

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 15, 2024

Prelude Christopher A. McCroskey
(As the Prelude begins, prayerfully prepare your hearts and minds for worship.)

Greetings, Announcements & Prayer

*Call To Worship
Revive our souls.
Praise God for the heavens tell of his glory!

Rejoice our hearts.
Praise God who enlightens our eyes!
Clear us from hidden faults.
Let us be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, our rock and our redeemer!

*Opening Hymn "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me" vs. 1-3 361

*Opening Prayer

Loving God,
We long for peace within and without. We long to find serenity of spirit in the midst of life's struggles. We long for harmony in our families and in all our relationships. We long for peaceful community and a world full of justice, yet we confess that there is much anxiety, fear, distrust, and sin in us. Help us to live as people of faith. Look upon us with kindness and mercy; rule in our hearts and in our world, and show us how to walk in your ways, through the grace of Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Affirmation of Faith "Take Up Your Cross" Insert

*Gloria Patri 70
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

*Psalter Psalm 19 (Response 2) 750-751

Passing of the Peace: *Let us greet one another with words of love and peace.*

"Let the Children Come!"
(Those 3 years of age through 8 years of age may go to Children's Church.)

Anthem "Beneath the Cross of Jesus" Choir
Dan Greshel, Soloist

Scripture Lessons Proverbs 1:20-33 Pages 560-561 (O.T.)
Mark 8:27-38 Pages 45-46 (N. T.)

Homily Take Up Your Cross Rev. Darlene L. Kelley

*Hymn of Invitation "People Need the Lord" TFWS 2244

Prayer of the People Insert
The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Presentation of Tithes & Offerings
Offertory Christopher A. McCroskey

*Doxology 95
Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him all creatures here below; praise him above ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

*Closing Hymn "Lift High the Cross" vs. 1, 2, 4 159

*Dismissal With Benediction

*Benediction Response "May the Lord, Mighty God, Bless and Keep You" Choir

*Please Stand As You Are Able

Leading in Worship Today

Pastor: *Rev. Darlene L. Kelley* AV Director: *Marie Stiles*
Music Director: *Christopher A. McCroskey* AV Assistant: *Chris Derrick*
Liturgist: *Jeanette Hornsby* Time Together: *Rhett & Pam Hook*

VISITORS ARE WELCOME in the service of worship! Please make use of the visitor's tags (located in the pew backs) to help us better welcome you as a visitor to Trinity this morning. We ask that you also please fill in the pew pad as it passes to register your attendance with us. **Large print hymnals** are available from the ushers.

You may join as a member into the life and work of this congregation by Confession of Faith or by Transfer of Membership from another church. If you would be interested in becoming a member, please speak to the pastor.

A GIFT TO TRINITY IS GIVEN to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Arnold Heiting's 94th Heavenly Birthday on September 14th, by his Annie.

“AS MEMBERS OF THIS CONGREGATION, WE WILL FAITHFULLY PARTICIPATE IN ITS MINISTRIES BY OUR PRAYERS...

Hilda Edwards Patsy Zeigler Charlie Hooker Kaye Floyd Ruth Frady
Patsy Shuler English Pearcy Latson Lewis Becky Derrick Jimmy Grahl

Shut-Ins: Esther Carter; Gillett Hipp; Linda Maloch; Jean Raynor

Family and Friends: *Lynne Powell (friend of the Ballentines and Branhams); Bobby Johnson (friend of Billy Pearson); Rev. Donna Eidson (former pastor of Trinity); Ima Thibodeaux (friend of Christopher McCroskey); Keith Jordan (nephew of John & Kay Jordan); Deanne Summer (partner of Martha Cooke); Kelsey Molotsky (granddaughter of friend of Bob Strickland); Meg Sansbury; Mary Perry (friend of Marty Johnson); Chantel & Dave Griffin (sister and brother-in-law of Erin Derrick); Malcolm Skipper (grandfather of Matthew Skipper); Bryan Collard (brother-in-law of Mary Sue Lewis); Charlyn McNeill, Michael McNeill (sister & brother of Mary Sue Lewis); Lawrence Gilbert (friend of Becky Derrick); Bob Bohnstengel (spouse of Jo Ann Heiting's cousin); Missy Abrams (stepdaughter of Lissa Abrams); Mary Davis (daughter of Bob & Libby Strickland); Sandra Hornsby, Gloria Erd (friends of Lynn Martin); Pearl Geddens (mother of Tom Geddens); Ross Deal (grandson of Mary Kamoroff); Nancy Wilson (friend of Jeanette Hornsby); David Turner (brother of Pam Turner); Ernie & Betsey Hendrix, Chip Mixon (friends of Tommy Gleaton); Ron & Janet Walker (friends of Tommy & Chris Gleaton); Merit Takach (friend of Joyce and Brent Robinson); James Boggs (father of Claire Boggs); Bill Arheart (friend of Bonnie Ramsey); Robert Bradley (Business Associate of Simon Ross); Florence Lee Carter, Monnie Tiller (friends of Chris Derrick); Adrin & Linda Hargett (stepfather and stepmom of Christopher McCroskey); Haidee Baehr (friends of Ruth Frady); Denise Paul, Scott & Karen Nelson (cousins of Gale Frady); Dan Conner, Max Johnson (friends of Gale Frady); Walt & Janet Beck (friends of Jo Ann Heiting); Adam Lavender (son of Phil Lavender)*

