

HILLTOPPER

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

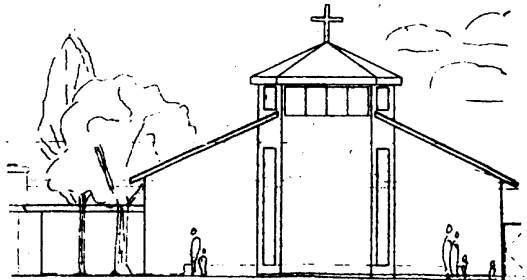
903 So. Beverwyck Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054 (973) 887-4657

http://www.parsippanyumc.com E-Mail: jedwards14@juno.com

Sunday Worship Celebration: 10:30 a.m.

In a hostile, hurting world we reach out to share kindness and laughter. Our spirituality is based on Jesus and his love and compassion. We provide a community of support and healing where all are welcomed and valued regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, disability, gender, or economic status. In a world where people feel they can love only those who are like themselves, we seek to celebrate the uniqueness of every human being.

"Making Room in the Circle"



MAY, 2010



A sermon preached by Pastor Jeff on March 21st, 2010 based upon John 12:1-8 entitled "Reason and Intuition."

Shortly before Jesus enters Jerusalem where he will die, the family consisting of the sisters Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus host a party in their home in honor of Jesus. They have a warm friendship with Jesus; earlier in John's Gospel we hear about how Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave at his sisters' request. Apparently it is a family of some means – Mary has in her possession a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, which we soon learn was worth what a laborer would make in three hundred days of work.

Why Mary has this expensive perfume isn't clear. Did she buy it recently with anointing Jesus' in mind, or has she had it a while? We don't know for sure, but given what we know of Mary from this and other passages it's clear she wasn't particularly "practical" in her thinking — that was her sister Martha's forte. So my guess is that she bought it on impulse at some point in the past, and that now, on yet another impulse, she cracks it open in order to anoint Jesus.

If you had asked Mary why she bought it in the first place, or why she cracked it open to anoint Jesus, I expect that she wouldn't have been able to give you an especially rational explanation. Maybe she would have said something to the effect of "it just felt like the right thing to do at the time." And I suspect she would have had a hard time explaining why she decided to anoint his feet rather than his head, which would have been a more traditional way to anoint somebody.

It turns out that Mary's actions have deep symbolic meaning of which she herself wasn't fully aware. Jesus interprets her anointing of him as preparation for his burial. (*Reading a commentary, I discovered that in those days the only time feet were anointed was to prepare a body for burial.*)

In other words, Mary is receiving her directions from some place other than her rational mind, which opens her up for criticism. This, of course, is precisely what Judas does, saying, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?"

David has been leading some of us in a study and reflection of the Lord's Prayer. It is remarkable the "big questions" this prayer opens up. For instance, when we pray the petition, "Thy will be done" -- how **do** we know in any given situation what God's will is? As a pastor, if there is a religious question I hear asked more often than any other, it might be this: *What does God want me to be doing with my life?*

It seems to me that the answers to this question come to us from two places. First, we read the Bible with an ear to basic themes by which to be guided. We look to Jesus in particular — his teachings and actions — and we discern certain principles. For instance:

Jesus wants us to act lovingly towards other people, and to remember that **all people are beloved by God.*

**Jesus doesn't want us to get caught up in the pursuit of material possessions, but rather to locate our treasure in heaven.*

**Jesus wants us to care about the poor and act on their behalf, sharing what we have.*

With principles such as these in mind, we try to live accordingly. From the perspective of these principles, Judas' words make some sense: "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" In the Lord's Prayer group, the petition "give us this day our daily bread" led us to reflect on the distinction between our "wants" and our "needs." It's hard to see how a pound of very expensive perfume could ever come under the category of our "daily bread;" it's rather extravagant, to say the least. And Jesus taught us to pray for "our" daily bread, not just "my" daily bread, which again suggests Judas had a point: think of how many hungry bellies could have been filled with bread bought with all the money it took to purchase that perfume.

