

BLOW THE TRUMPET IN ZION

**MEDITATIONS FOR
LENT AND HOLY WEEK 2010**

**THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
OF THE CITY OF WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast;
call a solemn assembly; gather the people.
Sanctify the congregation; assemble the
aged; gather the children, even infants at
the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his
room, and the bride her canopy.

Between the vestibule and the altar let the
priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep. Let
them say, "Spare your people, O LORD, and
do not make your heritage a mockery, a by-
word among the nations. Why should it be
said among the peoples, 'Where is their
God?'"

Joel 2:15-17

Introduction

What a difference a year makes! And yet it makes none at all. God still calls us to a new and holy life. After the anticipation of Advent and the joy of Christmas and the wonder of Epiphany, we enter into a time of contemplation and repentance to more fully appreciate the gifts which God has given us.

It is hard for one person to do this alone, but we, the Body of Christ, exist as body of many members, each contributing to the life of the body. Not one member is more important than the others but each benefit from their contributions.

Contained within in this book of devotions are some contributions of members of the Body of Christ which exists as the First Baptist Church of the City of Washington, DC. We hope that all may benefit from the insight and meditations within these pages and grow in their own formation as Christians.

*Roderick Coates and Chris Hook
Editors*

ASH WEDNESDAY

FEBRUARY 17

Have mercy on me, O God...

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
According to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless
when you pass judgment.
Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your
praise.
For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.
The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Psalms 51:1-17

Ash Wednesday - February 17
Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or *Isaiah 58:1-12*
Psalm 51:1-17
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
Evening: Psalm 27; 51

Psalm 51:10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Repentance and renewal are important themes of the season of Lent, which begins today with Ash Wednesday. It is a day for earnest reflection, for searching one's own heart for those ways in which we have fallen short of God's will for our lives.

Contrition weighs heavy on the mind of the author of today's Psalm. It is difficult to read - the writer is almost consumed with sorrow regarding their actions. They fear the breach between themselves and God is irreparable. We cannot know for certain the circumstances of the writing, but perhaps the Psalmist has already "reaped what they've sown" and seen the damage done to their own lives - and the lives of others - as a result of their transgressions.

This song, however, is not a dirge. There is a melancholy to its poetry, but in its appeals for the grace that will "renew a steadfast spirit" there is a note of hope which is carried into the final verses. As such, it is an apt reading for the opening of Lent. The story of the road to Cavalry is struck through with human vices - betrayal, violence, and hatred borne out of fear among them. But this ultimately serves to magnify the powerful truth of its triumphant finale. So let us begin the journey of Lent with contrite hearts - while also sharing the Psalmist's request of "create in me a pure heart".

Justin Anderson

Thursday, February 18
Morning: Psalm 27; 147:12-20
Habakkuk 3:1-10 (11-15) 16-18
Philippians 3:12-21
John 17:1-8
Evening: Psalm 126; 102

The High Priestly Prayer, John 17: 1-8

Passion week is drawing to a close. The Last Supper that Jesus shared with his disciples in the Upper Room has ended. Jesus has washed his disciples feet. He has told them what evils they will face once their ministry to the world begins. The cross is just hours away.

Jesus knows his hour is at hand, and that his mission on earth is finished. He now turns to the prayer of consecration. His prayer has no sense of agony, or desire that he not have to die. Rather, it is a prayer fully accepting that reality, and he prays that it may be for the glory of God.

Here, in the face of an agonizing death, Jesus' thoughts were not of himself, but for his disciples, for those the Father had given him, and for those who in the future would believe in him. Our Lord prayed as a man, yet he spoke with the majesty and authority as one equal with the Father. The passion and emotion with which he prayed cannot be contained to the pages on which they are written; the reader is drawn inextricably into Jesus' heart.

Jesus first prayed for himself that he would be glorified so the Father may be glorified. He prayed for his disciples. He prayed for those who are his. He prayed for future believers that they would be kept from sin, have strength to fulfill their mission, and that they be brought safe to heaven. He prayed for you.

These first eight verses give us a glimpse of the incomprehensible love that Jesus has for those who belong to him. From this prayer, we rest in the assurance that Jesus continues to pray for us. We know that his will for us is that we pray for one another and walk together in brotherly love. If we allow Jesus to have control over our lives, we are not only doing his will, but we also become living symbols of what it means to be a Christian.

Jean Bell

Friday, February 19
Morning: Psalm 22; 148
Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32
Philippians 4:1-9
John 17:9-19
Evening: Psalm 105; 130

John 17:9-19

The Prayer

Glorify = To give honor or praise; to exalt
Sanctify = To cleanse or set apart for sacred use

What joy I receive when I read the Gospel of John, especially the 17th Chapter! And what a Savior---Jesus Christ, who prays not just for Himself and His glory, but that He could glorify "the only true God"...and for us to know Him through Jesus Christ.

Then Jesus prays for His disciples, for their protection and unity. Next Jesus says, "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message." For me, these words are among the most beautiful in the Bible...and comforting...just imagine...Jesus praying for me...and you!

Clearly our Lord's spiritual priorities are: glorifying the Father, the sanctity of disciples, the unity of believers (the church) and the winning of a lost world.

The prayer promises gifts to us: eternal life, the Word and His glory. But note that believers are the Father's gift to Him, just as Jesus is the Father's love gift to us! Such a deal! What grace!

Today's devotional centers on the disciples and the responsibilities given to them. In addition to protection and unity, Jesus prays:

"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.
As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.
For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified."

Thank you, Jesus!

Let us continue to be "responsible disciples" and worthy of God's love, as we work for his kingdom.

Glenn Bratcher

Saturday, February 20
Morning: Psalm 43; 149
Ezekiel 39:21-29
Philippians 4:10-20
John 17:20-26
Evening: Psalm 31; 143

Psalm 43

During this season of lent, while we reflect upon the suffering Christ and our shared experiences with Christ, we are certain to reflect upon circumstances in our lives which challenge us; circumstances which are the source of our personal sense of suffering. It is for such times of challenge and suffering that this Psalm serves to express our need to call out to God, confess our fears and ask God the difficult questions.

The writer of this Psalm affirms that God is the source of our vindication and in God we can take refuge from our troubles. Like the Psalmist, we should feel comfortable asking God the hard questions and then seek the light of God and the truth of God to lead us through our difficulties. Then we will also experience the desire to praise God in spite of the circumstances and thank God for helping us through those circumstances. Sometimes our fears get the best of us and our souls remain downcast.

The Psalmist reminds us to place our hope in God, and praise God even while we still feel disquieted. When we pray to God and praise Him through our circumstances, we will be comforted and strengthened as God leads us by His light and with His truth.

Rev. Beryl Dennis

THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

FEBRUARY 21-27

One does not live by bread alone.'

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.

The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread."

Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.

And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please.

If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here,

for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Luke 4:1-13

First Sunday in Lent - February 21

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

Romans 10:8b-13

Luke 4:1-13

Evening: Psalm 42; 32

Luke 4:1-13

Having been in the wilderness and without food for forty days, Jesus was tempted by the devil repeatedly. Prior to this, when Jesus was baptized, God declared that “this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased”. Satan challenged this declaration in the first two temptations. In response to each temptation, Jesus quoted from the Scriptures asserting that “It is written . . .” Jesus first quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3, then from Deuteronomy 6:16, and finally from Deuteronomy 6:13. There is power in the Word!