If you have a friend or family member on the Prayer List, we ask you to please keep us updated. If no word is received, we will trust that our prayers have been answered and remove the name. To update us, please call the office or e-mail us at trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com.

OUR PRESENCE ...

In-Person Attendance 09/08 SS: 13 Worship: 64

OUR GIFTS ...

General Fund 09/08 \$ 3,518.69

OUR SERVICE ...

OUR WITNESS.”

Upcoming Events

TODAY Snacks and a Movie, 4 p.m.

09/16 Exercise Class, 10:30 a.m.

09/18 Choir, 6 p.m.

T.a.G., 7 p.m.

09/19 Exercise Class, 10:30 a.m.

09/20 Office Closed

09/21 Trinity Ladies Group, 9:30 a.m.

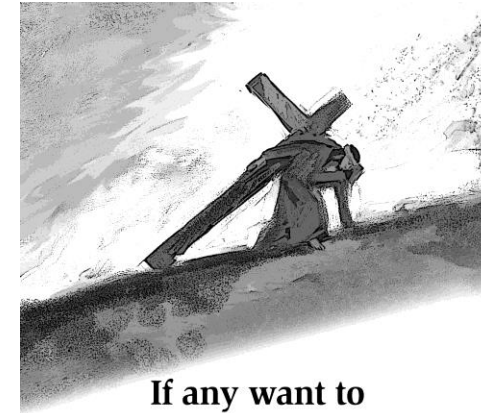
Lizard's Thicket on Hwy 1



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Jesus Christ

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If any want to
become my followers,
let them deny themselves
and take up their cross
and follow me.

Mark 8:34, NRSV

1201 Mohawk Drive
West Columbia, SC 29169

Telephone: 803.794.7777

E-mail: trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com

Website: www.trinityumcwc.org



This Afternoon at 4 p.m.

Plan to join us on Sunday, September 15, for food and fellowship as we watch the movie *The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima*. The film is based on true events of 1917, when three Portuguese children share a miraculous, prophetic vision of the Virgin Mary.



**Saturday, September 21
9:30 a.m.**

The Trinity Ladies Group will meet at Lizard's Thicket on Hwy 1 at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, September 21. They will be meeting on the third Saturday of each month. For October and November, they will again meet at Lizard's Thicket on Hwy 1.

Contact Marie Stiles at (803) 463-9706 if you are interested in being added to the group email and text for notification.



Sunday, September 22

Taste of Trinity, our church-wide covered dish luncheon, will be held on **Sunday, September 22**. Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to share great food and fellowship!

Please Note: The Ministry Team will meet immediately following Taste of Trinity.



Administrative Team
Meeting

**Sunday, September 22
Following Taste of Trinity**

The Administrative Team will meet on Sunday, September 22, to discuss the budget for the upcoming year and other Charge Conference related matters. Charge Conference will be held on October 30 at 7:30 p.m.



**Sunday, October 6
11 a.m.**

We warmly invite you and your beloved pets to a special worship service on Sunday, October 6th at 11:00 a.m. Inspired by the birthday of St. Francis and adapted from our own United Methodist Book of Worship, this unique service is a wonderful way to celebrate the joy and companionship of our pets, and to thank God for all the wonderful gifts of Creation.

Whether your pet has fur, feathers or fins, all creatures are welcome! We'll gather outside (weather permitting) for a time of prayer, reflection and blessing. A pet is not required for attendance; this is our Sunday worship service. Bring the whole family—some may require leashes or carriers. If your pet is unable to attend, please feel free to bring a photo, and we'll bless them in spirit (thanks for that great idea, Pam & Faye). Blessing certificates with your pet's name will be available.

