

September 20th 2026

WHEN MONDAY COMES

Faith for the Week Ahead

✿ Please take this home and use it during the week. ✿

Sunday worship is not meant to stay in the sanctuary.

Each week, When Monday Comes offers Scripture, prayers, reflections, and simple encouragement to help us carry faith into everyday life.



Read it with your morning coffee.



Use a prayer before bed.



Think about the weekly question.



Share a thought with someone else.



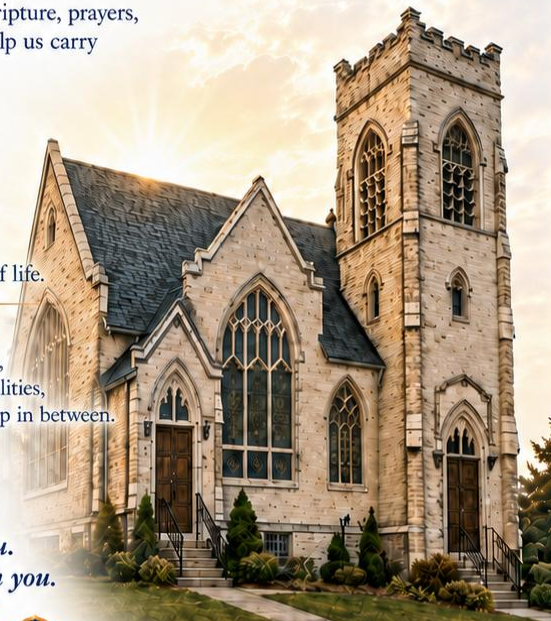
Let God speak in the ordinary places of life.

Faith is not only for Sunday morning.

Faith is for Monday decisions, Tuesday worries, Wednesday conversations, Thursday responsibilities, Friday weariness, Saturday hopes, and every step in between.

So please take this home, keep it nearby, and when Monday comes, remember:

*God is still with you.
Christ is still calling you.
The Spirit is still working in you.*



• United Presbyterian Church of Whitinsville •

• CONNECT WITH US •

51 Cottage Street • Whitinsville, MA 01588
Sunday Worship at 10:30 a.m. • <https://whitinpres.org>

Another View

When Today's Trouble Makes Us Forget Yesterday's Grace

This week we tried something a little different.

Instead of looking at only one Old Testament passage and one New Testament passage, we looked across several of the readings appointed for this Sunday: Exodus 16:2–15, Jonah 3:10–4:11, Psalm 105, Psalm 145, Philippians 1:21–30, and Matthew 20:1–16.

They are very different stories, but we found one common thread running through them:

We have an amazing ability to forget yesterday's grace when something goes wrong today. And yet God keeps working with us.

You do not need to know all these stories to follow along. Each one shows people trying to understand what it means to trust a God whose grace is often bigger than their expectations—and sometimes bigger than their comfort level.

Years ago, while moving, I parked a moving truck in the parking lot of a church. The pastor came outside, apparently thinking I might be moving into the neighborhood and perhaps looking for a church.

I told him we were actually moving to Massachusetts, but we ended up having a very good conversation.

At some point I mentioned the Israelites wandering in the wilderness. I told him that I could never understand them.

God had rescued them from slavery in Egypt. They had seen things most of us can only imagine. They had watched God make a way when there seemed to be no way.

And yet, when life became difficult, they complained.

How could people who had seen so much forget so quickly?

The pastor gently brought me back down to earth.

He reminded me not to be too judgmental.

We have the story of Jesus. We know about the cross and resurrection. We have the teachings of the New Testament. We know about grace. Many of us can look back over our own lives and remember times when God carried us through things we never thought we would get through.

And yet how quickly can we become frightened, angry, disappointed, or resentful when life does not go the way we want?

That conversation changed the way I read those wilderness stories.

It became much harder to ask: **“What was wrong with those people?”**

A better question was: **“Where am I doing the same thing?”**

In Exodus 16, the Israelites are in the wilderness after escaping slavery in Egypt. Food is running low. They are hungry and frightened.

Their fear is real.

But their present trouble becomes so large that they begin talking as though Egypt had somehow been better.

God does not abandon them because they complain.

God feeds them.

He gives them manna—food they did not plant, grow, harvest, or earn.