When we are facing challenges that seek to tempt us, or we are facing difficulties which seek to overwhelm us, we have available to us the Word of God, to re-assert and re-affirm the truths we hold on to as Christians. When we believe in the power of God’s Word, we can speak the Words of God with authority so that our resolve is strengthened, and our ability to withstand the tough experiences of life is buttressed by unwavering faith grounded in the Word of God. There is power in the Word!

We are all vulnerable to the temptations and challenges life that sometimes leave us feeling very insecure. God has provided for us a ready resource to help us if we don’t know what to say or how to address or face certain difficulties. Learn verses and say them in your prayers and conversations. Your faith will be strengthened because you will have tapped into the greatest power of all!

Rev. Beryl Dennis

Monday, February 22
Morning: Psalm 119:73-80; 145
Genesis 37:1-11
1 Corinthians 1:1-19
Mark 1:1-13
Evening: Psalm 121; 6

Near the beginning of Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth he appeals to them to "be united in the same mind and the same purpose." (1:10) There has apparently been a breakdown of community among the Corinthian Christians, with believers divided into factions based on primary allegiances - some to Paul, some to Apollo, some to Peter and some to Christ. Paul wants them all to focus on the one true leader of the Church, the one who had been crucified for them and in whose name they had been baptized. Using himself as an example, he cites as his own sole purpose "to proclaim the gospel" in simple terms so as to bear witness to the power of "the cross of Christ." (1:17)

The opening section of Mark also gives us guidance about purpose. Like Paul, John the Baptist knew his task well. His proclamation for "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (1:4) was a call to "Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." (1:3)

We, too, are called to proclaim the Good News of Christ, particularly as evidenced by His death and resurrection, and to prepare ourselves and the world for the Kingdom of God. Certainly no less; really no more. If we can focus on these great tasks, there will be no room for division and no time for delay.

"One generation shall laud Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts." Psalm 145:4

Ken Ellison

Tuesday, February 23
Morning: Psalm 34; 146
Genesis 37:12-24
1 Corinthians 1:20-31
Mark 1:14-28
Evening: Psalm 25; 91

Mark 1: 14 -28
Christ Preaches and Calls His Disciples

After John was put in prison, Jesus began to preach in Galilee. His message was clear: Repent and believe the gospel.

As Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, his brother, fishing. Jesus said to them “come after me and I will make you *to become* fishers of men.” Notice that Jesus said they had to come follow Him and then He would *change* them into fishers of people. One may infer that Jesus was telling them that He could transfer their skills from their chosen career path into useful tools for the Kingdom of God. The two brothers immediately forsook their nets and followed Jesus.

And when Jesus had gone a little further He saw two more fishermen, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother. The two brothers left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired men and followed Jesus. Not only could this be a career loss, but a loss of being with family and everything that offers one security.

Notice that Jesus is calling two at a time, they are brothers, and they are working in their chosen careers as fishermen. It is interesting to note that none of Jesus’ disciples were priests or teachers in the synagogue. They were just people working in their chosen careers who heard the voice of Jesus to follow Him, and they did so *immediately*. The gospel does not have stories of people who had to think about Jesus’ call before they decided to follow Him.

Jesus still calls people to follow Him. Those whom Jesus calls must leave all to follow Him; and by His grace He makes them willing to do so.

Charles Faddis

Wednesday, February 24
Morning: Psalm 5; 147:1-11
Genesis 37:25-36
1 Corinthians 2:1-13
Mark 1:29-45
Evening: Psalm 27; 51

Psalm 147:1-11

It's sometimes hard to know if God is sitting right beside us, listening to our prayers rather than just hearing them. He is so vast and powerful -- how could he possibly care or have time to deal with concerns that are so small in the grand scheme of things even when they make an incredible amount of difference in our own lives? I don't know how He does, and a little part of me cannot grasp why. Still, I have faith that He does.

Psalm 147 captures God's dual nature -- the majestic caretaker -- so beautifully. "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars; and gives to all of them their names." God is sitting next to His children and taking care of us in a very personal way, both physically and mentally, even as he exercises dominion over the vastness of His creation. How incredible that the One who created a world so measureless and complex that we can scarcely comprehend it cares about our individual hearts, whether broken or whole.

Britt Grant

Thursday, February 25
Morning: Psalm 27; 147:12-20
Genesis 39:1-23
1 Corinthians 2:14–3:15
Mark 2:1-12
Evening: Psalm 126; 102

Mark 2:1-12

In the second chapter of Mark, Jesus reminds us of the proper priorities. Four faithful companions bring their paralytic friend to Jesus. They remove a portion of the roof and place him before Jesus for healing. Jesus sees the man and is impressed by the faith of his friends. This is where the story takes a strange twist, and Jesus makes clear his priorities. Rather than healing the paralytic before him, Jesus forgives his sins. Silence and disappointment certainly followed. The friends of the paralytic and those witnessing expected something very different.

If not for the scribes accusations of blasphemy, perhaps that would have been the end of the story. Maybe the friends and paralytic would have gone home saddened and disillusioned as his ailments remained. But Jesus then turns the whole situation around. He demonstrates to the room his authority by healing the man. The people were then amazed.

When I read this passage, I am disappointed in myself. I want the healing. I want the paralytic to walk, and when he does, I too am amazed. But I know that I should be all the more amazed when Jesus tells him, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” So today I challenge you to reflect not on the earthly things that need to be healed for these are secondary to Jesus. Today have faith and ask that Jesus do what only he can. Ask for forgiveness of sins and then be amazed.

Justin Grant

Friday, February 26
Morning: Psalm 22; 148
Genesis 40:1-23
1 Corinthians 3:16-23
Mark 2:13-22
Evening: Psalm 105; 130

Ten days into the forty days of Lent, we should be well into the contemplative pattern of the season. Our hurried, busy, noisy lives make quiet contemplation and meaningful meditation difficult. We must be intentional and determined even to carve out 30 minutes of our day for a daily devotional and Bible reading. What a sad commentary on our times! Perhaps I should say a sad commentary on my life! Maybe other folks have a fuller contemplative life than I have. When I begin to feel that I have such difficulty with setting aside time to pray and meditate, I think of Susanna Wesley, the mother of Charles and John Wesley. She had 17 children and accomplished a “quiet time” by putting her apron over her head to signal that she was at prayer! Thankfully, for some years, we have had great leadership at FBC by way of contemplative prayer workshops and classes on Sunday mornings.

The season of Lent calls us to a different pattern of life. The Genesis passage for today relates how Joseph was wrenched away from the only life he had ever known to an entirely different place and life. The plan of God for Joseph’s life unfolded in ways neither he nor his family could have imagined. God’s call on our lives comes in ways that are hard to recognize, and no one knows what effect one’s response to the call will have on history.

When Jesus called those first Disciples (as recorded in Mark 2), they were called away from their normal pattern, but more importantly, they were called to live a different life. Can you imagine what it would be like to walk with Jesus as he did so many surprising and different things and taught such a stirring message? Little did they know that the whole world would be called to a new and different way, nor could they imagine how vital their part in that change would be.

The practice of contemplation and meditation helps us to discern God’s guidance so that when we are called to a changed pattern of life, we will not fail to respond appropriately. Life was not smooth and happy as a result of God’s call on these lives, but they made a difference that will last for an eternity. Could we even dare think it might be so for some of us?

