

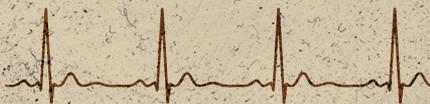


PREPARING OUR

Heart



21 Day Devotional



Thank you for joining us on this 21-day journey from Friday, March 17th to April 7th (Good Friday). We are inviting the entire NCC community to join us during this time to pray and fast. Fasting is an ancient practice of removing ourselves from something we depend on, often food, to remember your satisfaction comes from God.

Your first step in joining us on this journey is to choose how you will fast during this time. Look back over the last few weeks and consider something that is just a normal, everyday part of your life that you depend on regularly. Do you depend on the television to help you wind down at the end of the day? Do you need to check and post on social media to feel connected? Where are you finding your regular comfort and satisfaction?

This is not a time to only remove sinful behaviors but is a challenge to remove something that is a normal, daily need that may even be a good thing. This is to remind yourself that your true satisfaction comes from God. This is why I want to encourage you to fast from something as mentioned above but also, for at least a portion of these 21 days, consider also fasting from food if your health allows for it. You can fast from food for a set amount of time each day or for a certain part of the day (sunrise/sunset). Remember that this is not a sort of “holy diet” but a time to remember where your ultimate satisfaction comes from.

As you fast, ask the Lord to accomplish His will in your life individually and in the church corporately. That His work would be abundantly clear and evident in you and us. Please pray with us that God would be seen as the God that He is, worthy of worship and praise. Please pray for new and renewed opportunities to be a part of His kingdom work here in our neighborhood.

Finally, consider a few warnings as you approach this time of fasting with the church. Beware of trying to use this fast to manipulate God toward your goals, instead use it as an opportunity to lean into His will for your life. Beware of allowing your fast to bring pride rather than humility in your heart. Beware if this does not disrupt your normal rhythms, this should be uncomfortable.

Remember to always fast in grace.

Scott Solimine



Day 1

Fast Intentionally March 17th • Scott Soliminie

Today's Reading is Matthew 6:16-18 NIV

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

As we begin this fast together let me remind you to do this intentionally. Intentionality in a fast means that you will have things in place to make sure that your fast is not a show for others to watch.

Jesus addresses the behaviors of the hypocrites. This word hypocrites literally means the stage actors. They had made a show out of their fasting to draw attention to themselves. Jesus says to “put oil on your head and wash your face” as a way to make sure that **we are fasting for God not for the attention we will receive from others**. Make sure this time of fasting is not a show but a *genuine* time for you to remember your ultimate satisfaction is with God.



What do you need to do today to protect the next 21 days from becoming a show?

What does it look like for you to fast intentionally?

What do you need to focus on during our fast?

Our father we release our expectations of this time. Would you do in us what you alone can do? Would you remind us how much greater your satisfaction is than anything else that may be in our lives? Speak into our lives in the way you desire to. Amen





Day 2

Actively Fast

March 18th • Scott Soliminie

Today's Reading is Isaiah 58:6-9 NIV

*“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.
Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.
“If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing
finger and malicious talk,”*

As we experience the hunger pains and the draw to return to our normal rhythms of life, it is easy to allow the focus to be on you. That this time is only about *you losing something*. **Notice that the fasting that God says he has chosen in the reading above is *one that gives*.**



As we loosen our grip on our everyday rhythms, we are also invited to grab onto the needs of others. Justice, providing shelter, and clothing others all take sacrifice. As you fast from your needs, would you consider ways you can provide for others.

Who in your life is in need?

How is God leading you to provide for others in your time of fasting?

