



Living Lent | February 23

Present Obedience

*Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.
Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.*

Psalm 1 (NIV)

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

On the second day of Lent, we continue the proverbial journey, with the pivotal events of that first holy week as our destination. Retracing the same path we traveled last Lent, and the ones before that are both familiar and unknown. On one level, we know what is coming: triumphal entry followed by betrayal, lies, suffering, death, and then silence before an unexplainable triumph. On a deeper level, we confess our ignorance and admit the future is beyond our ability to see or control.

In regard to the unknown that is before us, we don't know what we don't know. This is the crisis of the human condition, how to live in the unknown. What are we to do?

The Psalms open with an answer to just such a question. In the first Psalm, we hear the familiar words, "The truly happy person doesn't follow wicked advice...." Happiness is about following a righteous path and avoiding the wicked one. Wisdom is found in obedience. The six brief verses of Psalm 1 simply compare and contrast two paths for living: one way leads to happiness and the other leads to destruction.

The promise to those who follow the right path is that they will "be like a tree, replanted by streams of water, which bears fruit at just the right time and whose leaves don't fade. Whatever they do succeeds." (1:3)

I am struck by the simplicity - my present obedience shapes my future reality. The key to the future is being attentive to and non-anxious in the present. This sounds like the wisdom of the Serenity Prayer written by Reinhold Niebuhr "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardships as the pathway to peace; taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His Will; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him forever in the next. Amen."

Contributor and Contributing Body of Christ

The Reverend Dr. D. Scott Hagan is the Senior Pastor at Statesboro First United Methodist Church, where the Church's Mission is to serve and empowering people to live Christ-centered lives. This statement of Mission is evidenced in the Body of Christ through a number of service-oriented missions, including the support of Morningstar Children's Home and active participation during the Day of Service Living Lent 2021 and 2022. Reverend Dr. Hagan and the Reverend Stephanie Smith, Associate Pastor, were intricately involved in the production of the Stations of the Cross presentation as a part of the Living Lent 2022 and 2023 engagement on the Campus of Morningstar.

*It takes a lot of everything to **create home and healing** for the foster children, our neighbors, served at Morningstar Children's Home.*

We invite you to join others in giving \$1 per day during Lent to help support the needs of the children.

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