

Inspirational words offered for Easter

(continued from page 1)

narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." Matthew 7:13-14

John Wesley Powell lived in the late 1800's. He was an explorer and teacher, but he also had a passion for the study of geology. In January of 1869 he was commissioned by the U.S. Government to explore and map the Colorado river, which runs through the Grand Canyon. No white explorer had ever completed the route, and possibly no tribal people either, so no one knew where the canyon or river ended, or how. It was his job to discover that, and record what was there.

So, it was on May 24, 1869, that Powell and a group of nine men launched their four boats into the Colorado River at the head of the Grand Canyon. All the boats were made of wood. One was 16 feet long and the other three were 21 feet long. These four tiny boats were used to carry all the men and their supplies for a journey into the unknown, which had no conceivable expiration date.

Four months after starting, after many hardships, several bad accidents and one tragedy, only four men and two boats emerged from the Canyon. What happened? Along the way one man had drowned, another had given up and left the expedition after the first month, and three more left the expedition en-route, opting to climb out of the canyon on their own.

You may have seen pictures of the rapids that run along the Colorado river. People run them today in large inflatable rafts. The rapids are as dangerous today as they were when Powell and his men ran them in wooden boats.

It all started easy enough with many days of smooth running. But the further they went downstream the worse the rapids got. That is because as they went further downstream, they went deeper into the canyon, the walls of the canyon became narrower, and were closing in on them, forcing the water to run faster.

Most of the time they could see or hear the rapids up ahead. When they did, they would pull their boats ashore prior to reaching them, walk downstream to evaluate the situation, and decide to either run the rapids in the boats, or carry their boats along the shore

Gold Star marker will be dedicated at clubhouse today

The Garden Club of Georgia and the Azalea District Pine Needle Garden Club of Lincolnton are preparing to dedicate the new Gold Star Memorial Marker on the grounds of the Lincolnton Club House.

The markers will honor families of the fallen. Those who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

The ceremony is scheduled to take place Thursday, April 1, at 1 p.m.

The community is heartily invited to attend the dedication ceremony. Refreshments will be served following the dedication.

The Lincolnton Club House is located at 255 North Washington Street.

DPH reports on COVID-19 cases; register for vaccine at ecphd.com

Lincoln County had its twenty-fourth reported COVID-19 fatality according to the Georgia Department of Public Health's (DPH) website as of Monday, March 29.

The number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Lincoln County increased to 498 with twenty-four reported fatalities as of the 3 p.m. posting by the Georgia Department of Public Health on Monday.

Neighboring Wilkes County lists 666 cases and nineteen deaths, McDuffie County reports 1614 cases and 38 deaths, Columbia lists 10,735 cases and 156 deaths, and Richmond County reports 19,170 cases and 385 deaths.

Also reported as of 3 p.m. Monday, 850,413 Georgians had tested positive for COVID-19. Of those patients, 58,533 were hospitalized, and 16,533 deaths have been reported.

until they got past the roughest parts and re-launch. This was the routine every day for four long months.

After many spills and chills, they came to one point that was a sharp horseshoe bend in the river. They could hear rapids around the bend but could not see anything but heavy mist, stirred up by the rapids, beyond the sharp curve. They did not know if it was rapids, or a waterfall. Since there was nothing but vertical walls surrounding them there was no shore from which to evaluate the situation, nor was there any way to walk their boats around the rapids even if they wanted to. The river met the vertical walls of the canyon, which rose some 4,500 feet straight above them. So, they paddled their boats into a small eddy to discuss what to do next.

By this point the journey had become more than rough; it was life threatening. They were exhausted. They had lost half their boats, two of their crew and nearly all of their supplies to the rapids. One had drowned, and one man quit almost as soon as they started. So, Powell took a vote: Do they run the rapids that they could hear, but not see, risking life and limb-again? Or do they say "Enough. I quit." and exit the canyon?

The majority voted to continue ahead. It was at that point that three men refused to go any further and decided to leave the expedition. That particular spot on the river is called 'Decision Point,' and is now marked with a large brass plaque.

Powell tried to convince the three men to stay the group as climbing out solo was far more dangerous. He even proposed that he and the others would run the rapids ahead of them, and when pulled safely ashore they would signal all was 'ok' with three rifle shots, so the others could follow. His words did no good. The three men decided to give up the journey and climb out of the Canyon on their own, which was by now some 4,500 feet directly above them. Straight up.