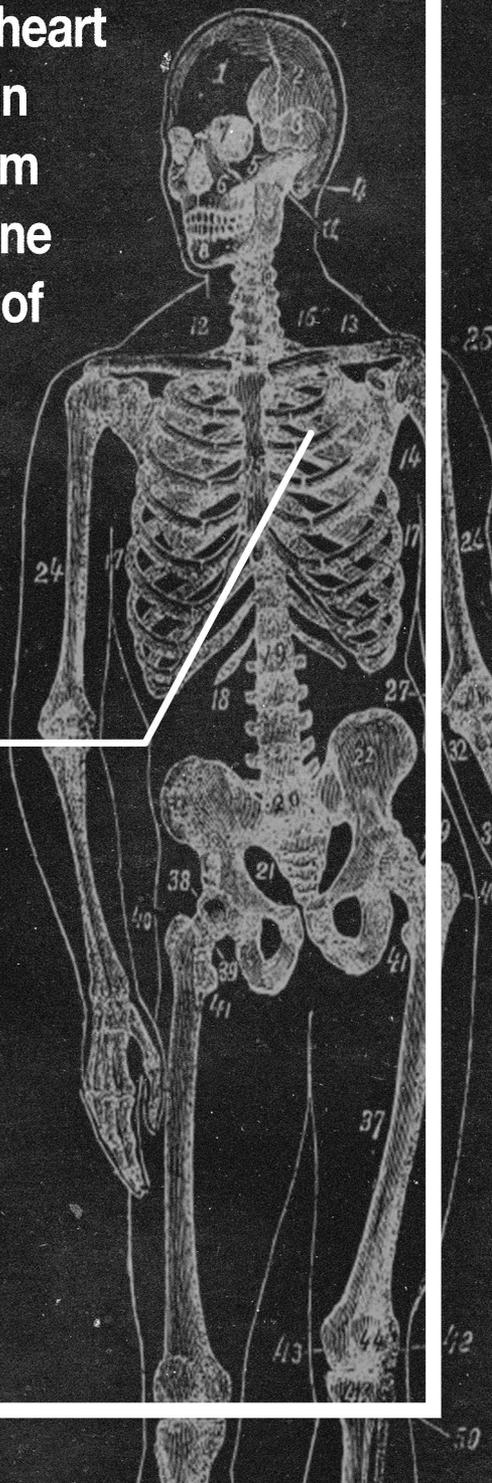
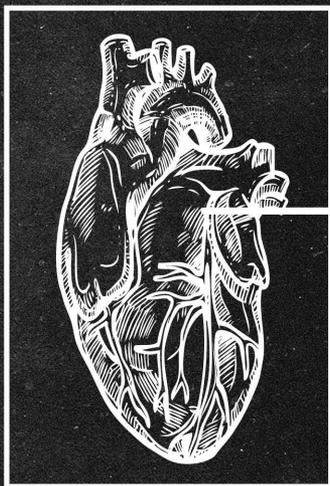
How might you bring about the kinds of actions described in the passage above?

Heavenly Father, guide me to see those around me clearly. Would you give me a burden for what burdens others? Please provide opportunities for me to use this time to bring about a true fast as you described in your word. Amen.



**I will give you a new heart
and put a new spirit in
you; I will remove from
you your heart of stone
and give you a heart of
flesh.**

- Ezekiel 36:26





Day 3 • March 19th • Andrew Todd
Sermon Notes





Day 4

Intentional Prayer March 20th • Andrew Todd

Today's Reading is Matthew 6:5-8 NIV

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

Growing up I thought people who prayed out loud and used words I didn't understand were somehow holier and loved by God more. Relate? But when I read these verses in Matthew, it continues to remind me that **God isn't looking for us to seem holier than thou in our prayers but to pray to Him with pure hearts.**

In these verses, Jesus teaches us about the importance of sincere prayer that is directed toward God and not for the purpose of impressing others or gaining attention.

As Christians, **prayer is a vital part of our spiritual walk.** It is through prayer that we can communicate freely and directly to God. We express our love and gratitude, seek wisdom and counsel, and ask for His blessings. However, if we aren't careful we can fall into the trap of praying for show rather than for God.



Jesus reminds us that God already knows what we need because He's our Good Father. Our prayers then should not be about trying to seem holier but rather to develop a deeper relationship with our Heavenly Father. **We can come to Him with a humble heart, seeking his guidance and wisdom and trusting that He will provide for us.**

I recommend we approach God in our prayers today with humble hearts. Try this by starting your prayer literally kneeling and/or being still for a moment in God's presence before ever uttering a word. Then, ask God to search your heart for any offensive way as David did in Psalm 139. When we approach God this way it has a way of refocusing us on what's important and can strengthen our relationship with God.

According to these verses, do we need to use extravagant words in our prayers? Why or Why not?

How can we apply the teachings of these verses to our own prayer lives?

Thank you Lord for the wisdom found in these verses. Let them guide and remind us that prayer is not about showing off, but having a sincere and humble connection with you. We ask for strength to resist the temptation to repeat empty phrases or seek the approval of others in our prayers. Lord, we ask that you help us deepen our prayer lives and draw us closer to you as we pray this week Amen.





Day 5

Humble Yourself

March 21st • Andrew Todd

Today's Reading is 1 Peter 5:6-7 NIV

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by anxiety and worries that seem to consume your every thought and action?

