

**3.06.22 –Lent 1**  
**“Laws of Compassion & Mercy”**  
The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

**2 Peter 1:8-15 (NLT) ~ Pam**

<sup>8</sup> The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.

<sup>10</sup> So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. <sup>11</sup> Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

*Paying Attention to Scripture*

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, I will always remind you about these things—even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth you have been taught. <sup>13</sup> And it is only right that I should keep on reminding you as long as I live. <sup>14</sup> For our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that I must soon leave this earthly life, <sup>15</sup> so I will work hard to make sure you always remember these things after I am gone.

**L: These are Words from God! C: Thanks be to God.**

**James 2:8-13 (NRSV) ~ Pam**

<sup>8</sup> You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>9</sup> But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. <sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. <sup>11</sup> For the one who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. <sup>12</sup> So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. <sup>13</sup> For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

**L: These are Refining Words from God! C: Thanks be to God.**

**Please pray with me:**

Dear Jesus, so that we may hear you, please clear our minds of war, violence, grief, anxiety, or thoughts of friends not here today. Let us wash our hands and hearts before you, leaving all of it in the basin at the altar. May we feel your healing presence and hear your voice in the words spoken. Help us Lord to live with holy intentions, dedicating our lives to you. Help us to experiment in a holistic way of listening for your direction. May those at home today feel your presence, strength, and love wherever they are. Lord, speak now through your messenger. **“Amen.”**

---

Another announcement: please remember this coming Saturday night to “spring forward!” Please set your clocks 1 hour ahead before

going to bed. And change those batteries in smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms.

Thank you all who were here and participated in our lively service last Sunday! Hope you enjoyed a slightly different style and renewed fellowship with NBMBC. We got helpful feedback from you for the next time we worship together. Please pray for a new sound volunteer to help during the service. If you are interested in learning this role, please let staff know.

I hope you have been practicing your prayer silence, breath prayers, Scripture praying, and the Quaker hands down, hands up prayers. Are you writing down what you hear God saying? Please let me know how things are going. This is especially important during Lent, when we give up certain foods or habits, and confess our sin in repentance and preparation for Easter.

You may recall 2 weeks ago, 2 Peter was written after Christ's death and Rome's destruction, to a mixed audience of Hebrews and Greeks, living in a corrupt and evil culture. He asked his hearers and readers to let go of this immorality, and add to their lives: goodness, self-control, endurance, godliness, and love. Those qualities were what Jesus taught and what would make their call secure; those qualities would reveal Christ's divine nature within them, and guarantee entry into the eternal Kingdom.

Matthew Henry declares these truths as such:

The great doctrines of the gospel, that Jesus is the Christ, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, and all that believe in God must be careful to maintain good works—these are truths the apostles insisted

on in their day; these are faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptance in every age of the Christian church.

These qualities of holiness are shown in good works; they grow in believers slowly as part of their sanctification. No matter how challenging life can be, Peter coaches, believers must choose to live a good life. His audience was **not** practicing holy living; they were following false doctrines. Peter warned them to stand firm in the truth; this would give them spiritual strength to endure difficulties prophesied after his own expected death. Peter also instructed Christ followers to demonstrate faith, not just to be faithful in spirit. This speaks to us as well. By the doing of the work, we grow in spiritual maturity. Helping with the Sandwich Ministry on first and third Wednesday mornings makes me recall how fortunate I am to have adequate food, water, and shelter. Making the sandwiches reminds me of **my** blessings, and that there are those out there who do not have the essentials but are grateful for what is provided. We cannot do ministry alone; we grow in Christ through **community**, and a shared vision and mission. We begin with silence and solitude; continue with prayer disciplines, listening for the work; we worship together to refuel our spiritual selves; and we grow as we come together in community to serve others. We are doing some of that now, through your giving and fellowship, but are called to do more.

