resources that relieve the everyday anxiety of survival and make it possible for gleaners to increase their support for the community. Indeed, gleaning is one of God’s structures of providence.

When people responsible for land left things in the field they said, “Yes, we believe in covenantal community. We commit ourselves to the structures of mutual support unfolded in Deuteronomy.” Today, we need to change systems that create human need. But while systems are changing, we, too, need to feed people day by day. Gleaning helps do that. Gleaning as practiced by the Society of Saint Andrew is part of the structure of God’s providence.

Prayer: Living God, we thank you for redemption. We especially thank you for redeeming us for mutual support in community. We ask you to help us not only share the gleanings from our lives, but to work for the changes in our world that will lead to an end to hunger and allow everyone to live fully and freely. Amen.

Ronald J. Allen – Indianapolis, IN

Abundance and Redemption

Scripture: Romans 15:13

Two brothers had a hard home life. Older brother, Johnny, charged himself with Malcolm's well-being. Leaving home amid violence, Johnny absorbed the worst to spare Malcolm. Thankfully, the brothers were welcomed into their aunt's home.

One day, their aunt heard rustling in the kitchen. Startled, she walked towards the pantry. She saw Johnny with four cans of food rolled up in his shirt. Johnny led her back to his room, showed her a collection of cans, and confessed to taking the food.

"I was just making sure Malcolm had enough to eat," he whispered. As she grabbed each can, she responded: "Johnny, the corn in the pantry is YOURS! The Ravioli is

YOURS! You don't have to take it. It belongs to you and Malcolm!"



Not fiction, this actually happened. Johnny and Malcolm were loved, nurtured, and fed by their aunt and by our church. These are the first people I think about when I hear the word "redeemed." Society of St. Andrew is a bright light in the world, not

only shining the light on hunger and food insecurity, but also making possible the miracle of redemption in many homes across our country. Like Johnny learned late that night, God's abundance always out-sizes our hopes when caring for our brother or sister. Through SoSA, we can learn abundance is already ours to share, and God's pantry is big enough for all.

Prayer: Generous God, remind us we are responsible for each other. Remind us, who follow Jesus, we are called to share. Remind us that in God's pantry, there is enough for all. Amen.

Bruce Case — Jackson, MS

NBD - No Big Deal

Scripture: Proverbs 22:6

I discovered joy in woodworking because I get to create something of value using my hands. Yet, as a parent of young children, I get very little time to myself.

One recent Saturday, I planned to spend my morning refinishing and converting an old door into a headboard. To avoid interruption, when my 5year old asked to help, I gave her a scrap of wood from a previous project, a hammer, and some nails. I hoped she would bang on that “useless” piece of wood all morning.

However, as she swung her hammer for the first time, she bent her nail and became upset. She thought it was broken and feared my disappointment because she couldn’t “fix” it. I explained bent nails are easily straightened and grabbed her hammer to demonstrate.



As I straightened her nail, drove it home, and hoped to return to my task, I carelessly said, “NBD, no big deal...” . As my daughter watched, listened, and absorbed that moment, her tears stopped. She smiled and then parroted me, “NBD dad, no big deals”. As my heart warmed and eyes welled, I decided right then to spend the rest of my very limited “free morning” setting and driving nails into scrap wood.

Looking back, God redeemed my morning for something of eternal value—a father investing in his child’s heart.

Prayer: Merciful Father, we give thanks for the countless ways you teach us about your great character. Amen.

Andy Lemmon — Brandon, MS

Wednesday, April 5

Faith Redeemed

Scripture: Colossians 1:13-14

I was in the depths of darkness and despair - in the horns of a dilemma both personally and professionally. I seriously needed God’s redeeming grace.

We were in Kentucky to visit The Ark. Unbeknownst to us when we made our plans, for forty days every year, there is a two hour concert in the late afternoon! One of the groups that day was Brian Free and Assurance. The following words blew me away:

“Don’t lose hope!

Don’t stop this side of a miracle!

Out on the edge of the impossible!

Keep on trusting there’s a bigger plan!

You’ll see just what the Lord can do!

Believe whatever is up ahead of you!

You may look up but don’t give up this side of a miracle!”

My hope had been wavering. A solution seemed impossible. I was forgetting to trust or even sense God’s plan. The song brought me back to my faith... redeeming it all.

May the God of hope fill you with peace and joy as you trust in the redeeming power of the Holy Spirit.



Photo credit: Silvia Recinos

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the gift of music and restoring my faith and trust in you. Thank you for redeeming me, bringing me out of darkness into the light. Amen.

Kathleen Price - Williamsburg, VA

Thursday, April 6

God's Amazing Grace

Scripture: Ephesians 1:7-8

Grace....a wonderful, simple, powerful word! The riches of God's grace are so overwhelming and abundant. So why do we not feel that joy and excitement and unconditional love every day?

It can be so easy to get stuck in the everyday tasks. In my privileged world, I manage a full time job, our household with two children, two cats and my husband, the myriad of extracurricular events, keeping up with extended family and friends and all the other life things that happen.

It can be overwhelming, and I forget to look for the good. I forget to remember whenever I fail, whenever I stumble, whenever I fall away from my relationship with God, God is always there.