If so, take comfort in knowing you're not alone. In fact, the bible provides us with wisdom and guidance on how to cast our anxieties onto God and find peace in the midst of our struggles.

The first step towards finding peace in the midst of our anxiety is humility. **Humbling ourselves before God means acknowledging our limitations and our need for Him.** We cannot handle everything on our own like we think we can and honestly, *thats okay*. We need God's help to get us through life's challenges. When we humble ourselves we allow him to work in us and through us.

The second step towards finding peace is casting our anxieties on God. Admittedly this is a hard one because we can get in the mindset that our "stuff" isn't that important to bring



before God, after all, everyone has their “stuff”. We can not think like this, when we do WE limit God’s power in life and God is a good father, these verses say He cares for us, not He tolerates us. It’s not always easy to let go of our fears and concerns, but when we do we can experience a deep sense of peace and rest in God’s presence and His ability to work all things for our good.

What would it look like for you to Humble yourself before God?

Why is it important to trust that God cares for us as verse 7 says?

What usually stops you from fully casting your anxieties and worries onto God?

Lord there are many things that can cause us to worry and be anxious. We ask that you help us let go of these worries and cast them onto you. May we find peace and comfort in knowing that you care for us our needs. Help us trust you completely and surrender our worries and fears to your loving embrace. God may we never forget that you alone are in control, even when things feel out of control. Amen





Day 6

No Longer in Darkness March 22nd • Paxton Todd

Today's Reading is Ephesians 5:8-14 NIV

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.””

When we are baptized, our darkness is buried with Christ, and we arise as a new creation. We are no longer lost in sin and confusion but have been brought into the light of God's love and truth. **As children of light, we are called to live differently than those who are still in darkness.** We are called to be holy, righteous, and truthful, reflecting the goodness of God to the world around us.

In verse 10, it starts with, “and find out what pleases the Lord.” How do we find out what pleases the Lord?

Living as children of light means exposing the deeds of darkness, not taking part in them. We are called to stand up for what is right and true, even when it is unpopular or difficult. We are called to be a light in the darkness, shining God's love and truth into a world that desperately needs it.



Why is it important to expose the deeds of darkness?

How can we be a light in the darkness?

How can we help our friends or families that are struggling in the dark?

If you find yourself struggling with sin, repent and confess to a close and trusted Christian friend or pastor. James says, “*Confess your sins one to another so that you may be healed*” (James 5:16). **Sin grows in the dark and light transforms sin. Confession brings darkness to the light. In confession, there is forgiveness.** It’s important to expose the darkness and not stay in it because the darkness does not produce fruit or freedom. Darkness produces chains and shame. Christ is calling us to a new life in the light.

Dear Lord, thank you for transforming us from darkness to light. Help us to live as children of light, reflecting your goodness, righteousness, and truth to the world around us. Guide us in finding out what pleases you and give us the courage to stand up for what is right and true. Help us to expose the deeds of darkness and to be a light in the darkness. May your love and truth shine through us, bringing hope and healing to those who are lost in darkness. In Jesus’ name, Amen.





Day 7

Godly Sorrow

March 23rd • Valerie Solimine

Today's Reading is 2 Corinthians 7:10-11 NIV

“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.”

For most people, if not all, I think the word sorrow initially sparks bad feelings. Although here Paul communicates that the **sorrow that comes from God is good and desirable** in our sanctification process. As we draw close to God, as we would draw close to a dear friend, our eyes and ears become opened and aware of the things of this world that pain God's heart. This awareness should spark movement in the life of a believer just as it did in our fellow brothers and sisters in Corinth.



1. Have you prayed lately to have eyes to see and ears to hear the things of this world that pain God's heart?

2. How has or should this awareness encourage you to act?

3. Is there someone you know who is living this out? Encourage them as Paul encouraged the Corinthian believers.

Father God, please open our eyes to see and our ears to hear the things of this world that pain your heart. May these things also pain our hearts and bring action in our lives to see justice done in our homes, community and world. Amen.





Day 8

In Our Weakness March 24th • Scott Solimine

Today's Reading is Romans 8:26-27 NIV

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God."

Everyone struggles to pray sometimes.

Paul knows this and is guided by the Holy Spirit to offer us a word of encouragement in those times of weakness. As we pray, that same Holy Spirit who guided Paul's words helps us when we approach God in our times of weakness. When our words are just groans because of the grief, the pain, the difficulty of the moment, He hears us. Not only does He hear us and know our hearts cry, but he also prays on our behalf to God the Father.

