



# LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

## **Foreword**

The Collect of the Day for Ash Wednesday reminds us that through our repentance and God's forgiveness the Almighty will, "Create and make in us new and contrite hearts..." What will need to happen in this time of Lent for you in order that a fresh start might be made, and a new and contrite heart be within you?

The prayer book suggests prayer, fasting, repentance, self-denial, and/or reading and meditating on God's word. Many people give up something for Lent (self-denial), but others want to take on a new spiritual practice to help them focus on God, God's grace, and forgiveness during this time. What will be best for you? What are you being called to during this journey through Lent?

I do invite you to the observance of a holy Lent and I hope and pray these meditations will be a part of your journey and help you to go deeper into this journey.

And a huge thank you to the Daughters of the King for collecting all these meditations, to Ash Kelly for putting the booklet together and for everyone who contributed to this ministry of prayer, reflection, and love.

Blessings for a Holy Lent

***Father Brian †***

**Ash Wednesday – February 22**  
**Psalm 103; Joel 2: 1-2, 12-17; Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21**  
**Fr. Brian**

Today we will gather in the chapel, out on the streets of Castle Rock, on Zoom and within our homes to kick off Lent. It is amazing to think that only a couple of years ago we were not able to gather in person for these events. Remember those days of Covid? While much was wrong in those times, it seemed to give us a time to step back, reflect on what was really important and worth our time, and just to breathe and be.

Maybe we need to grab a little more of that for our time in Lent this year. Jesus shares at the end of our Gospel reading for today, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." What do we treasure today? Is it to be seen and praised by others? Is it to fast and make sure people see us fasting? Is it storing up treasures in heaven? Our Gospel today speaks of all that today and it makes me ponder. What is the treasure we are looking for during this time of Lent?

Are you looking for that quieter time of days past?

Are you looking for a little more time to pray, focus, or meditate?

Are you looking for ways you can become closer to God?

Are you wanting to be closer to family or your community?

Lent provides us with a time set apart to step back, reflect and breathe, and I pray that all of us can do this during these next 40 days as we walk towards Holy Week and Easter.

May this time be blessed for you, may these meditations be helpful, and may our loving, liberating, and life-giving God walk with us.

## Thursday after Ash Wednesday – February 23

Psalm 1; Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Luke 9:18-25

Trevor Hart

As Moses' final charge to the Israelites was drawing to a close, he summed up his message in a striking formulation: "See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments...then you shall live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you this day that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. I call on heaven and earth to witness against you this day that I have set before you; life and death, blessing and curse; therefore, choose life that you and your descendants may live....." (Emphasis added) "Therefore choose life" is a powerful summons, but who would not choose life?

Given the choice that Moses first delineates between "life and good, death and evil", one would certainly have to be bent on self-destruction to opt for the latter pair. In what sense could these represent a real choice, two real alternatives? My sense is that by "choose life" Moses meant that Israel should resolve to keep the divine commandments, "by walking in his ways". This would result in "life" in the sense of the people's continued life for generations in the promised land. Choosing "death", that is being "drawn away to worship other gods" would inevitably result in exile and banishment.

This was the choice presented by Moses. But it is not a big jump to find in his words a still more elemental choice, between each individual's dedication to the good, that is, living in accordance with God's will, or missing the mark. Put in these terms, the choice is not a collective one, but a choice facing each individual in their lifetime. So, the choice presented by Moses is really a choice between two ways of life, two paths. In restating this choice, many sources speak of Two Ways. Indeed, the Early Christian Church adopted this language. The Didache, a manual of church instruction dating from the first century C.E., begins with a description of the "Two Ways" and a summary of the commandments, as the basis for Christian conduct: "There are two Ways, one of Life and one of Death, and there is a great difference between the two Ways.

The Way of Life is this: 'First you shall love the God who made you, secondly, your neighbor as yourself; and whatever you would not have done to yourself, do not do to another (Paraphrase mine)". We are still called to choose the Way of Life.

## Friday after Ash Wednesday – February 24

Psalm 51:1-10; Isaiah 58:1-9a; Matthew 9:10-17

Karen Curosh

These three passages remind us that we are all sinners, but God will forgive us if we ask. In Psalm 51, David pleads for forgiveness after his affair with Bathsheba. David asks God to: “Wash away all my guilt; from my sin cleanse me. . . . wash me, make me whiter than snow.” I love this image of snow. It is a joy to wake up on a winter morning and see newly fallen snow that is undisturbed by people or animals. The snow transforms the dull winter landscape, covered with dried grass and leaves and the occasional piece of paper that blew out of a recycling bin, into a sparkling winter wonderland. If we are truly sorry, God will transform us as well. I hope that each time I see a new snowfall, I remember that God will cleanse my heart from sin and that he will do it over and over again.

The passage from Isaiah discusses fasting. God doesn’t want showy, superficial fasting. Rather, God wants us to take action, such as by “sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless.”

In Matthew, Jesus has dinner with the tax collectors, who were despised and considered outcasts. Jesus loves and wants to be close to everyone. We can come to Jesus as we are, people who make mistakes and sin over and over again, and God will welcome us with open arms and forgive all our sins. What a comfort it is to know God’s love and forgiveness.

## Saturday after Ash Wednesday – February 25

Psalm 86:1-11; Isaiah 58:9b-14; Luke 5:27-32

Ted Fastert

David’s cry out to the Lord reminds me of where I want to be, but that I have much more work to do to get there. We hear from a servant of the Lord who though “poor and needy” remains completely devoted to his God. He KNOWS that in the day of his trouble he need only call out to the Lord and his cries will be answered. I believe that David’s faith is so strong that he is not saying that his troubles will vanish, only that the Lord will hear him and guide him along the path that is best for him. When he asks the Lord to “Teach me your way,” I am reminded of the Confession we make each Sunday from the BCP.

“For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.”