Oh God, not one of us is equal to this huge challenge, but you are. Help us in our weakness to rely on your strength always. Amen

Adrian Harward

Saturday, February 27
Morning: Psalm 43; 149
Genesis 41:1-13
1 Corinthians 4:1-7
Mark 2:23–3:6
Evening: Psalm 31; 143

Psalm 31:11-13

I moved to Washington, DC in January of 1988 from central Virginia, a place which was still mostly rural at the time. I had never really encountered people caught up in the depths of despair and desperation. I knew about it but had never SEEN it, SMELLED it, LISTENED to it echo down the street. It's not just people living on the streets who experience this despair. It pervades all of Washington, from the demeaning jobs people take to pay the rent to the offices of high government officials. All of us have experienced it. Some are experiencing it right now - I know a number of them. There are many times I am one of them. It is these experiences that stir my compassion for people in despair.

Often, ministering to those in need involves crossing boundaries and breaking rules, just as Jesus did when he healed on the Sabbath. Do not fear this, for "the Lord preserves the faithful, but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily. Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord. "

Roderick Coates

THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT
FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 6

...today, tomorrow, and the next day
I must be on my way...

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you."

He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work.

Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.'

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Luke 13:31-35

Second Sunday in Lent - February 28
Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18
Psalm 27
Philippians 3:17-4:1
Luke 13:31-35 or Luke 9:28-36, (37-43)
Evening: Psalm 42; 32

In Luke 13:31-35, we see Jesus warned to flee Galilee, but in turn he says in defiance that he has work to do and calls Herod “a fox” revealing Herod’s true nature as a cunning and baseless and treacherous person. He explains that he knows that his death is nearing, but that once he does the injustices in society will be righted, and that all will be rewarded by coming into the great salvation that he beholds.

We too as Christians should be examples to others, defiant of those that try and threaten or demean you as the Lord is on your side, and gladly welcoming others into the great salvation of Jesus’ teachings. For living life as if time is short can be freeing to work for others and making haste towards living the life that God wants all of us to exemplify.

As we approach the coming Easter Resurrection, let us not forget the challenges of life and that we do have to work at being the people of God that reject the injustices of the world around us, actively working, loving, and sacrificing ourselves for the betterment of others, so that ultimately, we all can profit from the gift of living a life in Jesus.

Chris Hook

Monday, March 1
Morning: Psalm 119:73-80; 145
Genesis 41:46-57
1 Corinthians 4:8-20 (21)
Mark 3:7-19a
Evening: Psalm 121; 6

1 Corinthians 4:8-20 (21)

Paul's letter to the Christians in Corinth admonished them as a father would, for being overly confident that they already had everything they needed spiritually and had become like kings on thrones. He complained that while these early Christians were living comfortably, the disciples were suffering as if God had placed them last. They were often hungry, thirsty and without adequate clothing to keep them warm. They had no permanent places to call home, and worked intensely to earn a meager living. But all the while they were reviled, they blessed those who cursed them, and replied quietly when evil things were said about them. Even so, they were treated like the rubbish of the world. Paul was warning the people to listen to his teachings and follow his example rather than listening to others. He told them that when he came to see them, he would find out if they were just proud talkers or if they really possessed the power of God. He stated that the Kingdom of God is not just talking; it is living by God's power. What might Paul say to Christians today? We should be so grateful for the suffering of the disciples and their perseverance in spreading the good news that has been passed to us through the ages. We can pray that we as a church are following the teachings and example of Christ, and that our actions and deeds are in accordance with God's will.

Bonnie Jorgensen

Tuesday, March 2
Morning: Psalm 34; 146
Genesis 42:1-17
1 Corinthians 5:1-8
Mark 3:19b-35
Evening: Psalm 25; 91

Morning- Mark 3:19b-35

I suppose it isn't something we like to talk about very much. We are taught and remember that all sins are forgiven through true belief in Jesus Christ. But here is Jesus stating that one sin simply will not be forgiven. To claim that the work of the Holy Spirit is in fact evil work is to be "guilty of an eternal sin."

That seems quite ominous but I think we all feel very confident we could never commit such a mistake as true believers. I just can't help but think that if Jesus didn't feel it was a very real risk, there really wasn't much point in mentioning it. So, I have to wonder have I ever argued against the "position" of the Holy Spirit?

Today it seems very easy to criticize, maybe even condemn, the actions of "other" members of the Christian community acting on their own faith convictions by just being very confident in my own understanding that they are getting it wrong. Maybe I should be more careful.

I don't think there is a problem questioning an intention and being in prayer about meaning. But before deciding the Holy Spirit isn't necessarily present in things I don't agree with or understand, I'll remember these words.

John Linam

Wednesday, March 3
Morning: Psalm 5; 147:1-11
Genesis 42:18-28
1 Corinthians 5:9–6:11
Mark 4:1-20
Evening: Psalm 27; 51

The Psalmist's Faith

The Lord, who is the believer's light, is the strength of his life; not only by whom, but in whom he lives and moves. In God let us strengthen ourselves. The gracious presence of God, his power, his promise, his readiness to hear prayer, the witness of his Spirit in the hearts of his people; these are the secret of his tabernacle, and in these the saints find cause for that holy security and peace of mind in which they dwell at ease.

The Psalmist prays for constant communion with God in holy ordinances. All God's children desire to dwell in their Father's house. Not to sojourn there as a wayfaring man, to tarry but for a night; or to dwell there for a time only, as the servant that abides not in the house for ever; but to dwell there all the days of their life, as children with a father. Do we hope that the praising of God will be the blessedness of our eternity? Surely then we ought to make it the business of our time. This he had at heart more than any thing. Whatever the Christian is as to this life, he considers the favour and service of God as the one thing needful. This he desires, prays for and seeks after, and in it he rejoices.

Taken from Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Bible

Marvin and Patty Marceron

Thursday, March 4
Morning: Psalm 27; 147:12-20
Genesis 42:29-38
1 Corinthians 6:12-20
Mark 4:21-34
Evening: Psalm 126; 102

"Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lamp stand?"

I just got Sister Rosemaron's e-mail reminding all parents presenting at our children's school Career Day to make sure our talk includes how faith affects our actions at work and how we witness Christ's love through our professional lives.

The IHM Sisters who live and teach at Little Flower Parish School constantly amaze me in their dedication to teach our children love, faith and service in every classroom lesson, and just as importantly, by their living example.

I have been blessed by many of you at FBC who continue to give me practical insights on living a light giving life not by preaching, but by doing. For instance, those who are dedicated to care for and beautify the physical church, those who teach, those who make meals, and those who pull together this devotional booklet. I often leave church inspired to do more, just by your witness.

Truth is meant to be seen; Christianity is meant to be seen. Would any you have to struggle to address a classroom of kids with practical examples of how faith affects your work and how you let the Christ's life shine through in your daily life? My prayer for all of us today is that we let Christ's light shine through in everything we do. Take a minute to identify your opportunities to act as Christ's light in this world today.

Wil McBeath

Friday, March 5
Morning: Psalm 22; 148
Genesis 43:1-15
1 Corinthians 7:1-9
Mark 4:35-41
Evening: Psalm 105; 130

Genesis 43:1-15

May you find in this collective retreat of 40 days a time when you live in the spirit of Baptism. A time of penance in the ancient sense of repentance, metanoia, change of heart and mind, conversion.