**If you ever felt unheard in your time of grief or pain,
He hears you.**



What do you need to grieve with God for today?

What grief are others carrying today?

Would you spend an honest, raw, and personal time in prayer today? Feel free to journal your prayer here.





Day 9

Our Confidence

March 25th • Paxton Todd

Today's Reading is Hebrews 4:14-16 NIV

“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

Wow, what a good God! **Jesus is the great high priest that beat temptation.** Temptation is something we struggle with every day but guess what? **We are not alone.**

Jesus, the one who has been tempted in every way is able to empathize with us through our struggle. This means that when we face trials and temptations, **we can turn to Jesus for help and support.** He knows what it is like to face temptation, and He understands the struggles that we go through.

When we are weak, Jesus is strong, and He is always ready to help us.

We can have confidence in God that Jesus understands our struggles and weaknesses. He faced the same temptations and difficulties that we face and yet remained without sin. This means that we can trust Him to help us in our time of need.





Because of Jesus' sacrifice and His role as our high priest, **we can approach God's throne with confidence**, knowing that we will receive mercy and grace. We do not have to be afraid or ashamed because we have been made clean through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Are you going to Jesus with your struggles? If not, why?

What do you think about Jesus being able to empathize with us?

Does this change the confidence you have to approach God in prayer?

Dear Lord, You are so great, so mighty, so merciful. Thank You for giving us a great high priest who understands our struggles and weaknesses. Help us have a greater confidence in You. In your name, Amen.





MANY PLANS ARE
IN A MAN'S HEART,
BUT THE PURPOSE
OF THE LORD
WILL PREVAIL.



Day 10 • March 26th • Scott Solimine
Sermon Notes





Day 11

Rest In Him

March 27th • Valerie Solimine

Today's Reading is Psalm 62:1-2 NIV

*“Truly my soul finds rest in God;
my salvation comes from him.
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.”*

When the world around us trembles and our troubles seem too much to handle the psalmist points us to the one we can always rely on. God might not take every trouble away but He will always see us through them.

Do you actively seek after God to find rest when you are weary?



When you have trouble in your life who do you run to first?

If you wait to run to God, why do you wait? He is willing and able to be your stronghold and rest.

Thank you God for the safety and rest we can find in you. Please help us to seek you first especially when our flesh feels weak and may desire other comforts. Amen.





Day 12

Taste & See

March 28th • Andrew Todd

Today's Reading is Psalm 34:8 NIV

*"Taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him."*

You may not have guessed it, but I'm a foodie. I've never written a review on food or a food critic like from the Disney movie, "Ratatouille," but I LOVE Food. When I enjoy some out-of-this-world tacos or some killer wings, I want to tell everyone and bring everyone to the restaurant. I'm sure you do the same when you've gone someplace, and the food is amazing. You've tasted it and seen for yourself that the food is good.

When someone says I found the place that has the best wings on the Island, which I believe I have, naturally you might want to go and put that to the test. The first thing you do is go and "taste" the wings for yourself, and when you do, you'll know they are good.

The psalmist doing something similar, except for raving about God. He's telling us we will enjoy it, it'll be good, worth the drive. It is indeed true that the Lord is good. This is a much better "good" to rave about than chicken wings, however good they may be.

The goodness of God is incomparable to anything else, but we can only experience that goodness when are all in.





When we let nothing get in our way and accept what God has for us through sending His son Jesus to die for our sins, it is indeed better than anything else we've had. It changes everything. When we accept the gift God gives us, we experience the full goodness that is incomparable.

I challenge you if you've never tasted the goodness of God, why not? If you have, don't be ashamed to share the goodness that is found in Jesus with others. God really is better than best tasting chicken wings you'll have, I promise.

How can you take refuge in the Lord this week?

In what ways can we experience the goodness of God in our daily lives?

How can applying the knowledge of this verse to our lives completely change the way we live for Jesus?

Dear Lord, we come before you today with grateful hearts filled with awe and wonder at the goodness of your love. As we reflect on Psalm 34:8 we are reminded of your unending grace and kindness. God we ask that you help us learn to take refuge in you, that we taste and experience your goodness. Father, help us seek you above all else. May your goodness be evident in our lives, Amen.





Day 13

Thirst for the Lord March 29th • Paxton Todd

Today's Reading is Psalm 42:2 NIV

*"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?"*

Have you ever been dehydrated? Our entire body can go out of order due to not consuming enough water. Physically our bodies long for water and it doesn't take us long to be desperate for it. But the thirst in verse two is not for water, it's for living water, which is God.