## **Monday in the First Week of Lent – February 27**

**Psalm 19:7-14; Leviticus 19:1-2,11-18; Matthew 25:31-46**

**Cyndi Fastert**

Verse 7 of this Psalm of David speaks of the perfect law of God which can convert the soul. It continues with his declaration that God is omniscient and omnipotent above all things. He suggests that one should then keep His law close to our heart as the reward is great.

In verse 12-14, David prays for forgiveness for even his secret faults. He asks God for help to avoid transgression. Even though nobody may ever hear our thoughts, God knows them. It is important to spend some time paying attention to what our internal voice says. Often times, that voice will turn into action.

## **Tuesday in the First Week of Lent – February 28**

**Psalm 34:15-22; Isaiah 55:6-11; Matthew 6:7-15**

**Frank Rivero**

If we believe, as the Psalm and Isaiah texts remind us, that God's "ears are open to our cry" and that He is merciful and freely pardons our sins, the Matthew text gives us the recipe for how to succinctly voice our prayer.

As I read Jesus' words in Matthew, I wondered how often our prayers must sound like pagan babbling or a litany of supplications. Jesus boils prayer down to four sentences with the understanding that all that other "stuff" is implied, understood, and already known. He shows us, through his teachings, that the effectiveness of our prayers is not improved by the number of words, but rather by the simple, yet incredibly powerful, prayer we say every Sunday.

Yet, in typical Jesus fashion, He turns the tables, making us pause, think, and become active participants in the prayer. Jesus reminds us that we too must be merciful and forgiving. No longer is prayer just a one-way communication. Rather than leave us in the blissful glow of God's mercy, Jesus reminds us that we must play an active part to truly be forgiven.

For me, there is comfort in individually going through the list of my prayers while ending every night with the prayer He taught us. Perhaps that is my way of hedging my bets and doing both. While that may make me potentially a babbling pagan, I believe that God mercifully forgives my sins so long as I am willing to do the same.

## Wednesday in the First Week of Lent – March 1

Psalm 51:11-18; Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 11:29-32

Geoff Hupp

The themes I found in today's readings are repentance and active response.

Psalm 51:11-18 A prayer of repentance and renewal: *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. Once we recognize our gifts and salvation, take action, and rejoice! Spread the word and sing aloud in thanksgiving! The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.* When we sin or fail, may we recognize that failure and be truly and humbly contrite.

Jonah 3:1-10 Conversion of Nineveh (NRSV): *The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you."* So, Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Jonah acted immediately upon God's request. We are challenged to get out of our comfort zone and go live (and even preach) the Good News of Salvation. From The Message translation: *Everyone must turn around, turn back from an evil life and the violent ways that stain their hands.* From NRSV: *When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed His mind about the calamity that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.*

God assures us of our heavenly reward when we turn from evil and respond with action to His whispers and nudges.

Luke 11:29-32 The Sign of Jonah: *For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation.*

The people of Nineveh ... repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and indeed, something greater than Jonah is here! We have the story and sign of Jesus; at the proclamation of his word are we ready to repent and turn back to Him and His ways? If so, the promised gifts are unearned grace, eternal life, and divine union.

## Thursday in the First Week of Lent – March 2

Psalm 138; Esther (Apocrypha) 14:1-6,12-14; Matthew 7:7-12

Lloyd Patterson

"In prayer you will find the courage to face adversity".

## Friday in the First Week of Lent – March 3

Psalm 130; Ezekiel 18:21-28; Matthew 5:20-26

Fay Stefan

Psalm 130 is a song asking for forgiveness of sins. If God kept a record of all of His peoples' sins, no one would enter His Kingdom as we all sin at one time or another. Jesus once said, "Let he without sin cast the first stone". Nobody threw a stone at the disgraced woman. I have sinned many times during my long lifetime, and I feel sure I am not alone. The majority, and severity, of my sins were committed when I was "young and foolish", but with age comes wisdom, (usually!) and in my closer walk with God, I try very hard to live a good and honest life and I know that my sins now are far fewer and are usually unintentional. Verses 6 and 7 say "... for with the Lord there is mercy. With him there is plenteous redemption". Therefore, trust in the Lord to show mercy and forgive us our sins.

These verses in the book of Matthew refer to the 10 Commandments, specifically "Thou shalt not murder". If you break this commandment, you will be held to judgement. As it was then, it is now. Then the chapter goes on to say that even by being angry at, or insulting someone, you will be brought to judgement. The same can be said in today's world as is evidenced by the many thousands of lawsuits which are brought every day. So, we need to reconcile with those we have wronged in order to avoid judgement. I certainly have no intention of murdering anyone, but anger and insults are sometimes hard to control, and we will most probably be judged by those to whom the anger and/or insults are aimed. So let us, without delay, seek to reconcile with those we have wronged. Not always an easy task, but one which we should make every effort to undertake. In my humble opinion, this will also bring comfort and peace of mind to ourselves.

I do my best to live by this rule.



## Saturday in the First Week of Lent – March 4

Psalm 119:1-8; Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Matthew 5:43-48

Ann Williams

In today's lessons the Psalms and Deuteronomy tell us that God has given us the instructions on the right way to live. The commandments were given to Moses to share with the people as guidelines for how to live a righteous life. Those are pretty strong rules to live by.

Then Jesus talks to the people at the Sermon on the Mount, with more guidelines on how to live a more righteous life. However, I believe that the hardest and strongest guidelines are found in Matthew 5:43-48. Here he tells us that loving those who love us, those whom we love, is not enough.

Jesus reminds us that God created all things, all people--- the righteous and unrighteous, we are all God's children. *"He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends the rain on the righteous and unrighteous."* (Matt 5:45)

WOW! *He tells us that we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us!* (Matt 5:44) Jesus is telling us to love everyone, no matter what. I must admit this seems like a tall order. It invites me to look at my thoughts, my actions, and my prayer life in a much different way. Being a follower of Christ is not an easy road, one that needs work, **Love**, and pray every day.

