

September 30, 2021



Steeple Views

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MARTINSVILLE, VA

Devotional

Elder Monica Stevens

September 29, 2021

Borrowed Trouble

Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29; Mark 9:38-50

It occurs to me that on the whole, people haven't changes]d much in the roughly 3,500 years since the Exodus. If you recall the stories in the book of Exodus, you will remember that there were a number of times that the Hebrew people complained to Moses, and by extension, to God. First when they were seemingly trapped between the Egyptians and the sea, next when they had run out of drinkable water, and third, when their food supplies had run out. In each case, Moses carried their complaints to God and God responded positively because these complaints were justified. God provided for the needs of his people each time. When the passage in Numbers took place, the people had witnessed God's faithful providence for them over and over again. From the comfort of our 21st century vantage point it is easy for us to judge them saying, "Why couldn't they just trust that God would continue to meet their needs?"

I don't think they set out to doubt and complain. Verses 7 and 8 that the lectionary omitted from our reading tell us that the manna would be collected, ground into powder, boiled in pots, and made into a cake that tasted like it was baked in olive oil. Manna was obviously tasty and a substantial meal, but I can imagine people saying something like, "This manna cake is good, but wouldn't it be really good with a little this or a dash of that added in?" Soon, people would start reminiscing about food and favorite meals they had before starting their journey in the wilderness. Those sorts of thoughts in themselves aren't bad, but people start borrowing trouble by selectively remembering only those things that were good. The Hebrews remembered only what they gave up when they left Egypt—cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, garlic, and meat, and they thought, "No wonder we are tired and weak, we haven't had any meat since our stores from Egypt ran out. Life would be so good if we had only stayed in Egypt. We need meat, or we will die." They

forgot that being slaves was the price they paid for those veggies and that meat.

It's easy to point at the Hebrews and shake our heads over their lack of faith, but we are also guilty of borrowing trouble when we engage in "If only" thinking, that is becoming so enamored of remembering the "good old days" that our longing for the way it used to be keeps us from living fully today. Such thinking keeps us trapped in the past and keeps us from growing in the present. It's wonderful to remember our history and to take pride in the good things of the past, but it is quite another thing to reject anything that does not mirror the past. Just as God was present and active in every step of the Hebrews' journey through the wilderness, God, who has brought us safely through the trials and tribulations of the past, is still present and active in our world and our lives today. God, in his faithfulness, continues to care for and guide us into the paths he chooses, and we in turn, are called to trust and faithfully follow God's leading into the future.

Moses learned that being faithful to God's calling wasn't always an easy task and sometimes, it was downright nerve-wracking and unpleasant. One of the things I love about folks in the Old Testament is that they are often shown trusting God enough to be totally honest with him. They laid all of their problems at God's feet and looked to him for help, and Moses was no exception. Instead of descending into "If only" thinking, Moses honestly, if somewhat dramatically presented his problem, and God responded by having Moses call seventy elders to the tent of meeting to become Moses' administrative assistants. For whatever reason two of the seventy remained in the camp, but when God descended on those in the tent, he also descended on the two still in the camp as well, and all seventy began to prophesy. Since elders had never prophesied in the camp before, one young man ran to tell Moses about it. Joshua begged Moses to go stop them. Joshua and the young man were borrowing the trouble of "it's never been done like this before" and so tried to stop God's new work among the people. Moses wisely declined to stop the "rogue" prophets, recognizing that God was at work through them.

This kind of trouble is so common in this present age that "We've never done it like this before" has been dubbed the seven deadliest words in the church. When people find something that works, they tend to stick with it, and there is nothing wrong with that. The trouble pops up when we become so comfortable with a way of doing things, that as times change and the system that worked so well for so long slowly becomes less effective, people tend not to notice and they keep doing the same old thing out of habit and not because it is serving them well. Our God is the creative and renewing force behind everything and we have to be alert and awake to notice when God is doing a new thing in our midst.

The passage from the Gospel of Mark opens with a situation similar to the two elders prophesying in the camp, but a different kind of trouble. The disciples noticed someone who was casting out demons in Jesus' name and they tried to stop him because he was not "following us." Jesus tells his disciples that anyone who can perform deeds of power in Jesus' name will not be able to speak ill of Jesus because anyone who is not against the ministry of Jesus and his disciples is for them. We, and the disciples, borrow trouble when we forget that it is Jesus and not us who is

being followed.

Human beings seem to have some kind of innate drive to classify people and separate them into easily definable groups of "us" and "them". This kind of trouble generally causes more problems than it solves because it paves the way for those in the "us" group to feel superior to and more worthy than those in the "them" group. All we have to do is look at the news to test the validity of this claim.

The last part of the reading from Mark is a warning to avoid doing anything that would lead or drive someone away from life in Christ. Whenever we borrow trouble by engaging in "If only" thinking and we fall into the habit of moaning and complaining, when we get so caught up in the way things have always been that we miss the new thing that God is doing in our midst, or when we get caught up in "us v. them" thinking and living with no room for following Jesus, we are in grave danger of preventing others and ourselves from fully living the abundant life God wills for us through faith in Jesus.