I am always delighted when I have an ah ha moment when reading scripture. The moment is full of anticipation, like being led from the darkness into the marvelous light. In whatever field of endeavor we place ourselves in it is a time when we figure it out. A smile comes to our face and for a brief moment in life's journey we see from atop of the world.

Genesis 43:1-15 gave me a brief ah ha moment. The view was marvelous. Preparing, I read "God may be thought of as someone off at a distance holding in his hands the issues of life and death, but with his disposition hidden from our knowledge. Therefore he must be placated with material gifts and sacrifice. But all the while God's goodness needs no buying."

We are like Joseph and Jacob, God's goodness and compassion predicates our appeals.

Steven Netcott

Saturday, March 6
Morning: Psalm 43; 149
Genesis 43:16-34
1 Corinthians 7:10-24
Mark 5:1-20
Evening: Psalm 31; 143

A Psalm of David: Psalm 143

Psalms 140-143 are called "Prayers for Protection"; Psalm 143 is David's penitent cry for help and guidance. Several verses indicate the urgency and earnestness of David's petition:

"Hear my prayer, O Lord..." (verse 1)

"For the enemy hath persecuted my soul..." (verse 3)

"...my heart within me is desolate." (verse 4)

"...my soul thirsteth after thee..." (verse 6)

"...hide not thy face from me..." (verse 7)

"...I flee unto thee to hide me." (verse 9)

"...bring my soul out of trouble." (verse 11)

"...for I am thy servant." (verse 12)

Prayer: Lord, calm my mind and my spirit, that I may urgently, earnestly seek your presence in my life.

John Osborn

THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

MARCH 7-13

*If it bears fruit next year, well and good;
but if not, you can cut it down.*

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?"

No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did.

Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them--do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem?"

No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."

Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none.

So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?'

He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it.

If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

Luke 13:1-9

Third Sunday in Lent - March 7

Isaiah 55:1-9

Psalm 63:1-8

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Luke 13:1-9

Evening: Psalm 42; 32

Luke 13: 1-9

This passage in Luke is a classic example of Jesus telling it like it is. In asking if those who have suffered terrible fates were punished because they were the worst sinners in the group, as we might like to think they were, Jesus tells us no. In fact, they are just like you and me, and that is scary. We like to pretend that other people's sins are worse than ours and, therefore, are more deserving of punishment. But Jesus teaches us that all sins are hurtful to God, and we should ask forgiveness for all of them not just those we think are "really bad". In these verses, he is telling us that "unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did." This is exactly the kind of reminder we should take to heart and put into action.

As Jesus continues, he tells the parable of the fig tree that will bear no fruit. The vineyard owner is ready to cut it down and start anew. But the gardener persuades the owner to give the tree another chance and to add fertilizer to its soil. Jesus is our gardener and provides the fertilizer we need of forgiveness, repentance, and new life to grow and blossom in the kingdom of God. Thank goodness we have a gardener who does not give up so easily on his wayward seedlings!

Whitney Owen

Monday, March 8
Morning: Psalm 119:73-80; 145
Genesis 44:18-34
1 Corinthians 7:25-31
Mark 5:21-43
Evening: Psalm 121; 6

The gospel reading for today, Mark 5:21-43, focuses on two miracles. First, Jesus is approached by Jairus, a leader of the synagogue, concerning his daughter who is very ill. Jesus agrees to go with Jairus, but on the way Jesus is touched by a woman who has been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. Her amazing faith is rewarded by complete and immediate healing. Now news reached Jesus that Jairus' daughter has died. Jesus instructs Jairus to have faith and believe. Jesus arrives at the house and raises the girl from the dead.

There are several parallels in these miracles. Both the woman and the girl are considered unclean in Jewish culture. This does not seem to bother Jesus at all. It is clear that the strong faith of both the woman and Jairus result in the positive outcomes. There is also one difference. The woman is considered an outcast because of the nature of her disease, while Jairus and his family are at the center of religious and social life. These differences did not affect Jesus' response to both pleas for healing.

What do these stories of healing have to say to us today? What is God saying to us through his holy word? Please read this passage several times today in a prayerful fashion and then sit quietly waiting for God to speak to you through his word.

Dear Father, please help us to sit patiently in your presence, so we may hear your message through your word. Amen.

Julie Pascu

Tuesday, March 9
Morning: Psalm 34; 146
Genesis 45:1-15
1 Corinthians 7:32-40
Mark 6:1-13
Evening: Psalm 25; 91

One of the great stories in the Bible is found in the book of Genesis. Covering several chapters, it is the story of Joseph, the favorite son of his father, Jacob, and of the rivalry between Joseph and his many brothers. It is a story of love, hate, jealousy, and many emotions in between, and illustrates the way God works in our lives. In Genesis 45, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers who many years earlier thought they were rid of him. But God had great plans for Joseph, and Joseph forgave his brothers.

The word “forgive,” and all the variations of the word, are a key to the way we should live our lives. Imagine a world without forgiveness. The Bible contains references to numerous derivations of the word: to forgive; forgave; forgiving; and forgiveness. The dictionary says the definition of the word forgiveness is the act of not holding resentment of an offense. So Joseph forgave his brothers for the terrible treatment he had received from them. There are many other instances in the Bible where we read of times when forgiveness was part of the story.

Of course, most importantly, when we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we pray “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” And then there is the ultimate example of forgiveness from Jesus himself, when he said from the cross “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” Again, just imagine a world without such forgiveness.

Mary Sponseller

Wednesday, March 10
Morning: Psalm 5; 147:1-11
Genesis 45:16-28
1 Corinthians 8:1-13
Mark 6:13-29
Evening: Psalm 27; 51

The second chapter of C.S Lewis' *The Last Battle* is called *The Rashness of the King*. Tirian, the king of Narnia, dashes off to investigate reports of evil doers in the Lantern Waste, against the advice of wise council to wait for support from his guard at Cair Paravel. As a result, he loses his freedom, his kingdom and his world.

The second part of the sixth chapter of Mark could likewise be called *The Rashness of Herod*. For the sake of a few moments of entertainment for himself and his court, the peace of his household and his reputation for power, he takes the life of a righteous man. He regrets it but he doesn't hesitate.

What vile story! But how different is he from us? How many times do we say the ends justify the means? It's the ticking time bomb! Nothing matters in the end if we can't do the necessary thing now! We must preserve ourselves if we do any good at all!

We see what legacy Herod has left. Whatever measure of peace and prosperity he brought to his portion of Palestine is obscured by this image of an old man willing to indulge his wife's blood-lust for the sake of his pleasure, comfort and authority. No one cares about whatever good he did. He has become an object lesson for the consequences of choosing expedience over righteousness.

Roderick Coates

Thursday, March 11
Morning: Psalm 27; 147:12-20
Genesis 46:1-7, 28-34
1 Corinthians 9:1-15
Mark 6:30-46
Evening: Psalm 126; 102

The Feeding the 5000

Mark 6: 30-46

This event is recorded in all four Gospels indicating that it was very important.

Jesus is the good shepherd who cares about his sheep so Jesus had great pity for the hungry crowd. Even though they curtailed his plan to rest, he was willing to teach them. The people sought the spiritual food of Christ's word, and then he took care that they should not want bodily food. This miracle shows that Christ came into the world, not only to restore, but to preserve and nourish spiritual life; in him there is enough for all that come. None are sent empty away from Christ. By his command alone, Christ provided bread and fish enough for all 5000. By commanding the scraps to be gathered, he teaches us not to waste any of God's bounties, remembering how many are in want. We may, some time, need the fragments that we now throw away.