As Presiding Bishop Curry says, "If it's not about **LOVE**, it's not about God".

## Monday in the Second Week of Lent – March 6

Psalm 79:1-9; Daniel 9:3-10; Luke 6:27-38

Eric Zelt

The first two readings in my selection are very dark Old Testament pieces bemoaning the state of the people's relationship with their God. They are self-blaming, negative, scolding, shaming lamentations about how terrible they have been as people, what terrible deeds they have done, and calling on God to punish non-believers and stop doling out punishment to them. Phrases like "pour your wrath on nations that don't honor you" and "we have not obeyed"; we're rebellious, we're sinners and have been unfaithful. These pieces are off-putting to me, and don't offer the message that I feel is called for in contemporary Lenten reflections. Such selections as this convey guilt and shaming. Such excoriating passages do nothing for me to foster my relationship with Christ, are not "teaching moments" and convey only negative sentiment. It is one thing to reflect on one's own shortcomings in one's relationships as a course of action during Lent, and to foster positive actions to grow and improve, and something quite different to be focused on negativity, bad behavior, and lamentation. I choose to see things differently.

Interestingly enough, the antidote to these two negative citations lies in the third selection, from the Gospel of Luke. This quote contains the very core not just of Lent, but of our Christian faith, and is at once, the simplest, and most challenging of all the commands that Christ gave us: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you". What more do you need as your exhortation for this season of Lent?

## **Tuesday in the Second Week of Lent – March 7**

**Psalm 50:7-15,22-24; Isaiah 1:2-4,16-20; Matthew 23:1-12**

**Kathy Mordeaux**

The gospel today seems very contemporary, with Jesus' condemning of those "who do all their deeds to be seen by others." His world must have been much like ours, where image seems to be all important. Prestige comes to the one who has the biggest house, makes the biggest salary, buys the fanciest car, wears the nicest clothes, sends their kids to the most expensive school—the list goes on and on. But Jesus says that is not the way; instead, he urges us to be less about ego, more about caring and avoiding exploitation and disrespect.

But that's not all. Here, Jesus goes one step further. "The greatest among you shall be your servant," he says. That statement embodies a very different model for leadership, the servant leader. The servant leader's main concern is to help and empower those around her, knowing it's more important that the job gets done well than who gets the credit. She values everyone as a person and not just for what they can produce. She will make sure they have the time and resources they need. She will encourage them to develop their own gifts and skills, and to understand that this is a team effort where everyone's contribution is important.

This is a powerful model that creates incredibly strong communities of dedicated, empowered people. I notice that it is one that is used by some of the best leaders in many areas, from parents, teachers, and scout leaders to board members, CEO's and even choir directors. As I try to live out this model in my own life, I know I sometimes fail. But when I succeed, the results certainly seem worth it. How about you?

## **Wednesday in the Second Week of Lent – March 8**

**Psalm 31:9-16; Jeremiah 18:1-11,18-23; Matthew 20:17-28**

**Julie Dadlani**

Psalm 31 is a song of trust, a prayer, a Psalm of David. David was in constant danger, distress, grief, and sorrow, and yet he ALWAYS trusted God for protection, strength, and refuge. Granted, this can be a difficult challenge for us to commit our lives fully to God in the midst of wrongdoing and chaos. This psalm is about staying constant in our faith in times of difficulty and trouble and knowing that we are ALWAYS under his care and guidance. God's wisdom is far greater than ours will ever be.

When we put our trust in the Lord, we can be sure that no matter what circumstances arise in our lives that he will ALWAYS be our strength and refuge. Even when we don't understand... this is his promise TO US. Let Go and Let God.

## Thursday in the Second Week of Lent – March 9

Psalm 1; Jeremiah 17:5-10; Luke 16:19-31

Stuart Prins

Growing up on a small farm in the rural Pacific Northwest, I saw how my father went to extraordinary measures to heal sick animals with love and faithfulness. From the prized quarter horse down to the simple chicken, his tender love and knowledge restored life. Our faith was a large part of this process. I can vividly recall him pausing to say a prayer, thanking Jesus for the health of a young calf after a difficult delivery out in the pasture. My childhood often felt at times like a chapter from a James Herriot novel.

We can find many examples in the Bible of our Lord's healing power in nature through faithfulness and faith. Our readings today center on the rewards of faith, persistence of the sick, and solidifying roots in times of stress. The Psalmist and Jeremiah knew the beauty of the earth and the rewards of truly believing. With the ever-poetic writings that offer up picturesque views of the country, we see how faithfulness, righteousness, and a belief in God's law produce a fruitful harvest.

Luke, a physician by training, had the knowledge to heal the sick. Yet he knew that true healing only came from belief in our Lord Jesus Christ. His medical background gives us a unique perspective on Jesus' ministry as he writes on many stories of the sick, healed by Jesus through their faithfulness in Him. In our story today, while faced with sickness and poverty, Lazarus' faith persists through much adversity bringing him side by side with the greatest healer of all.

Like deeply rooted trees by streams of living water, so must we plant our faith so that we can prosper in times of our world's drought, literally and figuratively. Though a lowly and simple ailing chicken, I can almost see my father saying a small prayer to himself as we nourished it back to barnyard health. A faith and love for helping even the simplest of animals. God loves all creatures, whether we are great or small, and our trust in Him plants our seeds for everlasting life.

## **Friday in the Second Week of Lent – March 10**

**Psalm 105:16-22; Genesis 37:3-4,12-28; Matthew 21:33-43**

**Jackson St. John**

The Old Testament readings focus on the story of Joseph. Joseph is the favorite child of his father, and he is treated better than his brothers. This makes his brothers resent him to the level that they conspire to kill him. His brother Reuben convinces the other brothers not to kill him, but to throw him into a pit. They then sell him into slavery for profit. Joseph is brought to Egypt as a slave, where he is eventually elevated to a high office.

