

The Sweet Spirit

Olive Branch United Methodist Church

April 2016



The streams which make up my tears

by **Joe** Mc Keever

“Thou dost give them to drink of the river of Thy delights” (Psalm 36:8).

My friend read something I’d written and wept. I asked what had prompted that. She replied, “It was just the Lord. They were good tears.”

That’s all she said. I know the feeling.

Any tears I shed come in one of three situations. I’m traveling down the highway talking to the Lord or going over a sermon and become so carried away with the joy of the Lord that the tears flow.

I’m on my knees with my face buried in a couch cushion, sometimes saying nothing, and I tear up.

Or, I’m at this laptop tapping out insights from God’s word and His promises and am overwhelmed by His goodness. (Such as at this moment.)

Men always want their wives to say why they’re crying. I quit that long ago when Margaret had no answer. “I just am. I’m a woman and sometimes we cry.” Basically, that was no answer, but it was all I was going to get.

Being a man, I want to know why I cry.

And I think I know.

My tears are made up of several components in the same way that the great Mississippi River which flows unendingly down that massive channel about 3 blocks below my house is formed from various waters. The Father of All Rivers, aka the Big Muddy, receives input from the Allegheny and the Ohio, the Susquehanna and the Missouri, from streams and creeks and runoffs from fields far and near, an area stretching from western New York to eastern Montana. An incredible basin.

It's not all just from one source.

Why are my tears flowing? Well, they are....

1) Tears of gratitude. He has been generous.

I think of how He has taken this farm boy and redeemed me, the family He has given me and the ministry stretching over a half-century—that I am now in my 70s and still going strong, that my wife and children love me and those 8 grandchildren enrich my life every day—and I am overcome with His goodness.

Thank you, Lord. How great Thou art.

2) Tears of relief that God has been merciful.

As David said (with good reason, actually), “He has not dealt with us according to our sin, nor rewarded us according to our iniquity” (Psalm 103:10). I know that relief too. Thank you, Lord, for your incredible mercy. If I got what I deserved, I would be in hell today.

I'm so grateful for the cross where Jesus dealt with my sins and the charges against me were nailed (Colossians 2:14).

3) Tears of joy. He is good, He is near, and His presence is awe-inspiring.

When I read of the lady anointing Him with her tears and the costly perfume, I envy her (John 12). Who among us does not know the joy that such a Savior is ours, that He is here in this place, and we are His and His alone. I cannot read that story without remembering something my dad once said: “Son, did it ever occur to you that when Jesus was hanging on the cross, that fragrance was still all over Him?” Until that moment, I had never thought of it.

I want my worship to be a sweet fragrance that honors Him, too.

4) Tears of regret. I am such a loser, a failure, an embarrassment to the Kingdom.

Why did I do that thing? Why did I cave in to that temptation? Why did I fail that one? Why wasn't I stronger? Why did I quit that good thing I was doing?

As a young preacher, when people opposed me or chose not to like me, I found that puzzling. Surely, if they knew what a great guy I am, they would change. Now, toward the sunset of a

long life of hills and valleys, the wonder of wonders is that everyone does not treat me with disdain.

Were it not for the assurance that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us of all our iniquities” (I John 1:9), I would be hopelessly lost in my sin and stuck in a misery of unbearable proportions.

As a young minister, I said to a wonderful senior saint, “You are the greatest Christian I know.” She said, “Oh honey, if you only knew.” It took a few years, but eventually, I learned. I know now what she meant. We are all sinners, and if saved at all, it’s by His grace. None of this is about our goodness. It’s all about Him.

5) Tears of hope. He is my all, my portion, my today and my tomorrow.

“Lord, to whom (else) shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” This question and statement of faith from Simon Peter means a great deal to me. (John 6:68) We do not follow Jesus, believe in Him, or serve Him because it’s easy and convenient. We do it because He is the only way, our only hope. “Neither is there salvation in any other” (Acts 4:12). We have been “born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (I Peter 1:3).

I do love that testimony of David that carries a world of meaning in just a few words: *I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined to me and heard my cry; He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm; And He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and hear and will trust in the Lord” (Psa. 40:1-3).*

6) Tears of concern. So many friends and loved ones need Him in their lives.

I love them so much and want them to know Him. But their hearts seem hard, their minds closed, their eyes blind. So, I pray.

7) Tears of fear. What if none of this is true and we are deluding ourselves, and I am of all men most miserable?

This morning, lying in bed and thinking about these matters, it occurred to me that if I knew I would never again see my wonderful parents, my grief would be unbearable, my pain inconsolable.

It helps to know that the New Testament deals with just this issue, this dread that none of this may be true, this need we have to know and know that we know. Consider, for instance...