Some people deny that Jesus created more food by virtue of a miracle. They say that one boy offered his small supply and then all the people began to share their food. In any case everyone had plenty to eat and there were 12 baskets left over. Every year, God supplies the harvest. What happened here was that the harvest (however occurring) happened in a short time. God's provision of food is plentiful. With grateful hearts, we too can share from what God has given us.

Max Yoder

Friday, March 12
Morning: Psalm 22; 148
Genesis 47:1-26
1 Corinthians 9:16-27
Mark 6:47-56
Evening: Psalm 105; 130

Mark 6:47-56

It was the darkest part of night - after the fourth watch - when strength and spirits were at their lowest ebb. Already exhausted from a long evening of fighting the lake's fierce winds, the disciples - soaked, bone-weary, hungry and wretchedly cold in their open boat -- were at that point where nerves fray and hearts fail. So upon the sight of an apparition upon the water, their courage left them. Even the most experienced of their party - who knew the price of letting the mind wander when traveling over rough waters - was seized by blind terror.

And then he was among them again. "Take courage, it is I! Don't be afraid." I imagine Jesus *striding* the last lengths to the boat, leaping aboard - perhaps seizing a fallen oar or grasping a tiller that fell from terrified hands a moment earlier. Suddenly the wind is calm, the water is still and the disciples - astonished, delighted - perhaps also sheepish about their earlier fears - are there again with Jesus, who radiates a powerful, calming, joyous love for them, even in their lowest moments. This is the Jesus they followed and - though their hearts will fail them, again, a few weeks later in Jerusalem - this greater storm, too, will pass, and a risen Christ will soon stand before them to proclaim an end to fear. "Take courage" then, brothers and sisters - though we may not always be able to see through the storm, Jesus is there, walking out to meet us - and to save us.

Justin Anderson

Saturday, March 13
Morning: Psalm 43; 149
Genesis 47:27–48:7
1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Mark 7:1-23
Evening: Psalm 31; 143

In yet another of his many confrontations with the local religious authorities, Jesus presages later New Testament teaching about how obeying the letter of the Jewish dietary, Sabbath and other laws is not nearly as important as obeying the overall message of Scripture: Loving God, loving others; doing justice and loving kindness; freeing the oppressed, healing the sick, feeding the hungry and lifting up the poor.

As modern-day religious people, part of our Lenten journey toward the Resurrection is the call to introspection -- to examining ourselves closely to assure that we are not honoring God with our lips and failing to honor God with our hearts and lives.

I probably don't need to remind anybody reading this that Baptists in this country have sometimes been every bit as guilty of this particular sinful attitude as the Pharisees. Think of our forefathers and mothers who assured themselves of their own righteousness in abstaining from alcohol, dancing and card-playing -- but who simultaneously turned a blind eye to the rank injustices of Jim Crow laws. Or the evangelists who tirelessly preached individual salvation and spiritual liberation from broken lives through Christ -- but who had not a word to say about the poverty, ignorance and other structural social injustices that also enslaved people.

In this Lenten season, let us be vigilant that our hearts are as close to God as our lips.

Robert Marus

THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

MARCH 14-20

See, everything has become new!

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way.

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Fourth Sunday in Lent - March 14, 2009

Joshua 5:9-12

Psalm 32

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Evening: Psalm 42; 32

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

The Ministry of Reconciliation

Reconciliation = To restore harmony between persons

Righteousness = Acting in a morally correct manner; correct by divine declaration

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27)

Creation was shattered by the willful disobedience of Adam and Eve. God said, "Don't!" They did. Sin entered the world and Satan was unmasked.

The rest is history: Commandments given. Commandments broken. (The covenant, forgiveness, and the promised Messiah.) God's plan for our salvation is revealed and we become a new creation when we believe in Jesus Christ. "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." So just as God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, now he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. When we trust in Christ, we make an exchange---our sin for his righteousness. Our sin was poured into Christ at his crucifixion. His righteousness is poured into us at our conversion.

What does this mean? It means we become Christ's ambassadors and take on a very important responsibility. God is now making his appeal...for reconciliation with the world...through us. This commission of the Lord should be our motivation for service. Is it your motivation?

Dear Father, thank you for your reconciliation through Jesus Christ.

Help us to reconcile our neighbors to you, through our ministry,
with the same love of Christ and the power of the Gospel. -Amen

Glenn Bratcher

Monday, March 15
Morning: Psalm 119:73-80; 145
Genesis 49:1-28
1 Corinthians 10:14–11:1
Mark 7:24-37
Evening: Psalm 121; 6

Psalm 121

How tempting it is to solve all of our problems by our own human strength. Afterwards, we often find ourselves depleted physically and spiritually as we make every effort to face difficulties in our lives on our own. The blessed assurance of this psalm reminds us to look to God for help and protection for every situation. God is always right there and ready to help us, but we must look to Him and acknowledge that He is the source of the help we need. There is never a moment when we are out of God's sight, although there are times when we don't keep God in our sight because other distractions capture our attention. Words of affirmation such as these remind us of the commitment God makes to us when we accept His lordship over our lives. If there was ever a question about what difference God makes in our lives, this psalm provides a comprehensive list of our spiritual coverage. All that is required of us is to make our commitment to look to God as our source of help no matter what the situation.

Rev. Beryl Dennis

Tuesday, March 16
Morning: Psalm 34; 146
Genesis 49:29–50:14
1 Corinthians 11:2-34
Mark 8:1-10
Evening: Psalm 25; 91

"God Can Do Anything"

Some of the apparent themes in the readings for today include: "Fear the Lord"... "Praise the Lord"... "God Can Do Anything"... and the "Unity of Believers"... found in the Communion service.

To "fear the Lord" is to correctly recognize God for who He is: holy, almighty, righteous, pure, all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-wise! Only then can we see ourselves: sinful, weak, frail and needy.

When we "praise the Lord" we can take our minds off our problems and focus on God. We move from individual meditation to corporate worship. We appreciate God's character and our perspective shifts from the earthly to the heavenly.

Jesus fed the four thousand with seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. I often think that God is so busy He couldn't possibly be aware of my needs or concerns. But when I read about the miracles in the Bible I realize there is nothing too large for Him to handle and no need too small to escape His interest..."God can do anything."

We are one in Christ and in love must honor one another. I respect the Lord's Supper and I try to be honest with the Lord as I confess my sins. I consider the service very personal, but as we share our Covenant and celebrate the Communion, I pray the "unity of our church" will be promoted. Surely this is what Jesus had in mind when He said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

God joyfully leads those who fear Him and submit to His will. We must keep our eyes on the Lord and let Him have His way. God knows where He is going and what He is doing, so let us follow Him by faith.

Glenn Bratcher

Wednesday, March 17
Morning: Psalm 5; 147:1-11
Genesis 50:15-26
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
Mark 8:11-26
Evening: Psalm 27; 51

After their father Jacob dies, Joseph's brothers are afraid that he will take revenge on them for their past wrongs against him. But instead, Genesis 50:19-21 tells us of Joseph's response:

But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as He is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Pretend for a moment that these are Jesus' words, not Joseph's. And that Jesus is speaking not just to those who put him on the cross, but to all of us who have sinned and made the cross necessary.

