



# The Senior Scene



*Love people. Know Jesus. Live Transformed.*

Volume 34

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## New... Every Day

*Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassion never fails. It is new every morning; great is His faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)*

Do you ever feel overwhelmed by life or like your heart is engaged in a constant battle?

We have an enemy that seeks to “consume” us. Every day we deal with temptation and falsehoods and hurts. We are often misunderstood or misrepresented. We see injustice and corruption in the world around us. We suffer from physical illness and injury. Spiritually, we have weaknesses and at times we have given in rather than stand and fight. We are tired. We are discouraged. Our strength is sapped. Our hopes and plans and actions have too often failed. We face hardship and pain. Perhaps there are times when we wonder if our faith walk is worth it. So far, this devotional article is a bit of a downer! But... we take heart.

In Jeremiah's day, the people of Israel faced the same doubts and fears. They had much to be downcast about. Their nation and city and temple were in ruins. Many of their people had died and most of those still living had been exiled. The few people that remained felt abandoned by God. They were wondering – where is God in our pain?

But after writing nearly 2000 words of lament and anguish, Jeremiah then expresses total confidence in God's faithfulness. He comes to the conclusion we read in our opening verse.

The hardships of life intersect with the deliverance of mercy and compassion. Jeremiah didn't dismiss the troubles and suffering of this life. But they are always offset by God's never-failing love and compassion. In the suffering, there is always hope. The same is true in our lives. Our troubles will not end until we reach eternity. But re-read our verse – we are not consumed! His compassion never fails; it is new every morning! As we reflect on these words, we can face our difficult times with courage and hope

because this passage reminds us who we are and what we have as children of God.

His steadfast, faithful love covers us even when we have done nothing to deserve it and there is no way for us to earn it. It is His gift to us. Every morning, He supplies His great mercy and grace, flowing to us from a never-ending, renewable fountain. Complete coverage! Always! It never fails... it never ceases. We receive a new supply every day. Fresh mercy—custom-made to cover whatever I face *that* day. Given to each one of us personally and specifically for *our* difficulties and weaknesses. It meets me right where I am and gives me just what I need... right now.

God will never give up on us, even when we stumble under the stresses of our world. He will never walk away from us or regret that He has invited us into His family. He loves us just as much on our worst day as He does on our best day.

This side of eternity can be hard. And yes, we too often become discouraged. But every day is a new day to open our hearts to His love; a new occasion to yield our daily failures and discouragements to His great mercy and grace; a new opportunity to be transformed more into Christlikeness; another day to recognize that we are not alone in whatever we face but have a loving Father whose compassions never fail. Great is His faithfulness!



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## Winter/Spring Bible Study

### **The Parables of Jesus**

**Thursdays February 26 thru April 16**  
**at 10AM**  
**in the Edinburgh Room.**

Jesus often used ordinary situations to communicate extraordinary truth. In this study, we will explore Jesus' kingdom-focused parables to see how stories told over 2000 years ago are still life-changing today as they reveal the mysteries of the kingdom of God.



### **What is Lent?**

The season of Lent—the 40-day period leading up to Easter. We acknowledge it every spring but what does it mean to us?

Lent is **not** a biblical command or event. And yet it is an intentional time for the practice of many biblical disciplines. It is a season of penitence, prayer, meditation, and reflection. It provides intentional time to pursue a renewed relationship with God and to cry out to God about the brokenness around us and within us. Lent invites us to refocus on our spiritual life.

At the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, the Church determined that Easter should be celebrated on the Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox. At that time, Lent was formalized into a 40-day period prior to Easter.

Why 40 days? The council chose a 40-day period because the number has roots in biblical accounts.

- God sent rain on the earth for 40 days and 40 nights after Noah and his family enter the ark (Gen 7:4).
- The Israelites spent 40 years in the wilderness (Ex 16:35)
- Moses spent 40 days fasting on Mt. Sinai (Ex 34:28).
- Elijah walked 40 days and nights to the mountain of God when he flees Jezebel's wrath (1 K 19:8).
- The 40 days of Lent, however, are primarily identified with the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness fasting and praying and being tempted by the devil (Mt 4:1–11).