What does it mean to thirst for God?

Jeremiah 2:13 says, "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."

Ouch. What this verse is saying is when we are spiritually dehydrated, instead of going to God, the source of living water, we are leaning on our own strength, which is broken and cannot hold water. **We keep trying to quench that deep-soul longing that only God can satisfy with water from a source that does not sustain.**



A cistern is what they used to hold rainwater and it was either a tank or an underground reservoir. What are some broken cisterns that you or other people may use in place of God?

How do we quench our thirst with God?

We turn to His Word. We long for God and His will. We thirst for God instead of the broken things of this world because the broken things cannot quench our thirst.

God, I pray that throughout this devotional we all learn to thirst for you more and experience you intently. I pray that we do not lean on broken cisterns, but we completely surrender to you and your Word. Thank you, God, for providing us with living water. Amen.





Day 14

Worship with *All* March 30th • Andrew Todd

Today's Reading is Romans 12:1-2 NIV

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Do you struggle to fully surrender to God? Surrendering our lives to God is not always easy. We may want to hold onto certain areas of our lives or cling to our own plans and desires. Romans 12:1-2 gives us a powerful reminder of the true cost and beauty of surrender. Paul urges us to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to God, which may sound odd but he means our thoughts, desires, and actions. Paul even says when we do that it's true worship.

Paul goes on to say this kind of surrender requires us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. It means giving up our old ways of thinking and allowing God to shape and transform us into the image of Christ. True surrender may be costly, but it's also incredibly beautiful. **When we fully surrender to God, we experience a deep sense of peace and purpose. We discover that our lives have more meaning than we might tell ourselves.**





How would giving God control more in your life also help your mental health?

How does “renewing” our minds help us discern God’s will for our lives?

What are some “patterns of this world” that you know you’re conforming to that you might need to let go of? What is a practical first step towards doing that in your life?

God, today, let us consider the true cost and beauty of surrendering to you. Father, when we recognize it’s time to let go of our grip on control may experience an abundance of peace that only comes from you. God let us not battle for control but give you control. When we do Father, may we also see our mental health improve this week. Amen





Day 15

In Spirit & Truth March 31st • Valerie Solimine

Today's Reading is John 4:21-24 NIV

““Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.””

True worship is not dependent on a location.

As followers of Christ we receive the Holy Spirit and our bodies become a temple, a holy place. Wherever we are and whatever we do should be honoring and pleasing to God because we worship with our lives.



Do you only feel comfortable worshipping God when you are in a place you consider holy?

Consider how you can worship God today in your home, at work or just through out the day.

Dear God, Thank you for your amazing love, the Holy Spirit that dwells in us and your son Jesus who died to give us life. May we never stop considering and living a life that honors you through our daily worship.





Day 16

Woe To Repent April 1st • Scott Solimine

Today's Reading is Isaiah 6:1-6 NIV

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:

*"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory."*

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar."



What a powerful scene Isaiah is given to show God's holiness. He shows that an experience of God's holiness should prompt us to recognize our brokenness and repent. As you go through this time of fasting would you allow the pains of the fast to prompt you to worship humbly where God can expose things in your life where you need to repent.

What sin in your life have you left unaddressed?

What does true repentance look like for you today?

Read Hebrews 4:14-16. Why do we have confidence in God's presence?

Our Lord we recognize you alone are worthy of worship. We recognize we elevate certain things in our lives to be objects of worship. Would you help me see where my heart has gone astray so I may be able to embrace your grace.





**MY FLESH AND MY HEART MAY FAIL,
BUT GOD IS THE STRENGTH OF MY HEART
AND MY PORTION FOREVER.**

PSALM 73:26



Day 17 • April 2nd • Scott Solimine
Sermon Notes





Day 18

His Vastness

April 3rd • Paxton Todd

Today's Reading is Psalm 36:5-11 NIV

*“Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the skies.
Your righteousness is like the highest mountains,
your justice like the great deep.
You, Lord, preserve both people and animals.
How priceless is your unfailing love, O God!
People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
They feast on the abundance of your house;
you give them drink from your river of delights.
For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.
Continue your love to those who know you,
your righteousness to the upright in heart.
May the foot of the proud not come against me,
nor the hand of the wicked drive me away.”*

This psalm reminds us of the **vastness of God's love, faithfulness, righteousness, and justice**. It also encourages us to take refuge in God's protection, to feast on His abundance, and to seek His fountain of life. The psalmist uses vivid imagery to describe God's attributes and these descriptions inspire awe for God's character, which in turn can deepen our trust and confidence in Him.