Now read this passage again. In doing so you will find in Genesis the message of Easter. Good coming from harm. Life coming from death. Preservation from destruction, now and for eternity. God's plan for God's people, spoken with kindness and love. So have no fear; Christ has provided for you and your little ones. Thanks be to God.

Ken Ellison

Thursday, March 18
Morning: Psalm 27; 147:12-20
Exodus 1:6-22
1 Corinthians 12:12-26
Mark 8:27–9:1
Evening: Psalm 126; 102

Mark 8: 27-9:1

“Who Do *YOU* Say That I Am?”

Jesus has finished His Galilean ministry and is now on His way to Jerusalem. On the way Jesus addresses His disciples and teaches about the true nature of the Messiah and predicts His passion and suffering. Jesus challenges the disciples about His true identity. They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”

“But what about you?” Jesus asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Peter answered, “You are the Christ.”

Then Jesus says, “Now see that you don’t go spreading it around.”

Why would Jesus tell His disciples to not share this information with others? Some theologians suggest that one needs to make sure that one’s faith has survived the horror and despair of Calvary, witnessed the triumph of the resurrection, and been empowered by the Holy Spirit. If one has not faced hard questions in one’s spiritual life, one may not be able to answer hard questions that people ask. If one has no confidence that Jesus has received all power and authority, the spiritual opposition could be terrifying and it would be easy to give up. If one has not been empowered by the Holy Spirit granting the vision to see the need and the desire to fill it, one may lose heart quickly.

So I say to you, we need to share the gospel, but before we do, we need to know who Jesus is.

Who is Jesus?

Charles Faddis

Friday, March 19
Morning: Psalm 22; 148
Exodus 2:1-22
1 Corinthians 12:27–13:3
Mark 9:2-13
Evening: Psalm 105; 130

I have to be very honest here. As I read through Psalm 22, I had mixed reactions. At first I couldn't figure out for the life of me what this said about God. And what it said about David. In fact, I almost wanted to close the good book, denounce the book of Psalms, and just focus on the New Testament. It's just...easier to take. I mean how much more embarrassing and pathetic can David be here in Psalms 22?!

"Roaring lions tearing their prey, open their mouths wide against me." Really? Am I the only one that thinks David is a Drama Queen (or King in this case)? I do understand that David was most likely under incredible pressure throughout his life for various reasons. He was one of the great leaders in the Bible and he did have Goliath and Saul trying to kill him. So maybe he did have SOME reason to be this much of a "kelly" (according to the Urban Dictionary, a "kelly" is someone that is overly dramatic. Apologies to anyone with the name Kelly...first of last). But still, I think there was at least a little wine involved in the writing of this harlequin style passage.

But really though, as a pretty average guy, with an average job, I suppose I should cut David a bit of slack. He had many more troubles than me and a job that probably brought with it more stress. Ok fine. But why would God want to hear all the whining and theatrics? He's God! He created David and David's problems must have seemed pretty minor to Him. As I considered this question, something came to me. This chapter really does show us a very pathetic, lame, embarrassing David. But then I also realized that I have and continue to something of a kelly at times. I've been like David. I just forgot I had been. Maybe I haven't been at church or at most public gatherings. But my close friends and family have seen it. My girlfriend has definitely seen it. The other thought I had was that Psalms 22 doesn't really tell me much about God at all, in my opinion. However if I consider the idea that God was simply listening to David, that He let David go through his rant, let David work out his feelings, and then come full circle back to Him, ("All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him,") then I guess I can be fairly hopeful. If God can be patient and endure the numerous rants and emotional outbursts that David went through in the book of Psalms, well then maybe God can do the same with me, embarrassing traits and all.

Josh Pierce

Saturday, March 20
Morning: Psalm 43; 149
Exodus 2:23–3:15
1 Corinthians 13:1-13
Mark 9:14-29
Evening: Psalm 31; 143

Exodus 2:23–3:15

The bush burned and was not consumed. The Lord declared Himself to Moses and made his desires known. Sometimes I yearn for this experience, the awesome opportunity to be in the presence of God. But then I am afraid, not of God, but of what He may ask me. If God called me before the burning bush, what would be the agenda?

Would he ask me to do more or give more at church? Would he ask me to complete a service project? Maybe he would ask me to support a mission trip? Any of these are possibilities, but somehow I don't think that God calls a face-to-burning-bush meeting if the agenda consisted of only these things.

When God calls a meeting like this, I think the topics will be of historic proportions. Would he ask me to rebuild Haiti? Would he ask me to be a prophet, missionary, or leader of missionaries? Would he ask me to start a church or churches? Would he ask me to quit my job and just wait for further instructions?

Today, reflect on the burning bush and what God may ask you to do. He called Moses to free the Israelites, what will He ask you when you come into His presence?

Justin Grant

THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

MARCH 21– MARCH 27

You always have the poor with you...

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.

There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him.

Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said,

"Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.)

Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial.

You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

John 12:1-8

Fifth Sunday in Lent - March 21

Morning Psalm 126

Isaiah 43:16-21

Philippians 3:4b-14

John 12:1-8

Evening: Psalm 42; 32

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the Living God. When can I go and meet with God? (Ps. 42:1&2)

“Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found..” (Ps 32: 6a)

“When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed.” (Ps 126:1)

“This is what the LORD says--he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, “..(Is. 43:16)

“What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.” (Phil. 3:8a)

The psalmist gives voice to our own longing to meet God. How rich with promise and comfort are the Psalms when we search for God. They and the other Old Testament poets and prophets point us to God’s greatness, sovereignty, mercy and incomparable love. They recite many of the evidences of God’s love and deliverance. They point us to the coming Savior and the coming again Lord. The fulfillment of those visions are realized in Jesus and that realization is so eloquently and often expressed by the New Testament writers, especially the Apostle Paul.

When a seamstress needs to cut a piece of material in a straight line, she finds the place she wants to cut and identifies a thread or two to pull out to make a visible line for her scissors to follow. There are many threads that make up the fabric of Scripture. The thread that records the human rebellion against God is to be found in all of Scripture and in all of recorded human history. The thread of longing and seeking for God is very evident and often repeated. The most evident and the strongest, I believe, is the redemption thread, the thread woven by God himself, which begins in Genesis and goes all the way through Revelation.

“O Holy Spirit, As the sun is full of light, the ocean full of water, Heaven full of glory, so may my heart be full of thee.” (FROM The Valley of Vision , A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions, Edited by Arthur Bennett, Canon of St. Albans Cathedral, England.

Adrian Harward

Monday, March 22

Morning: Psalm 119:73-80; 145
Exodus 4:10-20 (21-26) 27-31
1 Corinthians 14:1-19
Mark 9:30-41
Evening: Psalm 121; 6

Jesus reminds us that humility is one of the ultimate tasks bestowed upon Christians in our readings from Mark 9:30-41. As he shows throughout the New Testament, and he demonstrates through his own suffering, by reminding the bickering disciples in this case, that no one loved by God is greater than another and that we're all loved by God, even those that choose to work against him. Those that are the most humble, most greatly resemble Jesus.

Even as Jesus is already preparing for the end and knows that he will ultimately be betrayed by those he is ultimately trying to help, it is through example that we lead others to Christ. Those who work on his behalf should never be silenced nor rebuked, for all who work towards the betterment of others will bring joy to the Lord and spread the gospel across the globe.