The New Testament reading is the Parable of the Tenants. The vineyard is the kingdom of God and the tenants are the Jewish leaders. Jesus is prophesizing that the Jewish leaders will kill him, God will still open His kingdom to all people who follow Jesus, and that the Jewish leaders will be held accountable by God.

These readings have a common theme – people can develop and execute plans, but the end result is in God’s hands. This aligns with the cliché that “man proposes, but God disposes.” In today’s world, we often strive to develop long-term plans for our own or our family’s comfort. However, if these plans do not align with God’s intentions, we will not achieve our goals. The best approach to achieving a long-term goal is to plan with a focus on living the life that God would want us to. This may not always bring us to where we expect, but we will have a better respect for the journey.

## **Saturday in the Second Week of Lent – March 11**

**Psalm 103:1-12; Micah 7:14-15,18-20; Luke 15:11-32**

**Cyndi Fastert**

The Prodigal Son is one of my favorite parables of Jesus. I think it’s because at some time in our lives, we have all been a prodigal “son.” Many of us have had prodigal children or other family members. This is a parable that is true and eternal. As long as the human race has existed, and as long as it continues, there will always be a prodigal son.

If we decide to follow the laws and teachings of God, we learn about compassion and forgiveness. In fact, we have a proclivity toward it. It is our ego that gets in the way of everything.

## Monday in the Third Week of Lent – March 13

Psalm 42:1-7; 2 Kings 5:1-15b; Luke 4:23-30

Clay Hubbs

Psalms cry out with yearning for being in communion with God. The imagery is centered around water which is a necessity for life itself. How often after a hard day we are so thirsty and feel empty and weak. How fulfilling and nourishing it is to drink down a large cup of water. Nothing else can satisfy you or keep you fully alive. To be thirsty is a yearning that is not only a want but a need to be filled.

*My soul thirsts* rightly describes the need for us to be filled with the glory of God. The continued imagery of water in the tears shed and the tumultuous waves washing over me brings into sharp relief the times that I cannot seem to find God or feel his presence. It is feeling a loss and chaos of being adrift in a tumultuous world.

In Luke, where Jesus returns to his hometown to preach, and the people there were expecting him to do miracles for them. They felt that they were the chosen ones and Jesus should perform for them. They were outraged when Jesus spoke to them about how Gentiles and foreigners were oftentimes blessed and healed while the people of Israel were ignored. He quoted Kings 5:1-5b when talking about non-believers being cured and loved. The people were so enraged that they even tried to kill him.

How often does this happen that a group of believers shun those that do not profess the beliefs of that sect? How often do we condemn and demonize those that might be different than us but still are filled with the love of God and of each other? How many of us missed the overall message that we should love one another? There are many currents and waves that are trying to overturn and lead us on a path of their choosing. We must always be aware that God is there for all his creation.

## **Tuesday in the Third Week of Lent – March 14**

**Psalm 25:3-10; Song of the Three Young Men 2-4,11-20a; Matthew 18:21-35**

**Libby Smith**

The Psalm tells us that “God is fair and just; He corrects the misdirected, sends them in the right direction.”

In the Song of the Three Young Men (Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego) the king’s servants throw the three men into a raging fire. They sing God’s praises in the midst of the fire. God sends his angel to free them. They continue to glorify and bless God. The theme of the Psalm holds true—they were certainly redirected and sent in the right direction, greatly glorifying God.

In the Matthew story of the misdirected debtor, the king first shows him fair and just compassion by totally forgiving his \$100,000 debt. But he was no sooner out the door when he sees a friend who owes him \$10, and says, “Pay up. Now!” “The king was furious and put the screws to the man until he paid back his entire debt. And that’s exactly what my Father in heaven is going to do to each one of you who doesn’t forgive unconditionally anyone who asks for mercy.”

Fair. Just. In the right direction. Amen.

## Wednesday in the Third Week of Lent – March 15

Psalm 78:1-6; Deuteronomy 4:1-2,5-9; Matthew 5:17-19

Vicky Norris

The psalmist exhorts the people to listen to his words and do what he says. He stresses the need for them to pass on the stories handed down by their fathers of “the glorious deeds of the Lord and his might, and the wonders which he has wrought.” As I read these words, I felt pangs of guilt for not effectively instilling the love of God in our children. All four are good, responsible people, but religion has no place in their lives.

The reading in Deuteronomy stresses that people must be faithful to God’s commandments and not omit from or add a single word to them. By living in accordance with these laws, they will be viewed by others as a great and righteous nation. They are warned, however, that they must keep the laws in their hearts and make sure to pass on to their children and their children’s children. I’m not doing too well with the grandkids either!

In the passage in Matthew, Jesus tells us that he has not come to abolish the laws and prophets, but to fulfill them and adds, as in Deuteronomy, that “not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.” He also says those who don’t follow the letter of the law and condone others doing the same “shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.” I won’t mind being least as long as I’m judged more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees. I hope when the time comes that I make it in. I’d really love to see my mom again!



## **Thursday in the Third Week of Lent – March 16**

**Psalm 95:6-11; Jeremiah 7:23-28; Luke 11:14-23**

**Sharon Dwinell**

I apologize in advance for the very visceral, subjective response I had to these readings. As many of you know, my beloved older son died of cancer far too young. I descended into despair and anger at God. I awoke one morning having had a revelation...perhaps God spoke to me during the night. I realized two things. One, that Greg, my son, would be terribly disappointed in me and that I had to be the person he expected me to be. Two, and more importantly, that God didn't take Greg from me. Cancer did. God was trying to help me deal with it and keep on living. I had to open myself to my God and listen to him. I truly believe that God weeps when anyone is taken too soon.

