

MARCH  
2019

A PUBLICATION OF ROYSTON BAPTIST CHURCH

life together

We will begin our Lenten Journey with an Ash Wednesday Service, March 6, 2019 at 6:30 pm in the sanctuary. We will mark the beginning of Lent with the imposition of ashes in the form of a cross as a reminder of our sin and our mortality. We will also celebrate The Lord's Supper as a reminder of grace and resurrection. I hope to see you there for this important and powerful time of worship.

As I mentioned in last month's newsletter Lent is a season of juxtapositions - mortality and eternity, sin and grace, death and life. As we anticipate Easter, Lent invites us into a time of self-reflection and penitence; it is a time to recognize our sinfulness and our need for God's mercy and grace.

*The Green Mile* is a 1999 American fantasy crime drama film adaptation of Stephen King's novel by the same name. The movie is set at the Cold Mountain Penitentiary during the Great Depression. It tells the story a death row inmate and his miraculous gift. Death Row at Cold Mountain was aptly called the Green Mile "because the floor was the color of faded limes." The Green Mile corridor led to the electric chair - to certain death. The Green Mile is a wonderful film that is consistently ranked in the top 50 movies of all time, but it may seem out of place in our church newsletter. Hang with me - there is a purpose.

Easter is right around the corner. Easter is the most significant event in the Christian faith, but to celebrate without first traveling through what leads to resurrection — both chronologically and theologically — robs the celebration of its significance. Resurrection cannot happen if death had not occurred. Grace doesn't mean anything if there is nothing to be forgiven. You cannot have salvation if you have nothing from which to be saved.

The season of Lent is a lot like "The Green Mile" as it leads us to the cross - to certain death. Unlike the plot of the movie, where death waits at the end, our Lenten "Green Mile" leads to life! The color green symbolizes life and renewal and growth and hope. Resurrection awaits us at the end of our Green Mile. Redeeming love restores life. Hope is given new breath. The resurrection of Jesus at Easter becomes that much more amazing and transformational when we have journeyed The Green Mile of Lent.

Lent is a forty-day journey which mirrors Jesus' forty-day wilderness journey of temptation. Over the course of the 6 Sundays of Lent we will journey down "The Green Mile" through the wilderness, overcoming obstacles, striving for repentance, encountering God's prodigal grace, denying ourselves for the sake of Jesus, and refusing to allow our praises to be silenced, as we prepare for the life-renewing celebration of Easter.

*"We each owe a death - there are no exceptions - but, oh God, sometimes the Green Mile seems so long."*

...but, thanks be to God that resurrection-life is waiting at the end!

William

# ENCOUNTERING GOD DURING LENT BY DEBORAH HERRING

*"Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise  
– the fruit of lips that openly profess His name."*

Hebrews 13:15



I grew up not knowing much about the Lenten season. I remember feeling sorry for my friends from other denominations who said they were giving up sweets or soft drinks for Lent. I chalked it up to a ritualistic act that was an attempt to earn God's favor when I knew deep in my heart that God's grace and mercy was "unmerited favor" that I could never earn but was a bought with a price through Jesus' sacrifice. It was not until the

past 15 years that I began to study what the Lenten season was truly about and decided to experiment. What I found was truly incredible! It wasn't at all about earning God's favor through my small sacrifices, it was about practicing self-denial to encounter God. I learned how difficult it is to make even small daily sacrifices and consecrate yourself to God. Through the years I have given up many different things for Lent such as coffee, chocolate, all refined sugar, social media, and for the past two years I gave up the most precious commodity I have ... time. I committed myself to giving an extra hour a day through Lent

to pray and read scripture. This year I'm attempting something very difficult ... to give up complaining! In order to give something up, we need to replace it with something else. Scripture says that we are to "continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise." So instead of complaining I'm going to try very hard to turn it into praise. You can remind me of this when I grumble about how tired I am! I pray that the simple act of deliberate change will cause me to walk in a constant encounter with for Christ and will result in an outward change in my life that won't be just for Lent! I pray you will encounter Christ daily too!