Therefore, let us remain humble and diligent in emulating Jesus by loving our fellow Christians, our neighbors, and those around us. For loving others and working for Christ, ultimately benefits everyone.

Chris Hook

Tuesday, March 23

Morning: Psalm 34; 146

Exodus 5:1–6:1

1 Corinthians 14:20-33a, 39-40

Mark 9:42-50

Evening: Psalm 25; 91

Isaac Watts wrote more than 600 hymns, all with the purpose of awakening his congregation to a deeper knowledge and worship of God. The following hymn was written in 1707, and prompts us to realize the magnitude of Christ's sacrificial death. It is difficult for us to comprehend a love so great that He would give His life for the forgiveness of our sins. In return for this greatest gift, Watts so eloquently directs us to give Him our souls, our lives, our all.

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God;
All the vain things that charm me most -
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small:
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Bonnie Jorgensen

Wednesday, March 24
Morning: Psalm 5; 147:1-11
Exodus 7:8-24
2 Corinthians 2:14–3:6
Mark 10:1-16
Evening: Psalm 27; 51

Evening- Psalm 25

A psalm of honor and a prayer for guidance, it seems. I can imagine wanting to go to these words in a time of stress and struggle over the everyday dealings with people around me. When the difficulties of a day seem to mount up and build an obstacle to what will be a productive and rewarding workday, or a relaxing weekend, it would be easy to find some strength in these words.

But I would like to think that I might at least sometimes take the chance to have this prayer in mind when things have gone better than expected. It might be nice to think that when I feel as if I have “won the day” with my own words and work, that the lines of this Psalm feel even more meaningful. Maybe it wouldn’t be so much of a struggle to return to that place in the average day where things seem “just fine”, if I focused more on His guidance than the obstacles.

“Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, For I wait for thee.” I pray for that consistency.

John Linam

Thursday, March 25
Morning: Psalm 27; 147:12-20
Exodus 7:25–8:19
2 Corinthians 3:7-18
Mark 10:17-31
Evening: Psalm 126; 102

We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory.

When we believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we begin to reflect the glory of the Lord from within as we are transformed into the image of Christ. This transformation produces a glory which is intended to increase for the rest of our days. We will never attain the full likeness of Christ until we join Him in Heaven; but with every step along God's path, we become more and more like His Son. And as the radiant-blocking "self" is slowly removed, we are better able to reflect His glory.

We must continue down His path. We must take daily steps toward a life which reflects the glory of the Lord into the darkness that surrounds us. Heavenly Father, we pray for the Lord into the darkness that surrounds us. Heavenly Father, we pray for the strength to more fully surrender and reflect you into this world with an ever-increasing glory.

Taken from Steve Troxel's God's Daily Word Ministries

Marvin and Patty Marceron

Friday, March 26
Morning: Psalm 22; 148
Exodus 9:13-35
2 Corinthians 4:1-12
Mark 10:32-45
Evening: Psalm 105; 130

37...“Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”

I cherish those verses where we can see just how human and self-concerned the disciples could act. As William Barclay writes, “The Twelve were not a company of saints. They were ordinary (people). It was with people like ourselves that Jesus set out to change the world - and did it.”

James and John wanted prized seats in the kingdom. They were ambitious and in these verses we can see that they failed to understand Jesus’ plan. How many of us might be worse off if all our requests of Jesus were answered? As lost as they might have been, James and John never doubted but believed in Jesus. Ultimately both paid a heavy price for following Jesus.

God’s doesn’t reveal his plan for us to satisfy our curiosity. It is unfolded by our needs and capacity to act. God tells us what we need to know, what we can bear, only when we are ready hear and act.

Are you willing to taste of his cup and be baptized with death on the cross? My prayer today is that as God’s plan for each of us is revealed, we will drink from the cup and be baptized with Christ.

Wil McBeath

Saturday, March 27
Morning: Psalm 43; 149
Exodus 10:21–11:8
2 Corinthians 4:13-18
Mark 10:46-52
Evening: Psalm 31; 143

Exodus 10:21-11:8

In centering prayer my centering word is hope. Hope keeps me going. I want to believe there is always hope. Hope to me is planting a tulip bulb in the Fall with the anticipation of a beautiful burst of color come Spring. I cannot touch, smell or see hope but I need to believe hope exists.

I need to believe God exists. I need to believe God exists in the darkest of times. In the three days of darkness of the ninth plague God existed. In our darkest days God is with us. In contrast to the turmoil and grief experienced in Egyptian territory all remained tranquil in Israelite territory. In our finite minds we do not understand God's infinite wisdom. We ask his forgiveness in hope of becoming like Him. We repent; metanoia.

Steven Netcott

HOLY WEEK

MARCH 28-APRIL 3

PALM SUNDAY

MARCH 28

"Go into the village ahead of you..."

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:5-11

Palm Sunday - March 28
March 28, 2010

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
Luke 19:28-40

Isaiah 50:4-9a
Psalm 31:9-16
Philippians 2:5-11
Luke 22:14-23:56 or Luke 23:1-49
Evening: Psalm 42; 32

The Humility of Christ: Philippians 2:5-11

Christ "thought it not robbery to be equal to God..." (verse 6), yet "...made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men..." (verse 7). Following Christ, we are urged to be humble. "... but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." (Philippians 2:3).

Prayer: We seek to give ourselves fully to Christ.

John Osborn

Monday of Holy Week - March 29

Isaiah 42:1-9

Psalm 36:5-11

Hebrews 9:11-15

John 12:1-11

Evening: Psalm 121; 6

Hebrews 9:11-15

As we enter Holy Week, we wait with anticipation for the ultimate sacrifice made for us. Jesus willingly gave himself and bore the weight of all of our sins and transgressions on the cross. What a magnificent gift! As this passage in Hebrews points out, Jesus did not rely on ways of the past in sacrificing animal blood as mere atonement for sins to the Lord, but instead gave his own blood in an even greater showing of love and obedience.

As verse 14 says, “how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!” Indeed, this sacrifice was strengthened in my mind by the fact that Jesus had a choice. As a man, he was facing the mortal fears and anxieties any of us would and even asked to be released from this burden. But he knew that God’s will must be done over his own, and he allowed himself to be captured and killed for all of us.

To me, that makes his sacrifice even more remarkable and healing in its powers. Let us not take for granted this amazing gift of redemption and forgiveness. As we head into Easter, let’s celebrate the love of God for us and remember the One who showed us the way.

Whitney Owen

Tuesday of Holy Week - March 30

Isaiah 49:1-7

Psalms 71:1-14

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

John 12:20-36

Evening: Psalm 25; 91

In the gospel reading for today, John 12:20-36, Jesus begins to prepare his followers for his death and resurrection. In prayerfully reading this passage, I was drawn to verses 35-36 where Jesus discusses walking in the light or in the darkness. He concludes by challenging us to believe in the light, so that we might become children of light.

What does it mean to walk in light or darkness? If you walk in the light, you are confident of where you are going because you can see the way. If you walk in the darkness, you are hesitant and unsure of your way. You might even hurt yourself.