If you have a pop-up or canopy tarp that we might borrow for our outside service that day, please contact the church office at 803-794-7777 or email us at trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com. We'll also need three or four volunteers to set up chairs outside on the morning of the event. A volunteer sign up sheet will be available in the lobby.

Let's also discuss the possibility of bringing pet food or other special gifts as a donation to our local animal shelter. The pastor would love to hear your thoughts and ideas. Most importantly, let's use this opportunity to invite friends, family and neighborhood animal lovers to this special worship event at our church! Say a prayer, spread the word and give God the glory!

If you have any questions, just ask Rev. Kelley at 845-416-7308. Thank you!



Prayer of the People

Gracious God, you have saved us through your Son Jesus Christ and you call us to take up our cross and follow him: Incline your ear to us as we call upon you, saying: ***Let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our strength and our redeemer.***

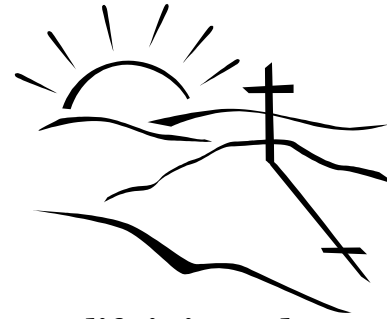
You have promised life to your church as we lose our lives for Jesus' sake and for the sake of the gospel: **Inspire our witness to your Messiah, that we may share in his work of resurrection. Let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight. O God, our strength and our redeemer.**

Keep us all from presumptuous sin and guide us, that we may set our minds upon divine things and not upon human things. **Let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight; O God, our strength and our redeemer.**

Be near to us and sustain us in conflict and in prosperity, that our community may be whole and sound, and innocent of great offense. **Let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight; O God, our strength and our redeemer.**

The heavens declare your glory, O God, and the firmament shows your handiwork. **Hear our prayers for those for whom we intercede.** (*silent prayer*)

Through your Son, Jesus the Messiah, you have shown us how to save our lives by losing ourselves in the grace of your good news for all people: **Fill us with the power of your Spirit, that we may live with faithful courage, sharing in your sufferings so that we may share in your resurrection through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**



Take Up Your Cross

**We believe in God,
the maker of all things,
source of all life and Mother of
all children.**

**Our life is in God,
and in God we are one with all beings.
We follow Jesus, the Christ, the Revealer of God,
who taught us to love,
who gave us courage to trust God's grace,
and who bid us to take up our cross and follow him.**

**In his life and ministry and his death and resurrection,
he has shown us that in losing our lives we find them.
He who was crucified is the Lord of the Universe.**

**We rely upon the power
and presence of the Holy Spirit,
the communion of saints,
the unity of the church,
the forgiveness of sin,
the resurrection of the body,
and the reality of eternal life.**

**Therefore we devote ourselves
to disciplined practice of the Way of Jesus
in our daily lives,
so that we may grow in faithfulness,
and serve God in humble, confident love
for the sake of the healing of the world. Amen.**

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Trinity UMC
September 15, 2024
Rev. Darlene L. Kelley

Take Up Your Cross

We've been walking with Mark for the past few weeks, but we haven't said much about him. So, I'd like to start this morning with a word about our Gospel writer. Mark's Gospel is the oldest gospel, and though there's always debate about the identity of biblical writers, most scholars agree that Mark was not a disciple but probably a close follower of the Apostle Peter. This is what one of my favorite writers, Rev. Frederick Buechner says about Mark:

Nobody knows for sure who wrote the Gospel that bears Mark's name because the book itself doesn't say. Some people claim it was the John Mark who turns up in the book of Acts as a traveling companion of Paul's and the son of a woman named Mary, who owned a place where the group used to meet and pray back in the days when the church was young (Acts 12:12). And maybe this John Mark was the same person who appears in the scene of Jesus' arrest at Gethsemane as a boy who managed to escape from the soldiers' clutches but not without leaving his shirt behind, so that he ran off into the dark scared out of his wits and naked as the day he was born (Mark 14:51-52). Mark is the only one who reports the incident, and maybe he put it in as a kind of signature. An early historian says he was a friend of Peter's and got some of his information from him. Who knows? In the long run, the only things you can find out about him for certain are from the book he wrote. Whoever he was, Mark is as good a name to call him by as any other.¹

One of the other lessons Buechner offers with his essay on Mark is this: *Mark writes for people who already believe instead of the ones who need things explained, and therefore it's who Jesus was, rather than what he said, that Mark's book is bursting with—who he was and what he did with what little time he had. He was the "Son of God," that's who he was. Mark says it right out in the first sentence so nobody will miss it (1:1). And he came "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (10:45).²*

It's who Jesus was, Buechner explains, and that's where we pick up in our Gospel reading this morning. First, Jesus asks: “Who do people say that I am?” And the disciples respond: “John the Baptist, or Elijah. Some say you are one of the prophets”...