Psalm 105 later looks back on this story and remembers what God had done for His people.

Maybe there is a reason Scripture keeps telling us to remember.

Sometimes the hardest time to remember yesterday’s blessings is when today hurts.

Then there is Jonah.

God sends Jonah to Nineveh, a city Jonah does not like and does not want God to forgive.

Jonah runs away from God's assignment. Eventually he goes, delivers God's warning, and the people of Nineveh repent.

God shows them mercy.

Jonah is not pleased.

He wanted judgment.

Later, Jonah sits outside the city under a plant that gives him shade. When the plant dies and Jonah loses his comfort, he becomes angry again.

That is when God points out the problem.

Jonah is deeply upset over the loss of a plant that made **him** comfortable, but he is struggling to care about an entire city full of people.

Jonah is worried about his shade.

God is worried about people.

And yet God does not give up on Jonah either.

God keeps talking to him.

He keeps questioning him.

He keeps trying to enlarge Jonah's heart.

Psalm 145 tells us something important about why:

The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

That sounds wonderful when God's patience is directed toward us.

It can become a little harder when God directs that same mercy toward someone we do not think deserves it.

Jesus takes us straight into that uncomfortable territory in Matthew 20.

He tells a story about a landowner who hires workers at different times during the day.

Some work all day.

Some work only part of the day.

Some arrive very late.

At the end of the day, the landowner pays them all the same amount.

The workers who had been there all day are angry.

But they were not cheated. They received exactly what they had agreed to receive.

Their problem was that somebody else received more generosity than they thought that person deserved.

That may be one of the harder truths about grace.

We usually like grace when we are receiving it. We sometimes call it unfair when somebody else receives it.

Maybe that is because somewhere along the way we start thinking of grace as wages.

We start keeping score.

I worked harder.

I have been faithful longer.

I suffered more.

I behaved better.

I deserve this.

They do not.

But grace stops being grace the moment it becomes something God owes us.

Paul then gives us the practical side in Philippians.

He tells Christians to live in a way that is worthy of the gospel.

In firefighter language:

If grace has really reached us, eventually it ought to show up in how we treat people.

Not because we are trying to earn God's love.

Not because we are trying to work our way into heaven.

But because God has already been at work in our lives, and that should begin changing something in us.

That is where all these readings finally turn toward us.

Difficulty will come.

There will be days when we are tired, frightened, hurting, angry, disappointed, or just plain fed up.

We can thank God for years of good health and still become angry when one medical problem changes our plans.

We can be grateful for what we have until somebody else gets something we wanted.

We can remember all the times God has carried us and still wonder where He is when one thing suddenly goes wrong.

We may complain like Israel.

We may sulk like Jonah.

We may look across the vineyard and decide somebody else received more than they deserved.

And sometimes we may discover that the person most in need of God's patience is the one looking back at us from the mirror.

The good news running through these passages is not that faithful people never complain, never become angry, and never lose perspective.

The good news is this:

God keeps working with them.

He kept feeding Israel.

He kept talking to Jonah.

Jesus kept teaching His disciples about grace.

And God continues working with us.

Maybe the question is not always:

“Why am I going through this?”

Sometimes a better question might be:

“God, what are You trying to teach me while I am going through this?”

Yesterday's grace has not disappeared simply because today hurts.

And perhaps one of the clearest signs that grace is working in us is when today's difficulty leaves us a little more patient, a little more compassionate, a little less judgmental, and a little more aware of how much grace we ourselves have already received.

The Bible becomes much more uncomfortable—and much more useful—when we stop asking why **they** acted that way and begin asking where **we** are doing the same thing.

Thankfully, the God who did not give up on them has not given up on us either.

Faith Between Sundays **Weekly Reflections: September 20–26, 2026**

Remembering Grace When Today Is Hard

This week's scriptures remind us that faith does not mean we will never complain, become discouraged, question God, or struggle with what seems unfair.

Israel complained when food became scarce. Jonah became angry when God showed mercy to people he disliked. Workers in Jesus' parable resented the generosity shown to others. Even Paul wrote from circumstances he certainly would not have chosen.