What does it mean to become a child of light? Throughout literature, goodness is presented in positive, clear terms. Light is seen as good. A child of light would possess the ultimate goodness - a likeness to God. In Matthew, Jesus encourages his followers to let their light shine before men. Today if we are to take our discipleship seriously, we must try to live our lives so that others will see the light of God in us. This is not easy, but if we remember to keep in touch with our Abba through prayer we will find love and support for the journey.

In conclusion, I would like to quote from Letters from the Desert by Carlo Carretto, a modern spiritual mystic: "God can do everything and I can do nothing. But if I offer this nothing in prayer to God, everything becomes possible in me."

Julie Pascu

Wednesday of Holy Week - March 31

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalms 70

Hebrews 12:1-3

John 13:21-32

Evening: Psalm 27; 51

In the Bible, the book of Psalms is a source of many forms of inspiration and hope. In Psalm 27, we read some of the ways the psalmist looked to his visions for securing these hopes from God. First we read that God is the stronghold of life; therefore there is nothing to fear. We are told that when we are faced with evil activities around us, we can be confident that God is with us and we can look to the future unafraid.

In the same psalm, the writer also tells us, in recognition of his safekeeping and his very survival in a land of beauty, that he will sing and make music to the Lord for the blessings he has received. Can we do the same?

In our modern world, we confront many of the same problems in life that arose in the lives of people who lived many generations ago. We, too, need to seek guidance from God in our lives. Our daily prayers should be for strength as we live each day.

Psalm 27 begins, "The Lord is my light and salvation - whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life - of whom shall I be afraid?" It ends with "Wait for the Lord, be strong and take heart, and wait for the Lord."

Mary Sponseller

MAUNDY THURSDAY

APRIL 1

Do this in Remembrance of Me.

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' ²⁵In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Maundy Thursday - April 1
Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14
Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-17, 31b-35
Evening: Psalm 126; 102

Do this in Remembrance of Me.

This year on Maundy Thursday, as I remember Christ's sacrifice for us, I will also remember two other occasions on which I have listened to these Words of Institution.

The first was in the early spring of 1983, at the baptism of my best friend Mark. It was our freshman year of college. Mark had not been raised in the church, but he found religion in college and was baptized into the Episcopal Church that year. The wine was white and the bread was brown.

The second was in dead of winter of 2009, at my best friend Mark's funeral. We dipped the bread into a dry Rose. And the irony was not lost on me. I had witnessed the beginning and the end of Mark's life on this earth as a Christian and the Rite of Communion served as the bookends for this experience.

As we sang the recessional, the words took on special meaning:

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings
Ris'n with healing in His wings
Mild He lays His glory by
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth!

I know on the Day of Resurrection, I will see Mark again and we will laugh and hug and remember.

Roderick Coates

GOOD FRIDAY

APRIL 2

Whom do you seek?"

After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, "Whom are you looking for?"

They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.

When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground.

Again he asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go."

This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me."...

So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him.

First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people...

John 18:1-14

Good Friday - April 2

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Psalm 22

Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

John 18:1-19:42

Evening: Psalm 105; 130

Good Friday: John 18:1 - 19:42

Scope: Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus' mock trial, Peter's denial, Jesus before Pilate, Jesus scourged & condemned, Jesus bears his cross, the women at the cross, Jesus dies on the cross, Jesus' pierced side, Jesus' burial.

All four Gospels describe these events with some differences. The first three Gospels relate how Judas identified Jesus while John (the only author actually present at all of the events) makes no mention of Judas identifying Jesus in the Garden. To the contrary he states: Then Jesus, knowing all that was to befall him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Matthew states that all of the disciples deserted Jesus as he was taken away; John makes it plain that he did not forsake Jesus and was initially the only one to accompany Jesus into the High Priest's courtyard. The other Gospels quote Jesus as admitting that he is the Messiah while John does not mention this. Finally, John is the only Gospel wherein Jesus (from the cross) entrusts his mother's care to John.

We, like John, need not be afraid to stand by Jesus. When Peter agonizingly remembered the loving tenderness wherein Jesus foretold Peter's denial, its hideous enormity became self evident and very haunting. As Christians, we must never drop our allegiance to Christ. Praise be to God that Jesus died to atone for our sins.

Max Yoder

HOLY SATURDAY

APRIL 3

“When it was evening,...”

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception would be worse than the first."

Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can."

So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

Matthew 27:57-66

Holy Saturday - April 3

Job 14:1-14 or Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24

Psalms 31:1-4, 15-16

1 Peter 4:1-8

Matthew 27:57-66 or John 19:38-42

Evening: Psalm 31; 143

What was Joseph of Arimathea thinking, or feeling, as he made his way through the streets to find Pilate and ask for the body of Jesus? He had not favored the execution but he could not stop it. Jesus had been crucified. Did he and Nicodemus speak aloud their grief to one another or question the wisdom of what they were about to do?

This was a bold move for two men, one a member of the high council and the other a teacher and a Pharisee. They were Jewish leaders who had been secretive about their relationship to Jesus, but were now using their influence to gain permission from Pilate to take away the body of Jesus and prepare it for burial.

With permission granted they took the body and prepared it with the spices, the myrrh and aloe that Nicodemus had brought. They wrapped the lifeless body in linen clothes. As they worked did they talk about the hope they had had in this man? Did they even think about the possible repercussions for their public display of compassion and personal expense devoted to one who had been crucified?

They carried the body and laid it in Joseph's own new tomb that was hewn in the rock. They were pressed for time and the tomb was nearby. They rolled the stone to the door of the tomb and went away. It was the Jewish day of Preparation, but no one was prepared for what was to come next.

Debbie Cochran

EASTER
THE RESURRECTION OF
THE LORD
APRIL 4

Why do you look for the living among the dead?

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared.

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body.

While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them.

The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.

Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again."

Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.

Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Luke 24:1-12

Resurrection of the Lord - April 4
Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 65:17-25
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
1 Corinthians 15:19-26 or Acts 10:34-43
John 20:1-18 or Luke 24:1-12
Evening: Psalm 136; 117

Luke 24:1-15
“The Resurrection—Our Core Belief!”

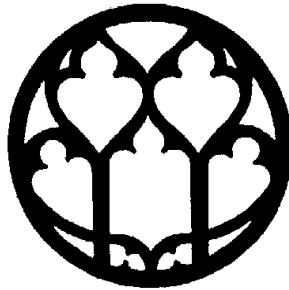
Today we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the event that is at the center of our Christian faith. Jesus’ resurrection distinguishes our religious faith because our Lord not only demonstrated sacrificial love in his death, but also supreme power in being raised to life again. The belief in Jesus’ resurrection originated in this humble Sunday morning discovery, when Jesus’ beloved followers—still moved with severe grief and sincere adoration—journeyed to his tomb to anoint his corpse.

Upon entering the above ground tomb, the women discovered that Jesus’ body was nowhere to be found. They were greeted by two unidentified men, presumably angels. They asked the women, “Why are you searching for the giver and Lord of life in a tomb that was set apart for the dead?” The angels did not simply announce Christ’s absence, or else Christianity would be no more than the religion of the empty tomb. They announced that Jesus had risen from the dead, hereby launching Christianity as a new resurrection faith.

On Resurrection Sunday, we rededicate ourselves to our core belief, that God raised Jesus to reconcile humanity to reunion with God and service to others. Like the women who were the first bearers of the good news of the risen Christ; the church announces the good news that Christ lives, thereby offering redemption and hope to all people that Christ will someday reappear.

Dr. Jeffrey Haggray

NOTES



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