The James passage for today references the “Royal Law” of Leviticus 19:18: “<sup>18</sup> Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people but *love your neighbor as yourself*. I am the Lord.” Jesus also taught this law, when asked what of the Ten Commandments was the most important: “<sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with

all your soul and with all your mind.’<sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment.<sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: *‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’*<sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Matthew 22:37-40<sup>NIV</sup>).” As we learned recently, all persons are our neighbors to love, not just the rich, the well-positioned, or the politically popular. Discrimination based on class, race, clothing, or any other man-defined characteristic IS a violation of the law, both Old and New Testaments. It is sin.

So, as we enter Lent and reflect on our choices and how we live, let us remember that we too need God’s compassion and mercy when we sin or judge others. **We** deserve God’s judgment, but we receive instead his mercy and love because of our relationship with Christ. Still, total obedience is key. Christ alone supplies the Agape Love that we need to love our siblings, especially those different from ourselves. We are seeing that sacrificial agape love in the countries providing refuge to Ukraine’s mothers and children right now.

Jesus is the **why** we serve others through the motivation of the Holy Spirit; and “Listening for the Work” is the **how** we will serve others by learning the true needs of those around us. Prayer tools bring us closer to hearing God’s direction. Doing good for others multiplies our agape love for others within us. By our deeds we draw closer to God; and through our deeds, not only are we changed and matured, but God helps others to see His grace and love materialize before them.

Listening for the work is done in the mind, the heart, and also through one’s body. Before we love neighbor, we must love ourselves, isn’t that what the command says? Love neighbor as yourself. Not a selfish sort of love, but a love of peace within. To do that we must be

comfortable with God, in our own skin, so that we may receive his peace.

Today we'll learn to pray a whole-body movement prayer:

1. remove things from your lap.
2. stand up if you are able, wherever you are.
3. take a long deep breath; then raise your arms as high as you can, at your chest or above your head – stretch and take in a deep breath; shrug your shoulders or do a roll to loosen up your body.
4. If you're adventurous step out into the aisle and softly lift your feet as if you were marching – just 2 or 3 times to loosen up your body.
5. Now, select a sacred word for yourself to think – could be ABBA, Father, Creator, Lord, God, Love, Joy, Hope, amen, holy, neighbor, and get it set in your mind. Got one? The word is not magic, but it will help you enter into an interior silence and stay focused on that instead of distracting thoughts.
6. Now, if you choose to, walk up and down the aisles – we have plenty of room on both sides of the Sanctuary -- give others space to walk by you if needed. As you walk, think of your word. You will need to keep your eyes open. Pick up a communion cup if you haven't already got one at your seat.
7. And, if you wish to stay where you are, then you may sit or stand, and breathe deeply keeping that word in your mind. With every breath or step, say to yourself that word. Move your hands around a bit, or your arms or move the muscles in your face. This is whole body prayer engagement.
8. Come back to your seat, settle, and take one or two slow deep breaths, in and out.

With prayer movement, it is easier to do alone than in a group like ours. So, when you walk outside or inside around your home, you can do this type of prayer walking. What will happen is that you will begin to feel God's presence in your activity. It allows us to let go of our stiffness and invite the Holy Spirit into the experience. The advanced version is

Prayer Walking through a neighborhood, which is similar, but uses the power of observation, not a word. We'll talk about that in the future.

As with other prayer tools, there is no wrong way to do this. The point is to try it! It is another way to let go of sin and open ourselves to hear God's voice. These praying techniques help us "Listen for the Work" that God is revealing and to prepare us spiritually for the doing of the new work to come. // ***Let us pray***, Dear Lord, we thank you for sharing these unusual ways to pray; may they broaden our minds about how to hear you speak to and through us. Take away our fears and let us try something new. The Ukrainian Jews are praying to **you as** they walk to the trains or bomb shelters. Jesus walked and prayed his entire life. Let us be more like Jesus! Please keep us open-minded, faithful, healthy, and strong, so that we can live out the Gospel and share it with others. In your name, we pray and abide, **Amen**.

**[Communion right away]** – Another whole-body prayer experience is when we share the bread and cup together to remember Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection for our salvation. . . .