Yet through every story, God continues to provide, teach, forgive, challenge, and call His people forward. Perhaps faith between Sundays begins by remembering this: **Today's difficulty does not erase yesterday's grace, and God is still working even when we cannot yet see what He is doing.**

Prayer for the Week

Gracious God, when today's problems become so large that we forget yesterday's blessings, help us remember Your faithfulness. When we complain, be patient with us.

When we become angry, help us listen. When we judge the grace You give others, remind us how much grace we ourselves have received. Open our hearts to what You are teaching us, and let Your grace become visible in the way we live and treat others. Amen.

Sunday, September 20 **When Today's Problem Becomes Everything – Scripture: Exodus 16:2–4**

The Israelites had been rescued from slavery, but hunger in the wilderness quickly became the only thing they could see.

We can do the same thing.

One painful problem, frightening diagnosis, financial worry, family disagreement, or disappointing day can grow until it blocks our view of everything God has already done.

God did not abandon Israel because they complained. He listened and provided. Sometimes faith begins simply by remembering that the problem in front of us is not the whole story.

Today's faithful choice: Before worrying about what is missing today, remember one way God has provided for you in the past.

Prayer:

God, when today's problems become all I can see, remind me of the ways You have already carried me. Help me trust that this moment is not the whole story. Amen.

Monday, September 21

Enough for Today – Scripture: Exodus 16:15–18

God provided manna for Israel one day at a time. That must have required trust.

Most of us would probably prefer a warehouse full of manna with a six-month supply safely stored away. We like knowing what comes next.

But sometimes God gives us enough strength, courage, patience, or provision for **today**.

Tomorrow's supply may not be visible yet. That does not mean it will not be there.

Today's faithful choice: Instead of carrying all of tomorrow's worries today, ask God for what you need to faithfully handle this day.

Prayer:

Lord, I often want tomorrow's answers before I have finished living today. Give me enough faith for this day and help me trust You with what comes next. Amen.

Tuesday, September 22

Remember What God Has Done – Scripture: Psalm 105:5

“Remember the wonderful works he has done.” Memory is an important part of faith.

When life is going well, we can easily assume it will always be that way. When life becomes difficult, we can just as easily assume it has always been difficult.

Neither is true.

Looking backward can remind us of prayers answered, people who appeared when we needed them, strength we did not know we possessed, and moments when a way opened that we could not see beforehand.

Remembering does not make today's pain disappear.

It reminds us that we are not facing today's pain alone.

Today's faithful choice: Think of one difficult time you made it through. Thank God for one person, event, or unexpected blessing that helped carry you through it.

Prayer:

Faithful God, help me remember the times You have been present in my life, especially when today makes those memories difficult to see. Let yesterday's grace strengthen today's faith. Amen.

Wednesday, September 23

When Grace Goes to Someone Else – Scripture: Jonah 3:10–4:2

Jonah preached to Nineveh, the people changed their ways, and God showed mercy.

Jonah became angry. He wanted mercy for himself but judgment for them.

We may understand Jonah better than we would like to admit.

It is easy to believe in forgiveness until the person being forgiven is someone who hurt us. It is easy to celebrate second chances until one is given to somebody we think has already had too many.

God's grace is bigger than our list of who we think deserves it. That is good news, because eventually every one of us ends up on somebody's list.

Today's faithful choice: When you are tempted to decide what someone else deserves, remember one time you were grateful that God gave you mercy instead of what you deserved.

Prayer:

Merciful God, forgive me when I want grace for myself but judgment for someone else. Help me remember how much mercy I have received and make my heart more generous toward others. Amen.

Thursday, September 24

Jonah and the Shade – Scripture: Jonah 4:9–11

Jonah became deeply upset when the plant providing his shade died. God used that plant to expose something Jonah could not see in himself.

Jonah cared intensely about losing something that made **him** comfortable while struggling to care about an entire city full of people.

Comfort can do that to us. We can become so focused on what has inconvenienced us that we stop noticing what someone else is carrying.

Sometimes God uses our own discomfort to enlarge our compassion.

Today's faithful choice: Notice one inconvenience today and ask, “Could this help me better understand what someone else regularly experiences?”

Prayer:

God, do not let my own discomfort make me blind to the needs of others. Use even the things I would rather avoid to make me more compassionate and more aware of those around me. Amen.

Friday, September 25

Grace Is Not a Paycheck – Scripture: Matthew 20:13–15

The workers who had labored all day received the wage they had been promised.

