

or exhausted Christians are vulnerable to attack. Caution is in order lest we wake to find our relationship with Christ sabotaged and compromised. PRAYER: *Spirit of God, wake me up to the dangers which threaten my discipleship. Amen.*

### **Saturday – Enemy**

Read “The Parable of the Weeds” in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, focusing on the key verses, Matthew 13:25. “*His enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away.*” The dirty deed was done in the dark of night. The enemy dropped his bad seed and went away. Maybe he was out to hurt the master. Perhaps he was simply destructive, an agricultural vandal. The ground, as dumb as dirt, never saw it coming. It received the bad seed the way it took any seed. The sleeping workers missed it too. No one saw the enemy. What stands out about the enemy is his indiscernibility. Only the weeds give it away that he was there. The master has to tell the clueless workers where the weeds came from. It may still be a secret to some that the devil is a wily and formidable enemy. In the gospels the devil left Jesus after the temptations in the desert and waited “until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13). That time came in Gethsemane, where the Master again faced the dark of night and had to tell His workers to “watch and pray.” William Shakespeare was right in *Henry V*: “In cases of defense ‘tis best to weigh the enemy more mighty than he seems.” PRAYER: *In the darkness of temptation, Lord, teach us to watch and pray. Amen.*

### **Sunday – Until**

Read “The Parable of the Weeds” in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, focusing on the key verse, Matthew 13:30, “*Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.*” *Until* is a hard word. It means we are in the middle of in-between, and we will have to wait with patience for a coming event. So the master in Jesus’ parable tells the workers that the weeds and the wheat will grow side by side until the harvest. Then there will be a reckoning. The weeds will be bundled and burned. The wheat will go into the barn. Not now, though, but then. *Until* is also a hopeful word. It means there is still time for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to turn weeds into wheat. Side by side with pre-Christian people, we can still impact them as God uses our winsome witness, personal kindness and generous acts of service for eternal purposes. For Christians, the *until* of this parable spans a lifetime. We only have so much time to leave a legacy of witness. The harvest will come, but until it does, we have work to do. As Martin Luther put it, “God does not need our good works, but the world does!” PRAYER: *Lord Jesus, until I die or until You come again, make me a faithful witness. Amen.*

### **IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL**

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*This week’s Bring It Home devotions are from “The Parables of Lent” Daily Devotions on the Stories of Jesus for Lent”, written by Pastor Dean Nadasdy and used by permission of Creative Communications for the Parish.*



*Devotions for  
the week of  
March 5, 2017*

### **WHAT NOW?**

1. Ask the Lord for a growing understanding of Him and His Word – not just to be “smarter” but to let that understanding continue to shape and transform your life as you live as a Christ-follower and share Jesus with others, multiplying what God has sown in your heart.
2. Continue with the “Love Assignment” of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. This is week three, so use the week to practice love as it’s expressed in “not being envious,” the third characteristic of love in that list of 16. Have fun with it, be creative, and let Love Work through you as you “work” it with the people in your life.

*If you would like to receive daily Bring It Home devotions by email, please contact the church office: [churchoffice@immanuelloveland.org](mailto:churchoffice@immanuelloveland.org)*

## Monday – Dynamic Listeners

Read “The Parable of the Sower” in Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23, focusing on the key verse Matthew 13:23, *“As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”* Often a pastoral search committee will list the qualities they hope for in a new pastor. Admittedly the composite list often asks for superhuman heroics, and almost always topping the list is the expression “dynamic preacher.” It is a reasonable expectation. Most pew-sitters, after all, would like an effective, engaging communicator up front, presenting a personal, thoughtful and moving exposition of God’s Word. Jesus’ parable of the sower reminds us that those on the receiving end of Gospel proclamation also have responsibilities. They must clear their minds and hearts the way a farmer clears a field of weeds and rocks. They must pray for understanding. They must go beyond hearing to listening. As Martin Luther suggested, they must bring to the Word their trials and hard times, fully anticipating that God will have something powerfully helpful to say. Then, and perhaps most importantly, they must bear much fruit, finishing the sermon in their own lives. The powerful Word of God is enhanced by both dynamic preaching and dynamic listening. PRAYER: Lord, make of all of us who hear the Word dynamic listeners. Amen.