The reading from Luke struck another chord. Some well-meaning person told me that cancer was the result of demons in the body and that those demons had to be "cast out". This made me quite angry as I didn't contract breast cancer because I am a bad person and Greg certainly didn't die of cancer because he was an evil person. He was, in fact, one of the best people I have ever known who did more to help more people than anyone else I have known.

We all have minor demons we can cast out in the form of bad habits or "things done or left undone", but cancer is not one of them. My God is not a vengeful God. He is a loving, giving God who truly cares for "the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand." This is the God I follow and listen to; the God who comforts me.

## **Friday in the Third Week of Lent – March 17**

**Psalm 81:8-14; Hosea 14:1-9; Mark 12:28-34**

**Kim Dadlani**

One of the scribes asked Jesus, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There are no other commandments greater than these. The goal here is LOVE, which comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith.

- Loving the one true God
- Loving with our whole being
- Loving our neighbors
- Loving one another as the Lord has loved you.

## **Saturday in the Third Week of Lent – March 18**

**Psalm 51:15-20; Hosea 6:1-6; Luke 18:9-14**

**Bonnie Bell**

Jesus told the story of The Parable of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee which goes like this: Two men went to the temple to pray. A Pharisee stood where everyone could see him. He listed all the ways in which he was a righteous man. He looked in disdain on the tax collector. In contrast, the tax collector knelt and made a gesture of despair. He said "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner.

Jesus said the tax collector, who humbled himself before God, was forgiven. Why? The Pharisee believed in his own self-righteousness. In contrast, the tax collector named himself a sinner and asked for God's mercy. He humbled himself before God. "All who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted".

## **Monday in the Fourth Week of Lent – March 20**

**Psalm 30:1-6,11-13; Isaiah 65:17-25; John 4:43-54**

**Sam St. John**

In this Psalm, David thanks God for giving him strength and healing, and praises God for transforming him. In the passage from Isaiah, God promises a different transformation. He promises that he will create a new heaven and earth that is so amazing that we will not remember our current home. He promises that people will not suffer the grief of death. He also promises that people who perform work will receive the benefit of their work, essentially stating that slavery and abuse of power will not exist.

The New Testament reading is the story of the second miracle in Cana of Galilee, where an official asks Jesus to come heal his son, and Jesus speaks about belief and tells the official that his son would live. The official believes that Jesus healed his son and is soon informed that his son got better immediately after Jesus said he would live.

These readings have a common theme of faith and transformation. David has faith in God and is made an incredible leader. God promises that through faith we will see a new heaven and earth that are more than we can imagine. Jesus heals an official's son based on the official's faith that a miracle will happen. Our common faith has brought us together and is transforming the world around us. We have different views, but we are open to communication and show each other respect. Our children and grandchildren go to different schools, but they are working together through ministries and mission trips to improve the lives of others. We may experience loss, but our faith and the support of our church community surrounds us with love. Faith makes all these transformations possible, and faith allows us to better understand the transformations that God intends for us.

## Tuesday in the Fourth Week of Lent – March 21

Psalm 46:1-8; Ezekiel 47:1-9,12; John 5:1-18

Sharlane Kissane

Water is precious. Living in the west has heightened my awareness of this fact. We can have too much, not enough, none. We seek it in the dry times. We divert it in times of flood. We save it behind dams. We are made aware of its scarcity in our aquifers. We pray for rain in times of drought. Our ancestors settled where they had access to water – or could find it. There is the image of the dry land farmer water dowsing, using a stick or rod to locate underground water. There is an 8,000-year-old image in the Tassili Caves of northern Africa of a man with a forked stick, looking for water. We seed clouds in an attempt to “make rain.”

Water is a blessing. Water sustains life. Water heals. The readings today all talk about water. In the Gospel reading a man is healed at the pool of Bethesda. He had suffered with his infirmity for 38 years. He tried for years to be at the pool at the opportune moment when an angel would “trouble” the water. I think we can assume that people left that pool healed. Jesus spotted this particular man and asked simply if he wants to be healed. Without a way into the pool, he seems to be both frustrated and hopeful. Jesus tells him to arise and walk. He is healed.

The Ezekiel reading paints a beautiful picture of healing water flowing from God's house. The water starts as a shallow stream, covering Ezekiel's ankles. About 1/3 mile farther along the water is at his knees. Continuing for another 1 1/3 mile the water is waist high. It soon becomes too deep to cross. In verse 9 Ezekiel says, “and it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live.” He states this twice in the verse. We can believe this strong pronouncement. In verse 12, the water supports the growth of the trees and provides fruit. There is sustenance and healing when our life force comes from our faith and trust in God.

The Psalm selection gives us a wonderfully simple explanation of our relationship with the Almighty. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” The Psalm continues using water to tell us of the power, the beauty, and the glory of God.

One of the places I can rest in God's arms is floating in a mountain lake. I rest, I heal, I rejoice.

## **Wednesday in the Fourth Week of Lent – March 22**

**Psalm 145:8-19; Isaiah 49:8-15; John 5:19-29**

**Alice Ciaccio**

Psalm 145:8-19 speaks to the reader of WHO GOD IS, His character and attributes.

John 5:19-29 finds Jesus himself defining WHO HE IS, both in His relationship with God and us.

Isaiah 49:8-15 describes the extent of God's love for us and all that he will do for us. Like a parent explaining to their child the lengths that they will go to keep their child safe and happy and fulfill all their needs. The result of the three is nothing short of a beautiful love story. During this time of Lent, we remember the life of Jesus – the path he walked, the example he set forth, and the incredible love he showed the world. And we remember his sacrifice – all the human, material things that he gave up and WHY. There is no love greater than this.

God never stops trying to speak to us through the noise of our own humanity. Lent is a time to put some of that noise on pause and simply listen for His voice. Can you hear Him?