So it seems clear that the question Judas is raising is legitimate if it were asked with sincerity in a quest for truth.

But that's the problem; Judas isn't asking his question sincerely. He is being intentionally deceptive. He doesn't really have the concerns of the poor at heart; rather, his purpose is to **appear** righteous, indeed **more** righteous than others. Not only that, Judas is also using these words to put Mary down. The society they lived in considered women second class, whereas in the new community Jesus was creating, women are treated as equals. Judas is trying to put Mary "back in her place."

I want to make a short aside here to say that what Judas is doing here is unfortunately quite common in contemporary political debate. Our country is faced with a lot of big public policy problems that are quite complicated, over which good people can easily disagree in regard to how to approach them — health insurance reform, for instance.

A lot has needed to be talked through — a lot of legitimate concerns to be addressed on both sides of the political aisle. But too often the debate has been "knee jerk". Rather than sincerely seeking constructive ways to deal with the complexities of the issues facing our country, politicians have been primarily concerned with appearing righteous — Judas-like.

Leaving this "aside" aside, I said before that there were basically two ways we find answers to the question of "what does God want us to do?" The first was to search the scriptures, especially the words and example of Jesus, to discern basic principles to guide our actions. Although his question could be seen as arising out of concern for certain principles Jesus set forth, Judas' underlying behavior is at odds with other fundamental Jesus-based principles. If there is one thing that Jesus hammered away at more than anything, it was the evil of hypocrisy and self-righteousness. With his knee-jerk reaction, Judas is being a self-righteous hypocrite.

There are situations in life where reason alone won't make the way clear. The second place that we look for direction as to what God wants us to do comes from the source that Mary seems to be tuned into, which can be called "**intuition.**" In doing what she did, Mary was led by intuition rather than reason. This, of course, can seem very tenuous. How, for instance, do you tell the difference between psychosis and true religious insight?

But if we believe in the reality of the Holy Spirit — that God **is** actively involved in our lives nudging us towards the path we are to take — then we have to be open to the possibility that God is trying to communicate with us in ways that aren't strictly "rational." Otherwise, our religion will resemble the lifeless religion of the Pharisees, for whom it all came down to applying the right law from the Torah, and for whom there was no room for spontaneity.

You may remember Mark Gibson, the mentally-handicapped young man who used to come to our church before he moved up to Butler to live in a group home. Mark's intellectual capacity was less than that of others, but if you ever took the time to talk with Mark, you couldn't help but come away with the impression that he was tuned into God in ways that those of us with greater intellectual capacities could easily miss.

Now we do well to test our intuitions — our hunches about what God wants us to do — with what we know of God's will from scriptures. If we were to get the feeling that God wants us to kill somebody, hopefully we wouldn't follow through with it because we would be hard pressed to find anything Jesus said or did to support this intuition.

But sometimes the "rational" approach may overlook some of the peculiarities of a particular situation. In our Gospel lesson, there is an elephant-in-the-living room that everybody is avoiding.

Jesus is getting ready to die. In less than a week, his body will be in the tomb. Jesus is a man with a heavy heart. It is *the* needs of Jesus himself that are being overlooked.

Only Mary, relying on her intuition, is tuned in to this fact. Jesus has a profound need at this moment to have his impending death acknowledged. And so Mary cracks open the costly perfume, anointing Jesus' feet, filling the whole house with the sweet fragrance, and I suspect, soothing his Jesus' troubled soul.

Jesus defends Mary from Judas' attack. ***"You will always have the poor with you," he says, "you will not always have me."*** The principle holds: in keeping faith with Jesus, we **are** to care for the poor, who will always be among us. In this particular instance, however, the principle is superseded by the needs of Jesus himself.

So there are two distinct faculties — the rational and the intuitive — upon which we are to rely in seeking God's direction. Clearly, Jesus had both in play. His rational mind was impressively on display when he debated his critics. But he drew on something beyond reason as well.

It is fascinating that this story involves an interaction between a woman and a man. Generally speaking — though there are a lot of exceptions — women tend to be more developed in the intuitive side of life. Men are inclined to rely more heavily on the rational side. This can put women and men in conflict at times.