Starting in verse eight, the psalmist speaks of feasting on the abundance of God's house and drinking from His river of delights. This vivid imagery highlights God's provision. When we seek God, He provides us with everything we need, whether it be physical sustenance or spiritual nourishment.

How does God's love, faithfulness, righteousness, and justice inspire our trust in Him?

How does God's abundance satisfy our thirst and hunger?

Dear God, we thank You for Your love, faithfulness, righteousness, and justice that reach to the heavens. Help us to trust in Your character and to take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. Satisfy our thirst and hunger with the abundance of Your house and Your river of delights. Guide us in Your light and continue Your love and righteousness to us, Your people. Amen.





Day 19

Deliver Me

April 4th • Valerie Solimine

Today's Reading is Psalm 71:1-4 NIV

*"In you, Lord, I have taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame. I
n your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me;
turn your ear to me and save me.
Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go;
give the command to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked, f
rom the grasp of those who are evil and cruel."*

The prayer of the psalmist should also be the prayer our hearts cry. **When we call out to God He hears us and delivers us.** We can also rest securely in the truth that God's love for us is unwavering. In His righteousness, we find deliverance from the evil that tears us down and tries to destroy us.



When you face times of trouble what do you do? Do you call out to God seeking refuge?

What does it look like for you to take refuge in God?

How does your perspective change knowing that God “hears us and saves us” when we call out to Him?

Father God, thank you for rescuing us and delivering us from our sin and from the evil in this world that consistently wants to tear us away from you. May we always be quick to seek you and find refuge in you our rock and fortress.





Day 20

Bear Fruit

April 5th • Scott Solimine

Today's Reading is Matthew 21:18-22 NIV

“Early in the morning, as Jesus was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, “May you never bear fruit again!” Immediately the tree withered.

When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. “How did the fig tree wither so quickly?” they asked.

Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

From a distance one can't distinguish a fruitful fig tree from one that had no fruit. But on closer inspection, it is obvious which tree bears fruit. The tree Jesus approached that day had seemed like one that would have fruit on it, but when he saw there was no fruit, he cursed it and it withered.



Like the fig tree, Jesus wants us to have faith that bears itself in fruit in our lives. As we come close to the end of our journey together, would you consider how you can continue this faith journey bearing fruit that He desires from you?

What can you put in place to continue to bear fruit after this fast?

What do you need to take out of your life to make sure that you continue to bear fruit?

My Father, my desire is to bear fruit. I want to show the real work that you are doing through me by showing this to those around me. Would you be the source of the fruit in my life. Amen.





Day 21

Communion

April 6th • Scott Solimine

Today's Reading is Matthew 26:26-29 NIV

"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

In the church calendar today is considered Maundy Thursday. This is the time traditionally set aside to celebrate the passover celebration Jesus had with His followers.

We celebrate this time of remembrance every week at NCC as a reminder of *the work that Jesus did on our behalf*. This work will be celebrated tomorrow evening at our Good Friday Service. **Take some time today to prepare your heart and mind for tomorrow's time of remembrance.** Consider ways that you can feast and celebrate Jesus' work with others after this time of fasting is done.



What would it look like for you to spend time feasting with others after this fast is finished?

Who should you invite to come and feast with you?

What do you need to do to prepare?

Thank you Lord, for allowing us the opportunity to fast together. Thank you for the daily provision you provide for us. As we near the end of this fast, would you prepare our hearts to celebrate and feast. Amen.



What a journey we have taken together! Thank you for choosing to fast with us as we all prepare our hearts for Easter. We encourage you to continue practicing these different spiritual disciplines past Easter and throughout your faith journey. Watch as you continue to practice and see your spiritual maturity grow.

Spend some time in reflection thinking over the last 21 days and how your life is different since starting.

Do you feel closer to God?

How has your life changed with implementing these spiritual disciplines everyday?

Friend, I pray that the 21 days we spent together studying God's Word, fasting, and praying have encouraged and inspired you to go deeper in your relationship with God. Let your life be a testimony for what God can do!

Blessings,

Paxton Todd

Join us this Easter Weekend.

Good Friday Service
April 7th at 7pm

Easter Trunk Hunt
April 8th from 10-12:30pm

Easter Sunday
April 9th at 9:30am & 11:15am

Scan this QR code or go to Nesconsetchurch.com/easter for more information.