These are all times of testing. During these events, God worked on hearts and minds, leading His people to a deeper recognition of their need for Him.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. The name of this day is symbolic since the day is often commemorated by receiving ashes on the forehead. Marking oneself with ashes goes back to the Old Testament times of people used ashes and sackcloth when mourning or making a petition or repenting to God. (Est 4:1, Job 42:6, Dan 9:3, Jonah 3:6) Ashes still symbolize sorrow and repentance over our sins.

The biblical practices of fasting, Scripture meditation, prayer, sabbath, and solitude are emphasized during Lent to allow us to enter into purposeful time with Jesus with the result of being transformed into His image as we prepare our hearts for Easter.



### **Ash Wednesday Elder-Led Prayer Service**

In preparing our hearts for Lent, we invite you to join us on Ash Wednesday, February 18 at 7PM for a special elder-led prayer service.



Be on the lookout for fraudulent texts and emails that appear to come from a member of staff, particularly one of the pastors.

**NO ONE** on staff at MPC will ever request gift cards, favors or financial assistance via email or text. If you receive one of these requests, check the sender's address. Emails truly originating from MPC will be sent from the address **NAME@memorialparkchurch.org**, or **NAME@mpcepc.org**.

If you receive a suspicious text and do not recognize the number or they are not in your Contacts, please **"Delete and Report Junk"**.

If you are uncertain about a text or email, feel free to contact the church office at (412) 364-9492 or via email at [communications@memorialparkchurch.org](mailto:communications@memorialparkchurch.org).

## Nearer, My God, To Thee

Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!  
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,  
still all my song shall be,  
nearer, my God, to thee;  
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Though like the wanderer, the sun gone down,  
darkness be over me, my rest a stone;  
yet in my dreams I'd be  
nearer, my God, to thee;  
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

There let the way appear, steps unto heaven;  
all that thou sendest me, in mercy given;  
angels to beckon me  
nearer, my God, to thee;  
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Then, with my waking thoughts bright with thy praise,  
out of my stony griefs Bethel I'll raise;  
so by my woes to be  
nearer, my God, to thee;  
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Or if, on joyful wing cleaving the sky,  
sun, moon, and stars forgot, upward I fly,  
still all my song shall be,  
nearer, my God, to thee;  
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Sarah Flower Adams lived in a time of political reform. Her father, an editor of a radical weekly paper was once imprisoned for 6 months for criticizing a bishop. Her pastor, William J. Fox, fought the unpopular fight for rights of women and freedom of the press. Her husband, William Adams, wrote for political causes that were considered "liberal" in his day. Sarah's original interest was in theater. She successfully performed in an 1837 production of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, but she did not have the physical strength for theater, and she found purpose in writing poems and hymns.



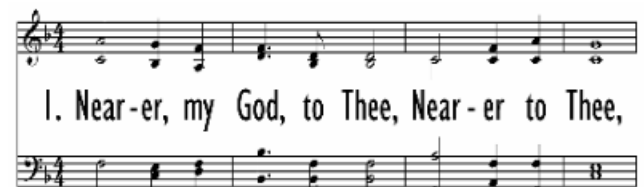
Nearer, My God, To Thee is her best-known hymn. She wrote it in 1841 when Rev. Fox was looking for a hymn for the following week's sermon on Genesis 28:10-22, the story of "Jacob's ladder." The passage tells of Jacob's experience at Bethel.

While traveling, Jacob found a stone for a pillow one night and had a dream of angels ascending and descending a ladder. Following his dream he built an altar out of the stone on which he had slept.

The lyrics draw heavily from this Genesis passage where Jacob dreams of angels ascending and descending a ladder to heaven.

Sarah offered to write the hymn and completed it within the week to go along with the pastor's sermon. Jacob's vow to return to God's house and to give a tithe of his resources to God becomes, in Adams' interpretation, a more personal longing for heaven—to ascend the ladder with the angels—"on joyful wing, cleaving the sky, . . . upward I fly." Her sister, Eliza Flower, wrote the music for the original version.