My wife Sarah is more intuitive than I am. Sometimes this frustrates me. Like Mary, Sarah's intuition can lead her to be somewhat impulsive at times. There are times when she declares that she "knows" certain things to be true, but can't explain how it is she knows it. Over time, this "knowing" is shown to be on the mark. *"How did you know this?!"* I ask. Neither of us can explain it. It comes from her intuition rather than from reason. So I've learned to pay attention when my wife tells me she "knows" something.

Sometimes Sarah refers to the knowledge she intuits as something she can "smell," which is interesting, given how this story describing Mary's intuition at work is also one of the very few instances in the Gospels where the sense of smell is employed. *"The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."* The nose knows.

None of us are the body of Christ alone; in order to discern where God would have us go, we need one another and the different faculties of reason and intuition with which God has gifted us. With humility, may we so honor one another.

In the kindness of Jesus,
Pastor Jeff

P.S. A number of you have indicated to me that you appreciated my Lenten reflections as food for thought on your part. I would like to be able to continue this on some kind of limited basis. It would be helpful to receive questions or topics that you would be interested in having me comment on in my "reflections." If any questions/topics occur to you, please email them to me. This could also extend to sermon topics. I welcome your questions and suggestions. You can indicate in the email whether you would want to put forth the question/topic "anonymously" or whether you would be willing to attach your name to it. I can't promise that I will adequately address anyone's question or topic, but your input would be invaluable to me. JEdwards14@juno.com



New Supplemental Hymnals: Seventy-five new copies of "The Faith We Sing" were recently purchased with money from our church's memorial fund. The new hymnals will supplement the hymnals we already have, enhancing our worship with an additional 284 hymn choices. If you see a hymn that catches your eye or ear that you'd like to have sung in worship, please speak to Pastor Jeff or to Barbara Bradley.



Sunday Morning alert: We've all become dependent on all of our electronic devices. Please take note of the announcement in the Sunday bulletin about your cell phones. Please remember, as a courtesy to those worshipping with us on Sunday mornings, to mute or turn off your cell phones. A random ring tone is not nearly as cute as a baby's cry. Thanks for your help!



Looking back...13 of us enjoyed an evening of fellowship and good food at Ladies' Night Out. You might want to join us in July and August. You need not be a member to come along!

All women are welcome to attend our next program.....



United Methodist
Women

Wednesday, May 5th – 7:30 p.m.
PROGRAM: Navaho Reservation Adventure
Speaker: Our own Betty Polen
Refreshments

May 7 – May Friendship Day (Fellowship of The Least Coin – pennies collected) May 31st – Memorial Day (obs)
May 9th – Mother's Day – Bulletin Insert

Get well wishes to those of you who are ill, and
HAPPY BIRTHDAY to those of you celebrating this month with Anna Weiss, Lyn Krisa, Doris Bradley and Lois Kelshaw.

God Bless,
Doris Bradley

Prov. 17:17 "A friend loves at all times."



Summer help for Sunday Worship: I am looking for additional help for Sunday morning worship services in the summer. Would you like to be a liturgist? Would you like to be an usher? Everyone is welcome... just get in touch with me. I'll get you signed up for a Sunday!! Thanks for your help ~ Connie Keller



Upcoming Youth Group Meetings Our youth group meets approximately every other Sunday evening from 7 to 8:30 p.m. All 8th through 12th graders are invited. Josh Romine is our youth leader, assisted by Dawn Barhite. Scheduled meetings are set for May 2nd and 16th, June 6th.



Church Lending Library: Just outside the door to the sanctuary, you will find a collection of books dealing Christianity and spirituality from Pastor Jeff's personal library that is available for you to borrow.



On the second Thursday of every other month our congregation provides dinner for the families at **Homeless Solutions**. Our next scheduled dinner is April 8th. If you would like to take a turn in helping with this outreach, or if you would like to donate money towards the expenses, please speak to Laurie Wilken or Connie Wallace.