Why is it so hard to recognize, especially when I am at my lowest lows? It's in these times I have to work to change my perspective and focus. Those lows don't seem as bad when I renew my relationship with God. Even if I am yelling and crying out to God in sorrow and anger, God's constant presence reminds me I am a beautiful child of God, and there is nothing I can do to make God not love me.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the riches of your grace and for the power of unconditional love. Help us to always remember you are there, and there is not anything that can separate us from your love. Amen.

Tresca McSwain - Charlotte, NC

Friday, April 7

Known and Accepted

Scripture: Ephesians 1:7-8

When I married my husband, we gave our solemn vows to love and choose each other, no matter what the future may hold. Sickness or health, riches or poverty, I made a commitment to the person standing before me, but also to the person he would become. Everyone who has made that sacred marital promise hopes they will like that spouse of the future and feel the same sense of adoration, no matter the turnout.

We see in these verses that it was with full wisdom and understanding that God chose to forgive our sins in the richness of his grace. He didn't just love us in our loveliest state, like an adorned bride on her wedding day. He committed to us knowing what mistakes we would make, sins we would commit, and ugliness in our hearts we would have to repent of. He embraces us fully, eyes wide open. Nothing we could do catches him off guard or could ever make him change his mind about us.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for loving me and choosing to forgive me, even when you had a full knowledge of the ways I would fall short. Thank you for Jesus' sacrifice, whose blood covering allows me to never be cut off from your abounding love, favor, grace, and power. Amen.

Joell Denison - Richmond, VA



Daily Redemption

Scripture: Ephesians 1:7-8

I will never forget walking away from the courthouse after signing the final paperwork for my divorce. A divorce that I had initiated out of selfishness. I felt broken. Alone. Dirty. Like I had turned my back on wisdom, ignored understanding, and made a mistake I could never come back from. Maybe this was something the Lord would not be willing to forgive me for. After all, He had already forgiven me for immensely more than He should have.

Now, happily married with three children, I am so grateful God is not only merciful enough to redeem us from our sins, but gracious enough to give us undeserved blessings. Like the Bible says in I Corinthians 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect." He redeems me every day. It brings such joy and peace to know He is faithful, even when I am not, and will never be farther away than I can cry out to Him for forgiveness and redemption.

Prayer: Dear Lord, I praise you that you are the God of mercy, and that I can come to You in tears and know you will never turn me away. Please give increase to my wisdom even as I continue to turn to you for daily redemption. Amen.

Laura Worosher - Richmond, VA



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The Riches of God's Grace

Scripture: Ephesians 2:7-8

Riches. The word brings to mind money and the trappings of wealth. One of my favorite comic books growing up was Richie Rich, second only to Archie and his gang. I could lose myself in the fantasy of a house with so many rooms that you forget the existence of entire wings and might find an eccentric uncle living there unnoticed for years. Or going through your closet and finding rolls of bills bursting out of forgotten coats. Images of so much money that you could swim in it like Scrooge McDuck.

If I apply that idea of riches to God's gift of grace – it is even more wonderful! Grace that is never ending, that you can swim in a pool of...because I NEED that much grace. I'm a mess.

It is difficult to grasp Unconditional Love – I don't have children but understand the love of a parent for a child is probably as close to the concept as we get here on earth. Once, when I was in my early 20s, I tested my mother's love. I accidentally stayed out all night (too long to tell here). I arrived home as dawn was breaking, and she was on the porch before I could get out of my car. The first thing she did was hug me tightly. Grace.

Prayer: Father God, we don't deserve your grace and mercy. We couldn't buy it with all the money in the world. Thank you for your generosity and love. Amen.

Chris Howell - Madison Heights, VA





Society of St. Andrew

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Hunger Relief Ministries of The Society of St. Andrew

Gleaning Network — A hands-on mission program for all ages, getting healthy food directly from fields and markets to the hungry people who need it most. The Gleaning Network brings together farmers with excess produce, volunteers to glean (pick, dig, or gather) that produce, and agencies feeding the hungry. People in need glean alongside people with plenty in this community-based program, that engages individuals, congregations, and civic organizations in service.

Potato & Produce Project — A produce salvage program, providing direct food relief to our nation's poor, while addressing one of the major causes of hunger: food waste. The Potato & Produce Project salvages and distributes hundreds of tractor-trailer loads of fresh fruits and vegetables to food banks, soup kitchens, and other feeding agencies each year.

Seed Project — A self-help program, providing seed potatoes purchased by The Society of St. Andrew to impoverished rural communities, where people have access to land for gardening. Families plant, cultivate, and harvest their own crops, realizing a yield of about eight pounds of potatoes per pound planted.

Harvest of Hope — A hunger-focused work/study mission program. Participants glean and distribute produce remaining in fields after harvest each morning and learn about the realities of hunger each evening. Bible study and dynamic worship round out days of Christian community and service, providing a basis for on-going commitment to ending hunger. Harvest of Hope offers middle school, high school, and intergenerational events throughout the summer. Alternative College Spring Break programs also available.

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The Society of St. Andrew, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, grassroots interfaith ministry, has been working toward a world without hunger since 1979.

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