“But who do you say that I am?” Jesus then asks. And Peter gets it right; he understands. Peter proclaims that Jesus is the Messiah—and for a few minutes it must have felt like good news indeed, and Peter must have felt like the one with a gold star in Sunday school.

¹ frederickbuechner.com/Mark

² frederickbuechner.com/Mark

Peter and his whole community, all his family and friends, everyone he knows –everyone has been waiting for the Messiah. And all the signs have come together; the prophecy unfolds and the Messiah is here. The Messiah is with them.

And he's arrived just in the nick of time. The people are suffering under the mighty weight of the Roman Empire. They are looking for a leader, a king who will lead them to victory over Rome, and at last here he is!

But then the good news turns bad. Not only does Peter have to keep the good news to himself for now—what some scholars call “the Messianic Secret”—but now he hears Jesus say: the Son of Man “must undergo great suffering”, and be “rejected by the elders and the chief priest” and “be killed”.

So the Messiah is here, but things aren't going to turn out like we'd hoped. We're not going to join together and overthrow Rome. We're not even going to organize and have a bake sale. No. We're going to watch our Savior be denied, beaten and killed. This does not sound like good news.

Jesus does tell Peter that after three days he will rise again, but I'm not sure that gave Peter any real comfort. How much do you hear after someone you love, a leader you were counting on, tells you they have to suffer and die?

How can this be? So Peter disapproves. And he tells Jesus just how he feels, how he knows the others will feel, how everyone will feel. “Jesus, you can't suffer and die. We need you! We have work to do, things to set right.”

But turning and looking at his disciples, Jesus rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things...for if any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the Gospel will save it (Mark 8:33-35).

Poor Peter went from a gold star to disappointment and confusion, and he's not alone. Scholars love to debate this passage. Yet, New Testament scholar, Joel Marcus, has a very practical approach to this morning's Scripture lesson. Marcus believes we can best understand what Jesus is teaching us by understanding—not our human battles, but the spiritual battles that engulf the world—not on *human things* but on *divine things*.

Marcus quotes a 7th century Greek poet named, Tyrtæus, who wrote: “The man who risks his life in battle has the best chance of saving it; the one who flees to save it is the most likely to lose it.”

In other words, Marcus explains: *what is most important in the heat of battle is not to lose your head (either figuratively or literally). And it is impossible to keep a cool head if you are trying in a panicky way to steer clear of danger—the fleeing soldier is easily shot in the back.*

On the other hand, intrepid soldiers sometimes miraculously survive, even when their companions are falling left and right because they act in a purposeful and deliberate fashion that unnerves the enemy. Jesus takes this piece of secular, military wisdom and transposes it onto a different

plane; and the transposition is apt, Marcus points out, because Jesus pictures himself as a general in an army, and the present situation as one of fierce battle—the climatic battle, in fact, between God’s army and that of the personified power of evil in the world.

Yet, Marcus asks: what sort of general is Jesus? Generals don’t usually end up being crucified—unless they’re bad generals. Yet this Jesus, this would-be Messiah, ends his life nailed to a Roman cross, dying through a mode of execution so horrific that it was considered to be appropriate only for slaves. And Christian theology has always seen this terrible, degrading death as a victory, indeed the victory by which God vanquished the power of evil once and for all.

Through that victory, Marcus concludes: the church believes, a strange vitality has been released into the world, a spirit of hope that still erupts in arenas of weakness, suffering and death. ³

Though Peter and the disciples don’t understand it at the time, they are hearing Jesus tell of his plan, the plan that conquers sin and death. Death, has been swallowed up in victory. Where, o death is thy victory? Where, O death, is thy sting? (1 Corinthians 15:55).

As we celebrate again and again through the sacrament of communion, Jesus conquers sin and death on the Cross; Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. Victory over sin and death through the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, the Anointed One, the Messiah.