Adams' unifying theme is to be nearer to God. If one sings all five stanzas, the singer will voice the phrase "Nearer, My God, to Thee" or "nearer to thee" 16 times! The hymn reflects a personal faith and relationship with God that was common in the 19th century.



The song became more well known, and in 1856, it was sung to a new melody composed by American musician and composer, Lowell Mason, which is the tune we are familiar with today.

Sarah went on to write 13 more hymns, as well as publishing *The Flock at the Fountain* (1845), a catechism with songs for children.

Having cared for her sister who died in 1846 of tuberculosis, she succumbed to the same disease in 1848 at the age of 43.

The hymn has been featured in many television shows and movies, the most famous being 1997's *Titanic*, in a scene that is rumored to mirror the actual event of the ship's band playing "Nearer, My God, to Thee" to calm the passengers while the Titanic was sinking, although the actual occurrence is debated by historians.

The hymn is associated with two assassinated presidents. The hymn was played as President James Garfield's body was interred in 1881. President William McKinley was said to have quoted the hymn just before his assassination in 1901; bands played it upon the announcement of his death. The hymn was also played at the funeral for President Ford, cementing its association with solemn occasions.

# People of the New Testament - The leftover letters reveal this month's Scripture

A	P	O	L	L	O	S	T	H	E	R	L	U	A	P	T	W	E	F	C
M	B	A	R	N	A	B	U	S	T	H	E	W	I	S	E	M	E	N	E
A	A	W	P	H	I	L	E	M	O	N	O	L	I	R	A	C	R	B	N
R	R	R	E	E	E	C	H	O	N	F	I	T	D	T	L	E	A	S	T
Y	A	S	Y	H	T	Y	A	O	U	H	P	N	T	E	R	R	J	S	U
M	B	S	S	M	T	E	I	I	P	A	A	H	O	N	T	J	U	I	R
A	B	S	U	T	O	T	R	O	B	E	I	P	A	H	O	M	D	M	I
G	U	J	C	T	H	T	A	E	O	A	A	T	O	S	E	O	A	O	O
D	S	S	O	H	I	E	H	M	S	S	R	L	E	D	R	A	S	N	N
A	S	N	U	H	D	T	C	E	P	I	O	P	O	E	R	S	I	O	A
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E	T	J	E	Y	S	O	C	A	U	T	T	J	J	R	M	A	R	R	I
T	I	M	O	T	H	Y	R	C	A	H	Y	L	E	K	B	L	I	E	C
E	H	A	N	A	N	I	A	S	A	E	A	E	S	S	A	I	O	N	I
A	L	E	D	T	M	I	H	D	E	Z	P	R	U	A	U	P	T	E	L
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Q	E	A	W	S	E	S	R	F	U	O	T	L	A	N	D	T	E	E	F
A	S	D	O	U	B	T	I	N	G	T	H	O	M	A	S	N	F	E	C
S	T	E	P	H	E	N	A	T	I	R	A	M	A	S	D	O	O	G	T
E	L	I	Z	A	B	E	T	H	I	V	E	J	O	S	E	P	H	X	X

ANANIAS

ANDREW

APOLLOS

AQUILA

AUGUSTUS

BARABBUS

BARNABAS

BARTHOLOMEW

CAIAPHAS

CENTURION

CLEOPAS

DOUBTING THOMAS



ELIZABETH

GOOD SAMARITAN

HEROD

JAMES

JESUS

JOHN

JOHN THE BAPTIST

JOSEPH

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

JUDAS ISCARIOT

JUDE

LAZARUS



LUKE

MARK

MARTHA

MARY MAGDALENE

MARY MOTHER OF JESUS

MATTHEW

MATTHIAS

NICODEMUS

PAUL

PETER

PHILEMON

PHILIP



PONTIUS PILATE

PRICILLA

SILAS

SIMON OF CYRENE

SIMON THE ZEALOT

STEPHEN

THADDEUS

THE WISE MEN

TIMOTHY

TITUS

ZACCHAEUS

ZECHARIAH