## **Thursday in the Fourth Week of Lent – March 23**

**Psalm 106:6-7,19-23; Exodus 32:7-14; John 5:30-47**

**Hellen Swanson**

As I read these passages, I felt a common theme in my heart. The statements that portray the Lord as vengeful and punishing do not marry with the image I have of him. I see him as a loving God with nothing but tenderness. I depend on God for comfort and gentleness – it's what keeps me going some days.

## **Friday in the Fourth Week of Lent – March 24**

**Psalm 34:15-22; Wisdom 2:1a,12-24; John 7:1-2,10,25-30**

**Jerry Lionetti**

Psalm 34 evokes the love God has for the Just and Brokenhearted.

Wisdom 2 is often cited as a direct prophecy of the passion of our Lord.

Verse 12 - Let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us.

Verse 19 - With revilement and torture let us put him to the test that we may have proof of his gentleness and try his patience.

The book of Wisdom was written about 100 years before the coming of Christ.

John 7 is the story of the evildoers plotting, scheming, and planning to arrest and kill Jesus. Jesus proclaims he is the one sent from the Father. "They try to arrest Him, but no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come".

These passages remind me that God/Jesus is in control. Numerous times the authorities (Pharisees) plotted, planned and schemed to arrest Jesus. It was not his time/hour. It could not be dictated by the evildoers but only by God.

## Saturday in the Fourth Week of Lent – March 25

Psalm 7:6-11; Jeremiah 11:18; John 7:37-52

Esther Long

In the Psalm, David asks God to arise and rage against his enemies. I think we all do that sometimes. I know I do. I want vindication. Then I rethink what I'm asking. We are all God's children. Any vindication must come from God. It is His job to judge our enemies and our job to forgive them. We all need forgiveness at times.

God revealed to Jeremiah the plot his enemies had for him. God has a plan for our lives, but he doesn't divulge it all at once. Instead, if we pay attention, when the time comes, He shows us the path.

In John, Christ is proclaiming that anyone who thirsts can come to Him for living water. That living water is the Holy Spirit, which wasn't given to man until after Christ was glorified. We thirst because something is missing in this life on earth — I need something to give meaning to my life and that is the Holy Spirit.

I remember a popular song in 1969, "Is That All There Is" sung by Peggy Lee. Her answer to the title was dancing and booze. It's a song of disillusion with events in this life. We thirst for Christ so when the Holy Spirit indwells in us, it is indeed like pouring water over a parched land.

## Monday in the Fifth Week of Lent – March 27

Psalm 23; Susanna\* 1-9,15-29,34-62; John 8:12-20

Laura Lamb

My Lenten reflection spans the gamut. Psalm 23 ranks in the top 10 most popular verses in the Bible, and then Susanna resides in the Apocrypha that doesn't exist in all current versions of the Bible. Thus, I journeyed in comparing the well-known and familiar to a story of a woman that was my 1<sup>st</sup> full read.

The 1<sup>st</sup> commonality is in John 8:12-20, "Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid" and in Susanna 21 in the statement from the two elders, "If wilt not, we will bear witness against thee." Both bring reminder and imagery to our current state in social media. The plethora of "Fake News" that is perpetuated by millions of followers or multitude of "Likes". It is the virtual "Gang Mentality". Truth isn't potentially pure, instead it is just gained by alignment or majority. This fills me with concern, dread, fear, and many other uncertain feelings for our society and for our youth.

This emotion leads me to the 2<sup>nd</sup> theme: the reliance on God and the Lord as our caretaker. In John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" and Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

Both bring me solace. Through darkness, anxiety, dread, I may still seek the Lord individually or collaboratively and can be delivered from my despair.

So, as we journey through this time of Lent, we can reflect on challenges and concerns but can reach for reassurance through prayer and restore our souls.

## **Tuesday in the Fifth Week of Lent – March 28**

**Psalm 102:15-22; Numbers 21:4-9; John 8:21-30**

**Carla Bryant**

One theme that runs through these verses is that when we repent and ask for forgiveness, God lovingly replies. The reprieve, however, is contingent upon our following his commands. The Israelites had to look at the bronze serpent to be healed in the passage from Numbers. In John's gospel, Jesus tells the crowd that they must put their trust in him as the Son of God to be saved from death.

Another theme that we find in the last two verses is that God speaks through others, rather than directly, to those in need. These speakers, Moses, and Christ followed his instructions regarding how to bring healing to their audiences.

Is God calling you to tell others about his love during this season of Lent?

## **Wednesday in the Fifth Week of Lent – March 29**

**Canticle 13; Daniel 3:14-20,24-28; John 8:31-42**

**Sharise Plescia**

Canticle 13 is a chance for me to express the glory of Our Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Canticle lays out the ways to worship through my heart and this brings joy. I think how wonderful it is to have a verse that is full of beautiful words of worship and love.

Daniel 3: 14-20, 24-28 influences my thinking when it comes to true faith. I realize the importance of having Faith in God even to the extremes including the "unknowns". The chapter explains the strength of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednago. They refused to believe in the King's idea of worship, and they had the strength to honor our God. They survived the fire. I think with my faith I can also have strength in knowing God is with me during the trials of life; I survive struggles.

In John 8: 31-42, Jesus told them that they should believe that he was the Chosen, even though the descendants of Abraham were denying him. This part of the chapter of John is precious to me as it is a reminder of how hard it was for Jesus to convince the crowds that to have a relationship with God, they must come through him. I make a point to thank Jesus for coming to give us everlasting life through him and a personal relationship with God. Without Jesus' teachings and sacrifice it would be impossible to have the beautiful gifts; Thank You Jesus Christ for your love.



## **Thursday in the Fifth Week of Lent – March 30**

**Psalm 105:4-11; Genesis 17:1-8; John 8:51-59**

**MichaeleAnn Palermo**

Stay steadfast in your love of God and be grateful for all that God has given to us.