But there is a price to pay for victory. Jesus pays the price with his life. And this is what he tells us: If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and the sake of the gospel, will save it (Mk. 8:35).

Perhaps one of the tricky parts is that taking up the cross may look different for different people. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple (Luke 14:27). Just a short time later, Jesus reminds us: Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? (Luke 14:34). So, it’s not just bearing the cross, but bearing it for the long haul. What does bearing the cross look like for you? How long have you been bearing that cross?

In his book, Turn my Mourning into Dancing, Henri Nouwen proclaims: God asks us to jump from our secure perches, to stop calculating the risks. Jesus bids us, “Take up your cross, follow me. Don’t insist on knowing exactly what comes next but trust that you are in the hand of God, who will guide your life.”

Trust and surrender. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and the sake of the gospel, will save it.

³ Joel Marcus, “Uncommon Sense”, *The Christian Century*, Sept. 17, 2000.

Losing my life? Turning over control and simply trusting in God and surrendering? That isn't always easy for me, and there are lots of days, I confess it doesn't seem entirely like good news. Where is my faith? Do I believe in a God of grace and mercy?

Taking up the cross requires faith, and faith requires courage, strength and determination, and as Peter knows even with faith—you don't always get what you want. And the Cross will surely put you face to face with suffering.

Yet, United Methodist Bishop, Kenneth Carder, retired now too from teaching at our local seminary, Lutheran, recently here in Columbia, and a wonderful leader in our community, we're blessed to have still serving among us though retired...Bishop Carder writes: *Should not religious faith protect us from suffering, bring security, give us victory? This is no way to gain followers. Promised suffering, bearing crosses, losing one's life—that will not sell. That will not bring church growth! Protection from suffering, avoiding the cross, that is what we want and expect from God is it not? Why follow a wounded, scarred, crucified Christ? We have enough suffering and rejection without this. Peter's objection is as contemporary and personal as our own instinct for self-preservation, our own longing for security and prominence and health and life.*

Mark knows that only those who follow Jesus to the cross will recognize who he is. If we stop before Calvary, Bishop Carder explains, we misunderstand Jesus. We will mistake him for just another miracle worker, or another exorcist, or a wise and compelling teacher. If the disciples proclaim Jesus the Messiah without the cross, they will proclaim a false messiah, for Jesus' true identity can be known only at the cross. There, even an unenlightened Roman soldier will recognize him: "Truly this was the Son of God."

Why follow a crucified Christ? Bishop Carder asks, because only a crucified messiah reveals God as a suffering, vulnerable God. Only those who stand beneath the cross and watch him suffer and die will be convinced that at the heart of reality is One who enters into suffering. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us, "Only the suffering God can help". And Alfred North Whitehead calls God the "fellow sufferer who understands".

Bishop Carder goes on to explain, *the message is profound: The Transcendent One has moved into our vulnerability, our guilt, our alienation, our suffering, our death. God has claimed our weakness as a resource for divine power. God has claimed our wounds as potential means of healing.*

By following a crucified Christ, we can face our own vulnerability. We no longer have to hide behind a mask of stoic control or wear the protective armor of invulnerability. We can confront our weakness, and even affirm with Paul that "when I am weak then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). We can take up a cross with the full assurance that Christ has gone before us and now shares its weight and pain.

Because we follow a crucified Christ, we enter into solidarity with the world's suffering. We experience the power and love of God through the vulnerable and the suffering. Nothing so snaps us to attention and moves us into the depth of life's meaning as an anguished cry from one we love. Everything else is stripped away and we enter the sacred world of shared suffering. We enter into the presence of the crucified God.

We follow the crucified Christ, Bishop Carder concludes, as people of hope. We live on the other side of the cross from Peter. What Jesus teaches to the disciples in this morning's passage has come true. The Crucified One became the Risen One. Those who follow him know the future does not belong to

the triumph of suffering, sin and death. It belongs to the reign of Christ over all creation. We have no reason, therefore, to be ashamed of him or hesitant to follow him. The One who calls us to take up our cross goes with us to the cross...and beyond. ⁴

And that sounds like good news to me.

Will you please pray with me?

God of love and mercy,

Give us the courage to take up our crosses and follow you. Strengthen our faith and our hearts, and make us your own, for we pray in the name of the Crucified and Risen Christ. Amen.

⁴ Kenneth L. Carder, "Why Follow a Crucified Christ?" (Mk. 8:7-38) *The Christian Century*, Sept. 3, 1997.