Their anger began when people who worked less received the same amount.

They had not been treated badly. Someone else had simply been treated generously.

We sometimes keep spiritual scorecards without realizing it.

I worked harder.
I served longer.
I behaved better.
I deserve more.

But grace is not a paycheck. The moment grace becomes something God owes us, it is no longer grace.

Today's faithful choice: Celebrate something good that happened to someone else today without comparing it to what you received.

Prayer:

Generous God, free me from keeping score. Help me rejoice when others receive goodness and remind me that every good gift in my own life is grace, not something You owe me. Amen.

Saturday, September 26
Let Grace Show – Scripture: Philippians 1:27

“Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” Paul does not tell us merely to believe certain things. He tells us that the gospel should eventually become visible in the way we live.

In everyday language: **If grace has reached us, it ought to show up somewhere.**

Maybe in greater patience.
Maybe in forgiveness.
Maybe in generosity.
Maybe in how we speak about someone we disagree with.
Maybe in noticing another person's pain because our own experience taught us what hurting feels like.
We will not do this perfectly.

Israel did not.
Jonah certainly did not.
Neither did Jesus' disciples.
And neither will we.

But God kept working with them. And God keeps working with us.

Today's faithful choice: Before this week ends, ask yourself: “Where has God’s grace changed the way I treated someone this week?”

Prayer:

Lord, let the grace I have received become visible in the life I live. Make me more patient, more forgiving, more compassionate, and more willing to reflect Your love in ordinary moments. Amen.

From the Pew
Forty-Five Minutes

Some calls stay with you longer than others.

This one began routinely enough. A man in our district was having chest pain, and his home was about forty-five minutes from the nearest hospital.

Long transports were not unusual. You settle into the back of the ambulance, monitor the patient, follow medical-control orders, watch the vital signs, and keep an eye out for anything that might change.

But when it is just you and another person in the back of an ambulance for forty-five minutes, conversations naturally happen.

We talked about his family, his children, his work, and the life he had built. From the outside, he appeared successful—a large home, acreage, and a barn bigger than my fire station.

Eventually our conversation turned toward God.

He told me he had grown up in a religious family and had attended church when he was younger, even for a while during college. Somewhere along the way he stopped going.

Not because he was angry with God, but life simply got busy.

Then he asked me if I believed.

I told him I did—that I believed in God and that Christ was my Savior.

I didn't preach. I didn't try to convince him of anything. I simply answered his question honestly.

Before we reached the hospital, he told me that when he got home he wanted to look into church again and figure out how God would **“fit into his life.”**

That phrase stayed with me.

We often talk about fitting God into our lives.

We fit Him into Sunday morning. We pray when someone is sick. We turn toward Him when life becomes frightening.

But it is possible to believe in God—even attend church—and still live most of our everyday lives as though God has very little to do with them.

Our work.

Our money.

Our relationships.

Our anger.

Our honesty.

The way we treat people.

The choices we make when nobody else is watching.

If faith never reaches those places, then maybe the problem is not figuring out where God fits into our lives.

Maybe the question is whether we are allowing the life God has given us to be shaped by Him.

Over the years I have come to believe this:

We don't fit God into our lives. God has already fit us into His.

My patient remained stable during the entire ride.

Nothing suggested to me that we were spending the last forty-five minutes of his life together.

I don't believe he thought that either.

We both assumed there would be more time.

He would go into the hospital.

The doctors would figure out what was wrong.

He would be treated.

He would go home.

Perhaps he really would look into church again.

There would be time to think about all of that later.

We transferred him from the ambulance to an emergency-room bed. I stayed to give my report to the doctor and nurse.

Then I heard a groan.

He coded.

We worked hard on that code—longer than usual, harder than usual.

But he did not come back.

The man I had spent the previous forty-five minutes talking with was suddenly gone.

Later, when his family arrived, the question that mattered most to them was whether he had suffered.

I was able to tell them truthfully that he had not. It had happened suddenly.

I never told them about our conversation concerning God. It had been a private and unfinished conversation, and I did not want to add another unanswered question to their grief.

But I have thought about that conversation many times since.

What stays with me most is that **neither of us knew those forty-five minutes would be the last thing he ever did.**

To him, it was a ride to the hospital.

