

**“You Shall Be My Witness”
“Life Changing Witness”**

We are STILL in Easter. While Lent is forty days, the Celebration of Easter is fifty days, ending with Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit. During these Easter days, our readings will mostly focus on lives that are changed because they experienced the resurrected Jesus. They, then become witnesses to the new life Christ offers. The purpose of the church and particularly the Easter season is to know new life in Jesus and to witness to the resurrection in our life and spirit. We are sent as witnesses to what God has and is and will do in the world. Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen, Indeed!!! ---Pastor Cindy

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon: "Life Changing Witness"

Prayer for the Week

Holy are you, God of the risen Christ. Wonderful are you, God of grace and beauty! Glorious are you, God of eternal life! We bring before you, most loving God, that mixture of eagerness and reluctance, truth and distortion, love and indifference, which make up our human nature. We bring the totality of our true selves to you, holding nothing back. Please bless us according to our individual needs, and lift us up from all distraction into the deep joy of love and worship. Through Christ Jesus our brother, savior and friend. Amen. (Adapted from a prayer by Bruce Prewer)

Study Guide

Monday, April 30, 2018 John 15: 5-9

Jesus promises his disciples and us that if we deepen our relationship with him, we will have everything we need to live deeply and abundantly. Our lives will reflect the love and grace of God and lives will be changed and touched by God because of how we “abide” in Christ. We love, because Christ has loved us and strengthened up and nourished our spirits. That love, which we encounter with Jesus strengthens us to witness to the risen Christ. *How are you connected to the vine that strengthens and nourishes you? How does that connection help your witness in the world?*

Tuesday, May 1, 2018 John 15: 10-13

Christ does not use the metaphor of vine and branches just so that we might have everything we need. Although, we are promised that we will have what we need. We are nourished and nurtured for a purpose, which is to keep the commandment to love God and love each other and to show the world the love God has for it. If we do this, Christ say, we will know joy as Christ has known joy. Our relationship with Christ, feeds our hungry hearts and spirits, nurtures us so that our lives reflect all the good things God has to offer the world. This nurture is so we can be witnesses to Christ, to the love of God, the grace offered and to the resurrection of Jesus. *Today, spend some time in Christ, and be nurtured, loved and cared for.*

Wednesday, May 2, 2018 Acts 9: 1- 9

Saul was still “spewing” and “breathing” threats against those early disciples and believers. Saul had a vendetta against those followers of Jesus. Like many who have deep beliefs, Saul was perhaps afraid of the challenge these believers were given to his faith. All faiths struggle with reformation, with new life and hope given with new insights and promises. Saul and others were upset by this “Jesus” movement. Saul was determined to stamp it out. On the road, Saul experiences Jesus. He is stunned and overwhelmed by this experience. He doesn’t eat or drink for 3 days. Experiencing the risen Christ can truly turn a life, change a life, and transform a life. Saul is absolutely changed by Jesus. This experience not only changes Saul, but literally transforms the church into what it would become. *Today, ponder your own story. Perhaps not as dramatic as Saul’s, but how was your life changed by your experience of the risen Jesus?*

Thursday, May 3, 2018 Acts 9: 10-16

This story of Saul is not just about one conversation but two. Ananias also must wrestle with changed lives and his own doubt about the power of Jesus to truly transform a person. Ananias knew all about Saul, about his delight in the death of Stephen and his vendetta against the early church. Can you blame him for being suspicious of Saul’s change of heart? I think all of us want to believe that people can change, but probably all of us have experienced how people do not. Ananias follows the directive to be a witness to Saul in order for Saul to be filled with the Holy Spirit and fulfill his purpose and call. *Have you ever struggled with some one’s transformation? How did you reconcile what you thought you knew with the change Christ had brought in someone?*

Friday, May 4, 2018 Acts 9: 17-20

Ananias goes to Saul, prays for him and lays his hands about him. After that, he ate and began to witness the risen Christ, the Christ who changes lives. Jesus certainly saved Saul. Saul’s conversion literally changed the course of the church. It was Saul, who will become Paul, who truly opened the door to all people. It was Paul who preached to the gentiles and considered them equals. SAUL....who fought to keep his faith pure, and then encountered Jesus and turned the world upside down! Saul was a witness, not just to a few people but for all people. Saul’s life was changed and his witness transformed the world. All of us are called to be witnesses and through our witness transform the world. *Today, pray for your witness to make a difference.*