–In John 11, when the Lord said to Mary and Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life; He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die,” He did not stop there but asked her the question of the ages: “Do you

believe this?” (Thank you, Lord, for recognizing how big a deal this is and how hard we find it to grasp. We’re trying.)

–As He revealed His promises of a future in the Father’s House, Jesus said, “If it were not so, I would have told you” (John 14:2). That’s what a person of integrity does, makes no false promises.

–Paul emphasizes how pivotal the resurrection of Jesus is and lists a number of results of the loss of this critical factor. At the end, he says, “If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied” (I Corinthians 15:19).

So, let’s not have any of this foolishness that the destination does not matter, only the journey. The destination is everything!

“Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” (I Corinthians 15:57)

My tears are a blend of faith and regret, of relief and rejoicing, of concern and hope. As my friend said, “They are good tears.”

From The Pastor’s Pen,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

I love this time of year. The celebration of Easter, spring weather, flowers and trees blooming and well, as I suppose, we have to be thankful for the pollen too! God sure created some weird things, but of course we have to be thankful for Zyrtec or it’s equivalent!!

Our church was beautiful for Easter, with the new banners and lilies! A special thanks to everyone who made it possible for us to worship in such a joyful sanctuary and also to those who keep the outside flowers and shrubs trimmed and landscaping updated!

A thank you also to the Worship Committee for planning and participating in our Lenten and Easter services. And what about our choir and musicians! We are so blessed with talented people who use the gifts that God has given them.

It is my prayer for Olive Branch to continue to be a beacon of light for the Gasburg area, as we welcome the summer residents returning to their lake homes. Please make a special effort to welcome visitors and those returning to OBUMC for the summer. Please point out visitors and summer worshipers, so I can meet and talk with them.

As we approach the summer and vacation season, please remember that God doesn't take a vacation from us and our continued support of OBUMC is expected through our continued prayers, attendance, gifts, service, and our witness. Let's make 2016 one of the most, if not the best, vital years in the life of our beloved church.

I continue to pray for OBUMC and all of you daily and again want to express the privilege and honor of serving as your pastor and the love and joy Nancy and I have been blessed with since coming here. Let's not be "The Church"; let's do "Church" and be blessed to be a blessing to the Gasburg area.

**Yours In Christ,
Pastor Randy**

Second Sunday Lunch (Souper Bowl Sunday)

Second Sunday Lunch this month will be on the 10th. This is a special Sunday as the UMW will be providing their annual "Souper Bowl Sunday" lunch. It will consist of a varied menu of soups. It is a fund raiser for the UMW and any gifts will accepted. All are invited to join together after services for a time of fellowship and good food.

Message from the Council Chair – Jane DiStefano

WOW – what a great Lenten Season we have experienced. It was wonderful to see all the planning come to fruition! All of the noon time services were wonderful .. excellent messages and great food and fellowship. It was truly a blessing for me to take part in each service as this is the first year I have been available. I always knew that I was missing out on this event, but am grateful to have been able to attend each service. It also brought me great joy to see so many people from Olive Branch in attendance each day! Thanks for all your support.

And then there was Easter Sunday. Our Sunrise Service was small this year due to the rain, but it was still filled with the joy of Christ's resurrection and the forgiveness that he gave each of us. Afterwards, the men cooked a delicious pancake breakfast. Then for Easter Sunday Service, it was truly awe inspiring! A wonderful message, the church was beautiful all dressed in white and the Easter Lilies on the altar. Thanks again to all who made this Lenten Season special.

Please remember that our church will only be as good as those willing to work at making it the best it can be. Please come to council meetings and help us plan for the future. I

look forward to seeing everyone on April 18th. Please feel free to contact me if you have any suggestions or questions. – Jane

Outreach

Easter Dinner for our food pantry families was delivered on Tuesday March 22. Our families were surprised and thankful for the extra delivery.

Holy Week Luncheon Services: Olive Branch hosted Maundy (Holy) Thursday, March 24. A Potato Bar with Salad was served. Along with the wonderful service a great time was had by all.

Backpack program: We are participating with other area churches to provide meals for the weekend for school children. We will help fund the food and we have been asked to help with the packaging and distribution of the food. We would like to help at another church first to see what is involved. Volunteers for this program may talk with Pastor.

Please don't forget our Church pantry! Our brothers and sisters in the greater community are suffering and need help. We are blessed that Food Lion is willing to provide us with meats, vegetables, fruits, and baked goods but, it is up to us to fill out the dietary needs of the families we serve. Help keep our pantry stocked with your donations. I know you will open your hearts. Also, one of our biggest needs is meat. So if you are able, pick up an extra package of meat to help out one of our families. A big “thank you!” to those who take the time to help with the deliveries and each of you who donate to the Food Bank.