To me, it was another patient transport.

We talked as though tomorrow was coming because that is what most of us do.

And usually it does.

Until it doesn't.

That man changed the way I think about time.

He probably never knew that.

And there is something else about that night that has stayed with me.

If he had been given a choice about whom he would spend the last forty-five minutes of his life talking with, I doubt an ordinary paramedic he had never met would have been high on the list.

He probably would have chosen his wife.

His children.

Another relative.

A close friend.

Perhaps a pastor.

But none of those people were there.

I was, and neither of us knew the importance of the moment while we were living it.

That makes me think about all the people we meet unexpectedly.

Most of those conversations will not be anyone's last, and I certainly do not recommend walking up to strangers and saying, "You know, I might be the last person you ever talk to."

That would probably shorten the conversation considerably.

But perhaps we could treat more ordinary encounters as opportunities rather than interruptions.

If someone wants to talk, listen.

If someone seems lonely, notice them.

If someone asks what you believe, answer honestly.

If someone needs kindness, give it.

We never know what another person is carrying or how important a simple conversation might become.

Maybe that is one of the ways our Sunday faith follows us into Monday.

We do not have to preach to every person we meet. Sometimes showing God's grace is much simpler.

Be present. Listen. Be kind. Treat the person in front of you as though they matter—because they do.

Those forty-five minutes also taught me something about how casually we assume we have more time.

More time to repair a relationship.

More time to make the phone call.

More time to apologize.

More time to forgive.

More time to tell someone what they mean to us.

More time to take our faith seriously.

More time to allow what we say we believe on Sunday to affect how we actually live on Monday.

We tell ourselves we will get around to those things when life slows down, when circumstances improve, or when we finally feel ready.

But sometimes the opportunity we assume will still be there tomorrow is the opportunity we have been given today.

I don't know what God did with that conversation in the ambulance.
I hope it mattered to that man. I know it mattered to me.
It took away some of my confidence that I have plenty of time in my life.

But it also gave something back – Perspective and Clarity.

A greater appreciation for the life I still have.

Every day will not be easy.

Some days hurt.
Some days frighten us.
Some days disappoint us.

But a difficult day is still a day we have been given.

There are still people to love.
Words still worth saying.
Relationships still worth repairing.
Grace still worth noticing.
And there may still be someone standing in front of us who simply needs to know that they matter.

So, the lesson those forty-five minutes left with me is really very simple: **Don't wait.**

Make the call.
Offer the apology.
Tell someone what they mean to you.
Say the prayer.
Take the first step.

And don't leave God sitting in Sunday morning while you go live the rest of the week without Him.

Because we never know how much time we have.

And we never know how important one ordinary conversation might become.

Don't overlook the person God has placed in front of you today.

Wisdom from Bird Dog **The Hole We Keep Falling Into — Part One**

Bird Dog has a hole.

It is not technically her hole. It is simply a hole along one of our regular walking routes.

But considering how often she has managed to step into it, I was beginning to think she had claimed ownership.

You would think that after walking the same route day after day, she would remember where it is.

Apparently not.

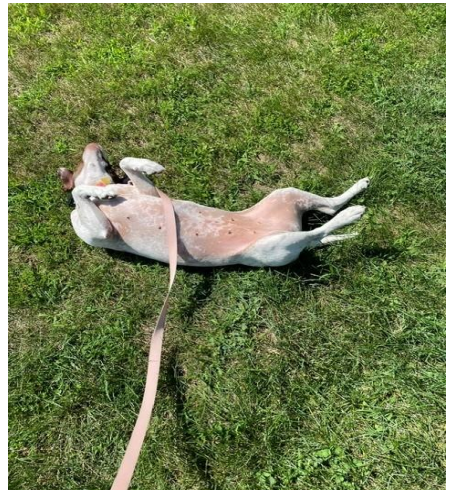
Not long ago, she stepped in it again.

One foot went down, she lost her balance, and instead of immediately getting back up and continuing the walk, she simply rolled over onto the grass and lay there.

I happened to have my phone out, so I even caught part of the collapse in pictures.

She looked as though she had reached a decision:

“That’s it. I have had enough. Leave me here.”



“I have reviewed the situation
and decided the walk can
continue without me.”