I have described some of the ways we are tempted to borrow trouble, but I want to close on the antidote to trouble. First, read the Scriptures and look at your own life to discover evidence of God's unending faithfulness. God wills only good for each of us and God is always working for our good. Trust in God's grace and providence. Second, remind yourself that the God of Creation is still at work recreating and renewing us and the world around us. Wake up with hope each morning, eager to see what God is doing within you and the world. If you look for evidence of God's creative presence in the world, you will be sure to find it. Third, remember that through Jesus we have all been made part of God's family, so that despite our differences, we are all brothers and sisters and charged to love one another. There is no longer any us v. them because we have been united in Christ's redeeming love.

May God's Holy Spirit grant that we have faith to trust in God's care, joyful hope in God's creative presence, ever increasing love for our brothers and sisters, and gratitude to our God who provides all good things. Alleluia! Amen.

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The Church is Open for In-Person Worship Service!

The safety of our congregation and community are our highest priority. In light of increasing infections due to the Delta variant and in order to follow state and local guidelines and CDC recommendations, **we strongly recommend that everyone, regardless of vaccination status, wear a face covering that covers your nose and mouth while anywhere inside the church and sanctuary.**

The church office will open for limited appointments. Please call to

schedule. Please enter at the narthex for Sunday worship and during the week use the back door at the portico.



Please join us for the nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost either **in person** or via **Facebook live** at 10:00 AM

On the Road Again

Based upon Genesis 12:1–10 and Philippians 4:4–13

Sermon by Rev. Paul Johnson



- Celebraton of Life for **Laura Buffkin**, Saturday, October 2, from 1- 6 PM.
- **A drive-thru Trunk-Or-Treat is being considered** to take place on **Sunday October 31** (tentatively 2-4:00 p.m). In order for this to be feasible, we need a minimum of 12 trunks. If you are interested in participating in this, please contact Brooke Cundiff or Sam Smith no later than October 18.
- Remembering **Doc Altizer** picnic and hike, Saturday, October 16.
- **The Community Breakfast is October 16** and we need your help! Volunteers are needed to cook and prepare from 7-8:30 a.m. and to serve and clean up from **8:30-10:00 a.m.** The breakfast will remain in a drive-thru format until further notice. Contact Brooke Cundiff if you are available to help (276-340-6124 or bchnfamily@gmail.com).
- **Pumpkins are here for the annual Grace Network Pumpkin Patch.** Grace relies on the community to man the patch and it's a great way for

our church to serve. Volunteers are needed for **October 16 from 11:00 am to 1:00 p.m.** Contact Brooke Cundiff if you are available to help (276-340-6124 or bchnfamily@gmail.com).

Celebration of Life

Laura Buffkin

Please join the Buffkin family in the celebration of Laura's life this **Saturday, October 2 from 1 - 6 PM** at the Sports Complex Amphitheater. The address is 1000 Irisburg Rd, Axton, VA.

The event will be catered but please feel free to bring a side dish or dessert so that there is enough for everyone to enjoy.

Laura loved music, so please bring your instruments and jam with us as Laura would have wanted.

Please join the Buffkin family in honoring Laura.

[Laura Wingfield Buffkin Obituary - Visitation & Funeral Information](http://wrightfuneralservices.net)
(wrightfuneralservices.net).



FAMILY AND FRIENDS "GET TOGETHER"
REMEMBERING
DOC ALTIZER



Saturday, October 16, 2021

12:00 PM

The Family and Friends of Doc Altizer invite his church family to meet at the **Rocky Knob** Picnic Area on the **Blue Ridge Parkway on October 16th**. The address is **1670 Blue Ridge Parkway, Floyd, Virginia 24091** and is located near **Mile Post 169**. Turn at the Information

Center and drive down into the picnic area until you see the family or members of the church!

Due to COVID, we recommend that you bring your own lunch. Bring a chair and plan a relaxing afternoon, visiting with Sarah, Sallie, Becca, and their families.

After lunch, those wishing to walk off their meals, are welcome to join a group hike on the Black Ridge Trail. This trail has a difficulty rating as "moderate". It is a 3 mile loop trail, which joins the Rock Castle Gorge Trail for a small portion of the hike. Everyone knows that Doc dearly loved hiking the Gorge Trail!

Others may choose to relax at the picnic area with Sarah, enjoying the beauty of God's creation in this wonderful setting.

Should you have any questions, **feel free to call or text Johnny Pinkard @ (276) 952-5826**.

Rain Date: Next Spring! :>)



Earth Care

When autumn arrives, we all like to admire the fall foliage.

But it can be hard for homeowners to love fall leaves when they drop off of tree limbs and onto green lawns. And in a number of communities, the once-accepted methods of getting rid of leaves—chucking them into the trash can or lighting large piles on fire—are no longer allowed, due to

limits on landfill space and concerns over human health. So what are some good earth-friendly options for autumn's fallen leaves? Here are four tips to help you get rid of your leaves while reducing your impact on the earth.