Summer Music: On Father's Day, the choir will sing its last anthem for this season. We are blessed to have a church with many musically gifted people. This summer, in addition to having our choir members perform solos during the summer, I want to give other people the opportunity to share their musical gifts. If you would be interested in performing a musical piece (either vocal or instrumental) during the anthem spot during the summer worship services, please speak to me to schedule a Sunday. ~ Barb Bradley



Our church website has been revised and updated. If you haven't seen it lately, check it out at Parsippanyumc.com. At the website you will find a link to all of Pastor Jeff's sermons, as well as his occasionally bloggings.



Healing Prayer sessions are held every Wednesday morning from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. in the prayer chapel. All are invited to come and be a part of this time of prayer -- for yourself or for others.



A **small gathering of men** from our church meet together every Tuesday at 7:15 a.m. at the Empire Diner with Pastor Jeff for breakfast, conversation, and a concluding prayer. All men are welcome.



The **UMW** is selling **Food Certificates to benefit the General Budget** for ShopRite and PathMark as an *ongoing Fund Raiser*. The church will receive 5% of all purchases (you buy \$100 of certificates, the church gets \$5). Certificates are available in \$5, \$10, \$20, \$25, \$50 and \$100 denominations. Please see Betty Polen at the beginning of Coffee Hour if you would like to purchase Food Certificates. Checks should be made payable to The United Methodist Women.

Thank you, The UMW

The next **Administrative Council** meeting is May 16 after worship. **Finance committee** meets at 9:45 AM on May 16.



Anyone aware of a **Prayer Concern** is invited to contact Grace Agre at 539-3855 who will put the **Prayer Chain** into action. If Grace cannot be reached, please contact Pastor Jeff. If you would like to add your name to the people who receive the prayer chain, please speak to Betty Polen



Consider becoming a part of one or more of our Musical Groups here at church:



Bell Choir – rehearses Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. The Bell Choir has been shrinking over the last few years and we sure would like more people to join us! Speak to Tom Smith or Barb Bradley - or just show up on Thursday and see what happens!

Choir – rehearses Thursdays at 7:45 p.m. We always have an "open robe" for anyone who loves to sing. We sing in 4-part harmony, so if you've sung in your high school chorus or any other equivalent, you have a great start! Speak to any choir member or Barb Bradley if you're interested.

Kids Choir – rehearses after Sunday service in the sanctuary. Children of all ages are invited to join Sarah Jernstrom and Barb Bradley as they teach your children songs and signing.



Parsippany Food Pantry - **Wes Sitgreaves** has called to our attention the ongoing need of the **Emergency Food Pantry in Parsippany** in these difficult economic times. There are more and more families turning to the food pantry for help. You can bring your donations of non-perishable food items to the church any Sunday. Our church has been collecting non-perishable food for the Parsippany Food Pantry for many years. There is a bin outside of the sanctuary for contributions. Wes Stigreaves takes the food over as the bin gets filled up. They have given us a list of items that they can use: Canned fruits, vegetables, meat, fish,

poultry and soups; dry goods: cereal, pasta, rice, dried potatoes, peanut butter and jelly, tomato sauce, tea, coffee, hot chocolate, fruit juice, powered or evaporated milk, salad dressings, mayo, mustard, ketchup. Supermarket gift cards are also welcome - buy them from Betty Polen and raise money for the church at the same time!!! This is a very easy way to give back to the less-fortunate in our own township. Please consider buying some of these items every week as you shop for your own groceries.



SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR MAY

May 2nd

Adts 11:1-18
Revelation 21:1-6
John 13:31-35

May 9th

Acts 16:9-15
Rev. 21:10, 22-22:5
John 14:23-29

May 16th

Acts 16:16-34
Rev. 22:12-14,16-17,20-21
John 17:20-26

May 23rd

Acts 2:1-21
Romans 8:14-17
John 14:8-17

May 30th

Proverbs 8:1-4,22-31
Romans 5:1-5
John 16:12-15



MAY BIRTHDAYS

1 st	Beth Cogan	15 th	Garin Roelefs
2 nd	Alison Cogan	18 th	Kayla Hook (Beckler)
3 rd	Anna Weiss	19 th	Doris Bradley
5 th	Joshua Christian	19 th	Lyn Krisa
6 th	Henry Isaacks	20 th	Susan Elbin
7 th	Dawn Colletto	22 nd	Zak Jernstrom
8 th	David Brodock	23 rd	Georgia Zibura
10 th	Michael Smith	25 th	Darlene Miller
10 th	Paul Larsen, Jr.	26 th	Lois Kelshaw
11 th	Erika Gripp	28 th	George Haeussler
12 th	George Hawkins, Sr.	29 th	Darren Yacenko
12 th	Katie Rose Milhalko	29 th	Lois Pongo
14 th	Kaitlyn Sklow	31 st	Diane Anderson
14 th	Michelle Hess	31 st	Nichole Raier
15 th	Leigh Colletto	31 st	Jessica Maclay

MAY ANNIVERSARIES

20th Ted & Bekki Schnetzer



The images of our stained glass windows were inspired by Revelation 22:2b *“and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”* May it be so. (The windows were designed by our own Joanne Rich and crafted by our own Monica Hawkins.)

MOTHER'S DAY BULLETIN INSERT



Mother's Day is right around the corner, and the UMW will be sponsoring their annual special Mother's Day insert to appear in the bulletin on May 9th. The UMW offers you the opportunity to honor or memorialize your mother, grandmother, aunt, etc. by placing her name on a special bulletin insert. \$1.00 donation per name is requested. Please use the form below and give it, together with your donation, to Doris Bradley by May 2nd.

.....
In HONOR of:

Placed by:

In Memory of:

Placed by:

Total Names _____

Total Amount \$ _____

Palm Sunday - Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, portrayed by Mark Chauhan and Ryan Laux



Our Easter Celebration:



Our children celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.



At Booth portraying Jesus revealing himself in the breaking of the bread.



Pastor Jeff receiving a prayer blanket from the congregation – April 18th

Plant a Tree!



You will need:

- ✂ seeds from a grapefruit, orange, lemon or tangerine
- ✂ a flower pot
- ✂ soil

How to:

Soak the seeds in water overnight.

Fill the flower pot with soil.

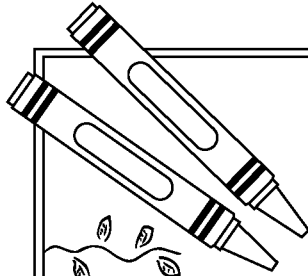
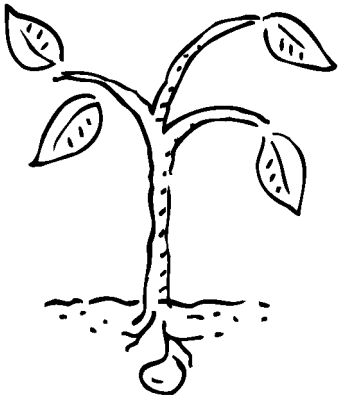
Plant 3 or 4 seeds about half an inch deep.

Keep soil moist. Water once or twice a week.

Keep pot in a warm, bright place.

The seedlings will sprout in about 8 weeks.

Leave only the strongest plant in the pot. It will grow into a little tree with dark, shiny leaves.



Just for KIDS

"A Time to Plant..."

The spring of the year is time to plant gardens or tend to other plants. The list below contains the names of plants that grew in Bible times. How many do you recognize? Circle the names from the list. They may be found → ← ↓ ↑ ↘ . There will be 13 letters uncircled. Write them in the spaces below.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|
| myrrh | aloes | cassia | mint | dill |
| lentil | apple trees | crocus | barley | cucumbers |
| balsam trees | melons | leeks | onions | garlic |
| oak trees | wheat | figs | mustard | grain |
| pomegranates | olive trees | beans | millet | cane |
| almonds | cinnamon | pistachio nuts | rose of Sharon | |
| lily of the valley | | | | |

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

Who is the "Master Gardener"?

_____, _____.