We are his chosen children as descendants of his everlasting covenant made to Abraham. God is our strength and shield.

## **Friday in the Fifth Week of Lent – March 31**

**Psalm 18:1-7; Jeremiah 20:7-13; John 10:31-42**

**Clint Shoemaker**

David had many struggles and faced many foes, including King Saul. But he remained faithful to the Lord. After David had been delivered from Saul and his other foes who wanted to kill him, he wrote a song of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord (Psalm 18). In the psalm David exclaimed “The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer.”

In Jeremiah 20 the Lord had sent Jeremiah to prophesy the fall of Judah and Jerusalem. As a result, Jeremiah faced many struggles, rejection, and frustrations, including from the High Priest Pashhur, who had Jeremiah arrested and tortured. Even Jeremiah’s friends denounced him. But after all of this, Jeremiah remained faithful and spoke the Word of the Lord. He showed his trust in the Lord and praised the Lord praying “Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord (verse 13).”

Throughout His ministry Jesus was rejected by the Jews. In John 10 not only did they reject Jesus and His teachings, but the Jews charged Jesus with blasphemy because Jesus said, “The Father and I are one.” They were going to stone him, but Jesus escaped and went across the Jordan to Bethany to pray.

David, Jeremiah, and Jesus all had an affirmation from God, a special place with God, and were faithful. But they were not immune to struggles, disappointments, and frustration. They all faced rejection from friends and foes alike. They faced persecution and death. Yet they all had an ultimate reorientation to the Lord’s loving purpose. They remained faithful, continued to serve the Lord, and gave Him praise and thanksgiving.

We all are on our own individual journeys of faith. And like David, Jeremiah, and Jesus, we will also face many struggles, rejections, disappointments, and times of frustration. Through all of this, we must remain faithful to the Lord, and accept His love and grace. We must always give praise and thanksgiving to the Lord.

## Saturday in the Fifth Week of Lent – April 1

Psalm 85:1-7; Ezekiel 37:21-28; John 11:45-53

Aspen Lamb

When I was reading Psalm 85:1-7, I found that it talks about all the ways God gives up part of himself and everything in the whole entire universe to help the people he calls his children. While we still question if He will do some things, what I am realizing is He will do anything. That makes me feel that I am meant to be in this world and not needing to be overlooked or less wanted. We are all equally here for a reason and telling yourself and people around is the easiest but hardest thing to do. But life is not supposed to be easy; faith and God should come easily even if it's harder to remember that in the darker times or shakier parts of life.

Ezekiel 37:21-28: We all think of ourselves as individuals and can put our needs in front of others one time or another in our lives. The world we live in has plenty of different groups or nations of people that are all unique for a reason. We see them differently sometimes for good or for bad. But the thing that God is trying to teach us is that separation isn't good, and us being unified-not looking for our differences and seeing what we have in common is the most important of all. That is what brings us together and not tearing us apart because God is trying as hard as He can to keep us together. Because the people who are alone are the most in need of help, if we show a little bit of community, that can change everything.

John 11:45-53: Having a community surround you is far more powerful and true than anything else I can think of. When someone comes up with something to believe in, it is hard to fully stay committed, and fight for the death. In this reading they talk about letting just one man die and the nation survive. You can think of it just as a sacrifice, or you can think of the power and the rise of what can come after. The sheer number of people, willing and able to continue the work put before them, creates real community.

## **Monday of Holy Week – April 3**

**Isaiah 42:1-9; Hebrews 9:11-15; John 12:1-11; Psalm 36:5-11**

**Janine Schiavoni**

In John's Gospel, we see Martha and Mary hosting a dinner in Jesus's honor – perhaps a dinner of thanksgiving to Jesus for restoring their brother Lazarus to life. Just imagine the scene: Martha as chef, preparing a sumptuous meal for Jesus. The house was likely filled with the aroma of bread baking in the stone oven. Imagine Martha's joy in serving Jesus this freely given gift of beautiful and nutritious food, made lovingly with her own hands. Mary lathered his feet with a fragrant, highly prized, medicinal oil to soothe his feet, dry, sore and tired from the journey over the rough road to their home. Witness Mary's joy as she wiped his feet with her hair. Now, visualize Jesus gratefully and graciously opening his heart to receive the gifts these cherished women bestowed upon him with love.

As you reflect in your Lenten journey today, deeply breathe in the fragrance, the aroma of the breath of Christ, into your body and soul, be grateful for the gifts of everyday life you discover there. Share them with one another.

## **Tuesday of Holy Week – April 4**

**Isaiah 49:1-7; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; John 12:20-36; Psalm 71:1-14**

**Beth Lionetti**

Isaiah 49: 1-7

God displayed His merciful providence. He spoke to His people sternly reminding them it was He who called the generations from the beginning. He encouraged His people to be silent before Him and to renew their strength. Trust Him.

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

There were always dissensions among the faithful. God reminded them that God's folly was wiser than human wisdom. If someone wants to boast, let him boast of the Lord.

John 12:20-36

Jesus foretells of His death and glorification. He speaks His truth:" If you serve me, you must follow Me." Give up your personal attachments. Believe that you will become children of the Light.

Psalm 71: 1-14

This psalm is a prayerful request for protection against the clutches of evil. It is an acknowledgement of God's saving justice and a reminder of how we choose hope, trust, and praise.

**Wednesday of Holy Week – April 5**  
**Isaiah 50:4-9a; Hebrews 12:1-3; John 13:21-32; Psalm 70**  
**Mary Brooks**

This is the day before our Lord's last supper with his disciples, his friends, his confidants. He knew one of them would betray him as the scripture notes, "Jesus was troubled in Spirit". As we finish our Lenten journey having set our faces like flint in running our journey, we continue to keep our eyes on Jesus, our Lord, our Savior who "endured the cross for us" sacrificing his very life so that we ourselves might have salvation.