For a few moments, Bird Dog was finished with the walk, finished with the hole, and possibly finished with life in general.

I laughed.

Then I started thinking about how often we do exactly the same thing.

Most of us have a few holes we keep stepping into.

They may not be holes in the ground.

They may be habits we have promised ourselves a hundred times we were going to change.

They may be old ways of thinking:

I can never change.

No one will ever take me seriously.

No one could really love me.

I am alone. Nobody cares.

God has more important people to worry about than me.

Things are never going to get better, so why bother trying?

We know those holes are there.

Sometimes we even know exactly where they are.

And yet somehow we manage to step into them again.

I have one involving the Muffin House.

I can announce with great conviction that I am going to lose weight.

I am going to eat better.

I am going to exercise more.

I am absolutely committed.

Then I drive past the Muffin House.

Suddenly I am standing at the counter ordering a muffin.

And once I have the first muffin, another fascinating piece of reasoning takes over:

“Well, I have already ruined the diet today, so I might as well have the lemon muffin too. I will start again tomorrow.”

Tomorrow has apparently become one of the healthiest days of my life.

I have started hundreds of diets tomorrow.

That example is funny.

But some of our holes are not funny at all.

Some have been with us for years.

And perhaps the hardest part is admitting that sometimes we do not merely fall into them.

Sometimes we go looking for them.

The familiar disappointment can feel safer than the unfamiliar work of changing.

If I already believe no one will take me seriously, I do not have to risk speaking up.

If I believe no one could love me, I can keep people far enough away that they never have the opportunity to prove me wrong.

If I tell myself nothing will ever change, I do not have to face the possibility of trying and failing.

Sometimes lying in the grass really does seem easier than getting back on our feet.

The Apostle Paul understood something about this struggle.

In Romans 7, Paul describes wanting to do what is right and yet finding himself doing the very thing he does not want to do.

That sounds remarkably familiar.

Our faith does not teach us that following Christ means we will never step into the same hole twice.

Grace is needed precisely because we do.

But grace does not say: **“The hole doesn’t matter. Stay there.”**

Grace says: **“You fell again. Give me your hand.”**

There is an important difference.

God does not stand over us keeping score:

Third time this week.

You should have learned by now.

I cannot believe you did that again.

Instead, God keeps calling us forward.

Sometimes God helps us recognize the hole sooner.

Sometimes He gives us enough wisdom to walk around it.

Sometimes another person sees us heading toward it and says:

“Watch your step.”

And sometimes we fall straight into it again.

When we do, God’s grace is still there.

The goal is not to pretend all the holes will disappear.

Some temptations, fears, wounds, doubts, and old ways of thinking may remain along our road for a very long time.

The question becomes what we do when we encounter them.

Do we decide that because we stumbled today, there is no point trying tomorrow?

Do we turn one muffin into two because the day is already “ruined”?

Do we allow one failure to become proof that the old voice was right when it said:

You will never change. Or do we get up?

Maybe slowly.

Maybe embarrassed.

Maybe after lying in the grass for a minute wondering why we keep doing this.

But we get up.

Eventually Bird Dog rolled herself over, got back onto her feet, and continued the walk.

The hole was still there and Bird Dog was still Bird Dog.

But the walk wasn’t over.

Neither is ours.

At the time, I thought that was the lesson.

Fall down.

Accept the grace that helps you back up.

Learn what you can.

Keep walking.

And apparently Bird Dog did learn something.



“The hole was still there. Bird Dog was still Bird Dog. But the walk wasn’t over.”

Over the next few weeks, I noticed that when we approached that spot, she started giving the hole a little more room.

I was rather proud of her.

I probably should have been paying closer attention.

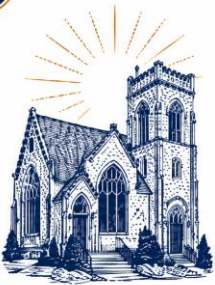
Because as it turns out, Bird Dog was not finished teaching me about that hole.

And the next lesson was going to be considerably more personal.

To be continued...

Bird Dog Says:

“You may need a minute in the grass, but don’t mistake a fall for the end of the walk.”



UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WHITINSVILLE
51 Cottage Street, Whitinsville, MA 01588
Sunday Worship at 10:30 a.m.

 <https://whitinpres.org>
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