Thanks again for all you do.

Prayer Bear Ministry

It entails donating a stuffed bear to our church so that we all hug and send on its way to someone who is in need of prayer. Several have been sent to members of our church who have had serious surgery or illnesses recently and we have been told the bears were with them during their stay in the hospital and when they came home. It is a small but powerful ministry. If you get a chance pick up a bear and let us hug him/her and send it on its way to help someone in need. Many have gone to those in need of a hug. They truly are a blessing!

United Methodist Men

A Stew will be held on the 15th & 16th of April. A call to all the men of the church to join us in preparing the stew and all the members of the church to help us sell it. We will begin prepping the ingredients on Friday, the 15th in the morning and we will be cooking the stew Saturday, the 16th, early in the morning. The finished product will be available at approximately 12 noon. The price for a quart of stew is \$7.00.

A note to all the men of the church: the UMM meets on the third Saturday of each month.. We invite all men of the church to join us for a time of fellowship, breakfast, devotion. We welcome our sister church, Rock, as we would gladly have them join us for breakfast.

United Methodist Women

They are looking forward to their “Souper Bowl” fundraiser on the 10th. Their next meeting will take place on the 13th of April in the Fellowship Hall. All women of the church are invited to take part in the meeting and missional activities of the UMW.

Save Your Empty Ink Cartridges

A continuing mission project headed by Matte Bersch is to gather empty ink cartridges and send them away. The company that they are sent to then sends the church a check. Sooo, please save them and put them in the box in the fellowship hall. All funds go to continuing our outreach. Thank you Mattie! Thank you Robert for your assistance.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

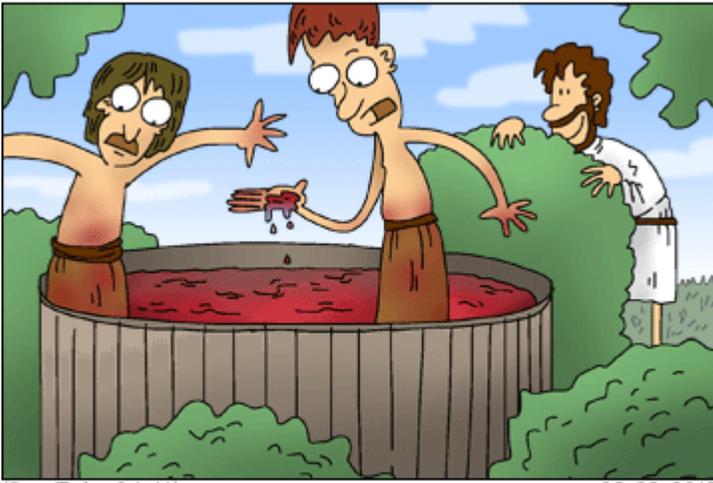
Celebrating birthdays this month:

Makayla Clary – 8 Sarah Wright – 13 Arlene Tatum – 17 Mabel King – 18

Anne Baldwin – 19 Linda Wright - 24

Choir Makes a Joyful Noise

And our choir does just that. We practice on Wednesday’s at 7:00 PM. We are 9 strong at this time and with the help of Shirley Everest we are learning to read music. Try that at our age!!! If you feel that you would like to make a joyful noise, please come join us. We It should be an exciting time for us and the church! Let us all come together to praise the Lord in song at our worship services.



(See John 2:1-11)

03-30-2015

THE WATER TO WINE MIRACLE ALSO MADE
FOR AN EXCELLENT APRIL FOOLS DAY
PRANK

Upcoming Events:

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| April 9 th 7:00 PM | Dane Bailey in Concert at OBUMC Come ALL!! |
| April 10 | After Services Second Sunday Luncheon |
| April 13 at 2:00 PM | UMW Meeting |
| April 15/16 | UMM Stew Prep and Sale |
| April 18 at 6:00 PM | Outreach Meeting |
| April 18 at 7:00 PM | Administrative Council Meeting |

This is our newsletter. It is meant to be a way to communicate what your church is doing and what all the organizations are doing both in the congregation and the community. I am sending this electronically via email and copies will be made available for those who need a printed copy.

There are many organizations within our church and I hope they would like to have their achievements, plans, and meetings made known to the entire church. It is my hope that they will ask one of their members to drop a short note as to what they doing each month. The line of communication in the church needs to be open and full of what we are doing at Olive Branch to make disciples in our area. If you would like to send us something, please bring it to church or send me an email (revedumc@yahoo.com) and we will see that it gets published. We need all information by the 24th of each month for the following month. Please, let's keep our church informed on what we are doing. See you at church and all our activities! God bless. Ed DiStefano