We cry out, help us Lord past the cross, through your glorious resurrection, through the trials of "the race marked out for us". For you are our help and redeemer. "Lord, do not delay!"

**Maundy Thursday – April 6**  
**Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31b-35; Psalm 116:1, 10-17**  
**Sharlayne Kissane**

Maundy Thursday, Command Thursday, Great Thursday, Sheer (Blameless) Thursday, Holy Thursday, Covenant Thursday. I found these many titles for a day that has always been personally special to me. It was the practice in the church of my youth to take your First Communion on Maundy Thursday, after being confirmed the previous Sunday, Palm Sunday. Thus, I commemorate my First Communion each Maundy Thursday; truly nourishing me, body, and soul. Psalm 116: verse 13 says "I will take the cup of salvation." As I participate in the gift of the Eucharist Christ Jesus instituted on Maundy Thursday; I am taking the cup of blessing, reaching out in faith, joyfully praising God, and asking for healing and refreshment. It wasn't until I delved deeper into today's lessons that I truly felt the command, the mandatum, of Jesus Christ to the believers to "Love one another. As I have loved you, you must love one another. By this everyone will know you are my disciples if you love one another." The scope of that love is more than I can imagine. Jesus says we must love one another if we are His. We can share our faith, evangelize, if we love one another. Here is the command; simply, profoundly – we must love one another. Only then can we live a life that honors our faith, spreading the love Jesus offers to all. As I was studying these lessons the song by Richard Blanchard (1959) filled my heart. I share a stanza here with you. Fill my cup Lord, I lift it up Lord. Come and quench this thirsting of my soul. Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more. Here's my cup, fill it up and make me whole.

## Good Friday – April 7

Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Hebrews 10:16-25; John 18:1-19:42; Psalm 22

Mike Boeglin

I hesitated before selecting Good Friday's readings for the subject of my reflection. As it is the most solemn and, arguably, most scripturally packed day in the Church year, where would I start?

I have tried to focus on one central message that strikes me in these readings. Isaiah sets the stage well with the plight of the Suffering Servant: "Yet it was the will of the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief." God sent his only son to be "wounded for our transgressions;" to be "bruised for our iniquities." I think of the best interpretation of Christian scripture I have ever read: Life of Christ by Fulton Sheen. In his 600+ page masterpiece, Sheen's sentence that singularly endures front of mind for me and that emerges as a central theme throughout the book is this: "Every other person who ever came into this world came into it to live. [Jesus] came into it to die."

In the face of this solemn message, we should not despair, because at the beginning of the Old Testament passage Isaiah assures us "My servant shall be exalted and lifted up." God (the Father) knew what he was doing when he sent Jesus to humanity, his creation. It was all part of the plan.

Despite being part of the plan, it is striking that Jesus, in his humanity – even though he is one with God – nonetheless felt abandoned by God as the moments of his death drew near. From the Psalmist, "Why have you forsaken me?" In this Psalm are foreshadowed all the emotions that must have coursed through Jesus' mind while enduring his Passion. In my toughest moments I too have felt abandoned. Where is God when I need him most, even though for me it has never been nearly as dire as facing my own death, as Jesus did.

Therein lies the central theme of hope for me. If Jesus, as one in divinity with God, could stoop so low in his humanity to walk through his whole life knowing he came to die, then surely with God's help I can endure anything I face in this life and, at the end of humbly doing my best, know that I too will be exalted.

I end with the personal prayer I have recited for decades and go back to every Sunday when we all join Father Brian in the solemn moment of the service when we remember what the consecrated Eucharist means for our faith community: "Lord, thank you for coming to show us how much you love us. You gave yourself up to show us that you know what it's like to carry the burden of sin and to suffer, even though you yourself did not sin. You want to show us how to love and serve one another, and to know that we can have eternal life with you."

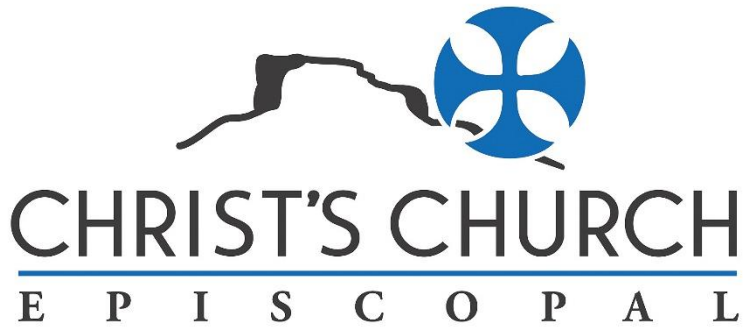
**Holy Saturday – April 8**  
**Job 14:1-14; 1 Peter 4:1-8; Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16**  
**Fr. Harold**

I suspect that because we know how the Jesus story ends (with resurrection), we do not fully appreciate the awful fear, emptiness and hopelessness felt by Jesus' followers, while His dead body lay in a tomb. Surely, the disciples' already shaky faith rested shattered and entombed with Jesus.

Holy Saturday is a day of lament, consumed by thoughts of mortality and dashed hopes. Our Scripture readings waver between hope and despair. Job rails against the finality of death and the distant silence of God. The Psalmist recognizes, "God my times are in your hands." Perhaps the Psalmist is suggesting the slightest hint of hope. He wants to believe that God still saves. In the reading I Peter, the writer states, "the end is near." Later, he hopes, "love covers a multitude of sins." Believing in the saving power of God's love, the author concludes, "the final judgment between right and wrong, life and death, is resolved in Christ and soon God's grace will be realized in the community of all God's people."

May I invite you, on this Holy Saturday, to prayerfully reflect upon the awful hopelessness and darkness of this day that Jesus is dead! Perhaps, by experiencing that moment, our joy will be complete on Easter Day as we celebrate—Christ is risen!





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