## Tuesday - A Little

Read “The Parable of the Mustard Seed and Leaven” in Matthew 13:31-33, focusing on the key verse, Matthew 13:31. *“He put another parable before them, saying, ‘The Kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field.’”* In Robert Frost’s poem “The Pasture,” he is ready to go out to clean the pasture in spring and fetch a newborn calf. Clearly these seemingly little things are valuable to him, so valuable that he invites those he loves to join him in his little outing. “you come too,” he writes. The kingdom of heaven is the way things are between God and the people God loves, and in that kingdom a little becomes a lot. Little things matter in the kingdom of heaven. From a tiny seed comes a tree, says Jesus. Put a little yeast in the dough, Jesus says, and watch the whole loaf rise. Little children, He says, are the essence of this kingdom. A boy’s sack lunch feeds five thousand others. Little things like a gentle touch, a focused look or a conversation with a woman by a well yield amazing results. Conventional wisdom says, “Don’t sweat the small stuff.” Jesus reminds us to value the small stuff because in the kingdom of heaven a little means a lot. PRAYER: *Lord, help me see the value of little things in Your grand scheme of things. Amen.*

## Ash Wednesday – Seeing As God Sees

Read “The Parable of the Mustard Seed and Leaven” in Matthew 13:31-33, focusing on the key verses Matthew 13:32-33, *“It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.....The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.”* In his 1888 poem “As I Sit Writing Here,” an aging Walt Whitman lists among his burdens of old age a

“whimpering ennue.” Ennui is a bored focus on minutiae, the little things in life. Whitman’s whimpering ennui moved him from epic poems to melancholy verses. Christians are prone to that malady, causing God to bring us back to His original uncropped view of an ever-expanding kingdom. God has no such listless boredom with little things. God may have chosen one small nation as His own people, but only with the goal of blessing every nation and all people with His Grace. God’ eye is not only on the single little sparrow but also on sparrows everywhere. God is not satisfied with little seeds but longs to see the seeds turn into rich crops of grain and forests of trees. We may see small aging churches becoming smaller; God sees the kingdom of heaven expanding to new people and cultures. God is out to leaven the whole lump. God would save the whole world through His Son. PRAYER: *“Lord, extend my vision beyond the immediate and the little. Amen.”*

## Thursday – Seeds

Read “The Parable of the Weeds” in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, focusing on the key verse, Matthew 13:24, *“He put another parable before them, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.’”* Johnny Appleseed is a figure in American folklore who went about planting apple seeds across the frontier. Actually, behind the legend is the actual man, John Chapman, who fought in the Revolutionary War and did indeed head west to plant apple nurseries and orchards in Ohio and Indiana. The apple trees transformed pioneer land into homesteads. Chapman was a Christian, remembered today in many Christian households with the mealtime prayer sung to a Swedenborgian tune: “Oh, the Lord is good to me, and so I thank the Lord, for giving me the things I need, the sun and the rain and the apple seed. The Lord is good to me. Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen.” The sower in Jesus’ parable introduces new seed to the ground. He intrudes in the natural order of things, chooses ground, prepares it and blesses it with seed. The planting is intentional and specific. God plants His Word just that way, and the Word yields amazing results in our lives, identity, purpose and impact in Jesus Christ. “Oh, the Lord is good to me.” PRAYER: *Lord, scatter Your life-giving seeds across my life. Amen*

## Friday – Sleepers

Read “The Parable of the Weeds” in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, focusing on the key verse, Matthew 13:25, *“But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came...”* The literature of many cultures has the story of an individual who sleeps for years and wakes up to a different world. In 1818 Washington Irving wrote such a story, giving us Rip Van Winkle, a lazy, henpecked husband who sleeps for twenty years and wakes up to discover he has missed the Revolutionary War. He is surprised by what he sees. In Jesus’ parable of the weeds, while workers sleep, an enemy sows weeds in a wheat field. Clearly, the enemy is out to ruin the farmer’s harvest. The workers are surprised when they see the weeds growing alongside the wheat and even question their boss. Did he misread the seed bag’s contents? Throughout the New Testament, followers of Jesus are cautioned to stay awake and alert. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told His disciples to watch and pray lest they yield to temptation. They woke to a violent and disturbing arrest. Lazy, sleepy