Fear of the unknown had become greater than the faith gained from surviving many previous trials. But trying to climb out of the canyon at that point was a certain death sentence due to steep cliffs, poisonous snakes, dehydration, and hostile Indians. To this day, no one knows what became of them and their names are lost to history.

Ironically, as Powell and the remaining crew resumed the journey, they encountered one more set of rapids around the bend... as fierce and as dangerous as any others they had run before. But this time it was different. This time when they made it through the rapids, the walls of the canyon opened up to a broad lake - and they finally exited the Grand Canyon. They had reached the end - it was the last set of rapids on the river.

The journey of our lives can be scary, and we face the unknown every day. Sometimes memories of previous situations we faced in life can haunt us to the point that fearful memories end up paralyzing us, or we give up trusting in a leader, to guide us into an unknown future. That is because we remember the fear quite clearly, but we rarely recall the blessings of having survived many previous ordeals. Something snaps in our souls, and fear becomes greater than faith. The problem with fear directing our decisions, however, is that more often than not we end

up worse off than if we had moved forward with wise faith.

God calls us to 'have faith,' and to trust Him. Many of us do, especially when the going is easy. But far too often when things get dicey, we want to know the end of the story before we will fully commit to following him any further. We think we can do better on our own. That is a 'decision point' and it comes at different times and different places for every one of us.

"Decision point" for Jesus came in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus knew the end of the story he faced, and it was terrifying to him. Yet, he continued the journey to the cross anyway because it was the Will of His Father in heaven that it be so. It is because of his faithfulness for the entire journey, that we have a path and a guide to eternal life.

He signals to us from the other side to take the narrow path, so we can continue the journey with him, forever. It is 'taking up our cross' and following Him wherever he may go. Trusting he knows the river and the rapids that every river of life contains. Yet for some reason, many fall away when the going appears to be too much to bear. If they had just hung on a little longer...

If Christ has gone ahead and prepared that narrow way for us, why are some hesitant to fully commit to Christ or to the Christian Spiritual Journey? I'm not sure. Granted, the journey is not promised to be easy or without trials, but it is never a solo trip into oblivion. Many a sojourner can recall anxious times having survived the impossible, and by God's grace, were blessed to travel another day. And yet what so often guides our decisions? Faith which comes from experience, or fear of the unknown?

It truly can be a struggle for many, including Christians. We commit of course, but are we fully committed? To the entire journey? Perhaps that is why Jesus says that in the end of days, many will fall away from the faith. Makes sense.

Maybe that's one reason why God gives us one another. The narrow way is the Christian way, and it can be a difficult way when the rest of the world tosses you around like a toy boat in a torrent. I believe that we are here to encourage each other along the way. To look out for one another, to hold and pray for one another as we navigate the unforeseen challenges and threats to life.

But if you give up the journey before it is over, who is going to encourage you when the rest of the crew has moved on? More importantly, who are you going to be able to encourage if you give up too soon? What will become of you? The solo journey which runs in fear is a guaranteed dead end. The narrow journey, which can be difficult and terrifying at times, is a journey that guarantees to get us through to the other side. Something to think about when Jesus talks about the difficulty of the narrow passage. It is a "Decision Point" indeed.

**Stephen F. Rayner
Pastor, Salem Baptist Church**

Easter is filled with commitment to the highest level. God sent His only Son. Jesus came to die for our sin. We also see scenes of no commitment. Pilate is an example of the most committed person at being uncommitted. He had opportunity to have Jesus released but chose not to. He passively tried to put the outcome on the shoulders of Israel's priests.

"Why is this man here? What is he guilty of? What do you want me to do with your king?"

"He isn't our king. We have no king but Caesar. Crucify him!"

Had it not been Pilate, it would have been somebody else. This was why Jesus came. Nobody was going to stop that from happening. That is how God's grace works. It is persistent; always reaching out to accomplish what it was given to do.

But this thing about Pilate, we can be just as non-committal as he was. When given the opportunity to serve (and we get plenty of opportunities) we choose not to. Every day we have the chance. It's easy to say who Christ is then just disregard what He says to us. He wants more. He deserves everything. "This man isn't my king."

We are to honor and serve Him not simply because that is what is owed but because we love Him. He is my King. He is my everything.