Mulch them

Leave the rake in the shed and the leaf-blower at the hardware store—mulching allows you to get rid of leaves without having to wrestle them into precarious piles

first! Just run over fallen leaves with a lawn mower, mulching blade attached. The blade will cut the leaves into small pieces, which will settle undetected beneath the green canopy of your lawn. A long-term study of leaf-mulching confirmed the practice even benefits your backyard, as the leaves feed the underground microbes that benefit soil health.

Compost them

Fallen leaves are critical to composting. Leaves, twigs and other carbon-rich "brown" plant material can be added to existing compost piles to bring balance to nitrogen-rich lawn clippings, fruit and vegetable waste and other "green" plant material. Or, large piles of leaves can be composted on their own. If kept moist and periodically turned, the leaves will decompose and create a dark, crumbly compost that can enrich the soil in your garden.

Paper bag them

If putting fallen leaves to use in your lawn or garden just isn't an option, then consider curbside collection. A number of local governments collect leaves each fall, whether they are raked in piles to the curb or placed in paper bags. Even garbage-collection services often offer yard waste pick-up, transporting leaves to municipal composting facilities to keep them out of landfills.

Don't burn them

A lit match is a tempting solution to the leaf pile problem, but burning leaves can pollute the air and harm our health. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the open burning of leaves puts particulate matter and hydrocarbons into the air. The former can increase your chances of respiratory infection, while the latter contains toxic and cancer-causing compounds.

Happy Birthday in October!

- 1** Shane Pinkston
- 5** John Abercrombie, Nancy Baker
- 6** Jane Ford
- 9** Cole Tatum
- 11** Fran Hensley, Richard Lawhon
- 15** Joe Smith
- 16** Emily Kelly, Liz Knighton
- 18** Betty Hendricks
- 19** Mike Ware
- 21** Mary Page
- 23** Nancy Brown



Prayer Requests

These members and friends of the congregation need our prayers:

PRAYER CONCERNS

Carl and Georgette Bishop, Ernest and Marilyn Bremner (S. Ford), Catherine Bridges, Jim Brunt (N. Davis' brother), Tommy Cobb (M. Dunn), Sandra and Mark Dobrinski (brother and sister in-law of Cynthia), Judy Epperly (Nancy Baker), Daniel Handy, Leonard Kelley (Monica Stevens' brother), Betty Carol Lamm, Eddie Levi, Mary Manning, Laura Stevens Milton, Brenda Pendelton (A. Pinkard), Anne Peterson, Gene and Betty Stanley, Scott Stevens (M. Stevens), Bruce Thomas (M. Stevens), Tammy Tucker Wardinski (Susan Pilson), persecuted Christians and all troops in defense of freedom throughout the world.



Please submit prayer requests to Rita in the church office, (276) 632-3431, office@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org.

Congregational Care and Fellowship

If you are in need of prayer, a meal, transportation, etc...due to a death in the family or the birth of a baby, please reach out to the Congregational Care and Fellowship committee by contacting Lynn Pritchett at [276 252-6068](tel:276-252-6068).

Please remember Canned Soup



The 4th quarter food donation item is ****canned soup****
(please NO tomato**)**

Please consider donating extra when you are able to get out and about as your donations will become more important than ever.

Hygiene Items - We are always in need of these items!

**Items may be brought to church but please call the office to make sure Rita is*

there. Alternatively, you may drop off at Grace Network, Monday - Friday, 9-2
PM

Presbytery of the Peaks



For updates and announcements, please click on the link below or copy and paste into your web browser:

https://www.peakspresbytery.org/images/2020_Peaks_Postings/PP_Aug18_2020.pdf

Our Mission

Share God's Love, Embrace Our Neighbors, Nurture Each Other

Printed copies of *Steeple Views* are available at church. Current and back issues are also on our website:

www.firstpresbyterianmartinsville.org/page.cfm/topic/newsletter

Useful Links

FPC website:

www.firstpresbyterianmartinsville.org/ or www.fpcmartinsvilleVA.org/

FPC online directory: members.instantchurchdirectory.com/

FPC Facebook page: www.facebook.com/FPCMartinsvilleVA

Presbytery of the Peaks: www.peakspresbytery.org/

Presbyterian Church (USA): www.pcusa.org/

Daily Bible Readings: www.presbyterianmission.org/devotion/daily/

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THE SESSION

Clerk: Nancy Baker

Treasurer: Henry Moore

Class of 2021

Lynn Pritchett: Congregational Care and Fellowship

Rob King: Facilities

Monica Stevens: Worship

Class of 2022

Brooke Cundiff: Mission/Outreach

Pamela Rakes: Stewardship and Communication

Betty Hudson: Christian Education

Class of 2023

Billy Kirby: Administration

TRUSTEES

2021: David Garland, Ed Linker

2022: Joan Montgomery, Ashby Pritchett

2023: Sandra Ford, Joe DeVault

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