# WANDERING WITH HOPE BY SARA FREEMAN

The forty days celebrated as Lent leading up to Good Friday, the death of Jesus.

Although Lent is a church tradition and not something that is necessarily found in the Bible, the pattern of "forty days" or "forty years" can be seen time and time again throughout scripture. Noah and

his family were on the ark while it rained for forty days. Jesus spent forty days fasting in the wilderness. My personal favorite and what has been most impactful to my faith journey is that the Israelites spent forty YEARS walking in the wilderness before God allowed them to enter into the Promised Land.

There have often been times, mostly to my own sin and my own doing, where I felt a close kinship to the griping Israelites on their wilderness journey. "Why can't I get to where I'm supposed to be going already? Why did I allow myself to get to this place of running from God, AGAIN? Why, why, why?" (cont. on next page.)

## WANDERING WITH HOPE, CONT.

But Hosea 2:14 speaks of hope. "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her." God speaks of bringing His children, the Israelites, into the wilderness, to punish them? Maybe at first, but that is not the end goal. His goal is to get them alone with their God and their Maker. Their sin, though numerous and great, was not enough to make God desire to forget them forever. He longed to allure them and speak tenderly to them, as someone would a husband or wife. Their sin did not make them hated by God, though it most certainly

should have. It merely made God desire them more, chase them more, and long for them



*Desert Path* by Elspeth McLean

to feel that same way about Him.

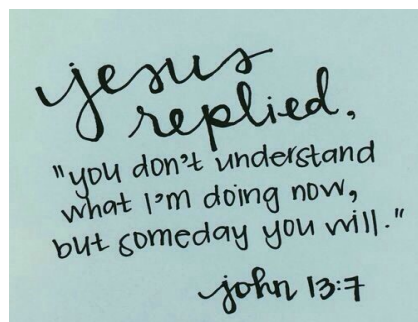
This Lenten season, even in the midst of our sin and our shame, we can look hopefully to the cross with its death and blood and gore, and know deep in our spirits that what was meant to kill actually gave Christ victory. Even in the midst of our seasons of wandering, God is always chasing, always pursuing, always calling us back to Himself. In the victory of Jesus, and even in the wandering, is victory for us as well. I will be resting in that peace these next forty days, and I hope you do too.

## MYSTERIOUS LOVE OF GOD BY ANDREW SMITH

In life, if we were to understand everything then there would be no need for a Savior. However, we don't understand everything and that is where faith comes into play. Faith is important because it is required when we don't have total physical proof of something. One thing that has been on my heart lately is the fact that just because we do not understand God's love for us, we should never let that stop us from the full experience. There was a blind man who received sight from Jesus. He didn't know how or why it happened and most people

think he did not deserve it because he was a sinner. When the Pharisees asked him what happened, he stated how he did not know Jesus, but he states that "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." The Pharisees didn't even like that answer and tried their hardest to get a different one from the man's parents. People do not like what they cannot understand. Paul puts it so great when he describes the love of Jesus as a mystery because it really doesn't make any sense. Even in Romans 3:23 we read that we all fall short of the

glory of God. Therefore, none of us deserve His love, but it is still there. This to me is something I hope never to take for granted and encourage everyone to take it in each day. Knowing full well that they have access to a love so pure without even doing anything to deserve it in the first place.





## Royston Baptist Church

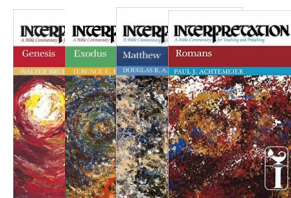
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## IN THE CHRIS TILLER MEMORIAL LIBRARY

This month, we invite you to come check out the *Interpretation Series: Bible Commentaries of the Old and New Testaments* by various biblical scholars. These commentaries offer a full interpretation of the biblical text, combining historical scholarship and theological purpose. It brings an understanding of what the text says into dialogue with the critical questions and problems of contemporary life and faith.



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