We have no king but Jesus!



Sixth-graders recognized were (front row, l-r) Grace Qualls, Noah Ogletree, Jacobe Moss, Triston Jones, Trayon Jones, McKenzie Curry, Nahum Chiles, Lucy Bailey, (back) Tonya Burt, Hannah Williams, Bryar Rhoden, Daniel Tankersley, and Charles McDonald.



Seventh-graders recognized were (front row, l-r) Kate McWhorter, Adelee McNeese, Mary Claire Matthews, Kenya Jones, John Hodnett, Amelia Hall, Kristian Glover, Brayden Crook, Ali Cox, Nathanael Chiles, Katy Chapman, Tucker Bentley, (middle) Tonya Burt, Kyle Turner, Charles Truitt, Catherine Seals, Brooklyn Seagraves, Allie Robertson, Fortson Partridge, Alyssa Parker, Justice Norman, Emily Minyard, William McWhorter, Charles McDonald, and (back) Daniel Tankersley.



Eighth-graders recognized were (front row, l-r) Aubrey Welch, Lily Ratliff, Brooke Phillips, Hannah Norman, Nathaniel Delancy, Emma Grace Cliatt, Kaitlyn Banks, (back) Tonya Burt, Daniel Tankersley, and Charles McDonald. (Photos continued on page 9)

LWREA recognizes LCMS/HS students for academic excellence in first semester

The Lincoln-Wilkes Retired Educators Association (LWREA) honored Lincoln County High School and Lincoln County Middle School students for their academic achievement for the first semester of the 2020-2021 school year on Tuesday, March 23. The students

who were recognized achieved an over-all average of 95 or above.

The students received the Georgia Retired Educators Association (GREA) Academic Award for their outstanding accomplishments. The GREA statewide program recognizes students who are to be com-

mended for their academic excellence, their participation in school activities, and their leadership qualities.

The awards were presented by Tonya Burt, Daniel Tankersley, Charles McDonald, Stephanie Jordan, and India Freeman.

State income tax filing deadline extended to conform with Treasury Department, IRS

The Georgia Department of Revenue (DOR) announced recently, in conformance with the U.S. Treasury Department and Internal Revenue Service (IRS), that the state of Georgia is automatically extending the 2020 individual income tax filing and payment deadline from April 15, 2021, to May 17, 2021, without penalties or interest.

"Aligning with this decision makes filing and paying both state and federal taxes as easy as possible for Georgia taxpayers," stated State Revenue Commissioner David Curry.

Like the IRS, the relief provided by this extension is only for tax year 2020 individual state income tax payments and state individual income tax returns due on April 15, 2021. At the state level, Georgia's income tax forms and integrated tax system rely on federal tax information to establish a taxpayer's state liability. This, in practice, means that taxpayers would need to complete their federal income tax filings before they would have the necessary information to begin their state income tax filings. Because of this, the state encounters

significant challenges if the state deadline falls before the federal filing deadline.

Individual taxpayers do not need to file forms or call DOR to qualify for this automatic tax filing and payment extension.

Please note that state estimated income tax payments due on April 15, 2021, are not included in the extension. These estimated payments are still due on April 15.

Additionally, no extension is provided for the filing, payment, or deposit of any other type of state

tax (including employee withholding and sales tax) or for the filing of any state information returns.

Although the individual income tax deadline has been extended 32 days, taxpayers are encouraged to file their returns any time before the May 17 deadline. As a reminder, DOR issues most refunds within 21 days.

In accordance with state law, the Revenue Commissioner may extend tax deadlines since there has been a presidentially declared disaster.

Booster club golf tourney to be held at Rocky Branch

The Lincoln County Athletic Booster Club will host a golf tournament for a \$5,000 cash prize on Saturday, April 17, rain or shine, beginning at 10 a.m. at the Rocky Branch Golf Club in Lincolnton.

The tournament will involve a five-person team scramble with "A, B, C, D, and E players."

Individuals may sign up at Rocky Branch or may call the club at 706-359-4303. The cost

is \$60 per person, which includes one mulligan and one red tee drive.

A tournament party will be held Friday night before the match at the Rocky Branch clubhouse at 7 p.m. Food will be provided. All proceeds from the golf tournament will go toward the Lincoln County Athletic Booster Club and its support for middle and high school athletics.