

What is it  
that gives  
you



LIFE?

LENTEN REFLECTIONS 2011

ST. CATHERINE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

## WHAT IS IT THAT GIVES YOU LIFE?

*Sleeping comfortably in my bed the other day, a voice called from the radio that asked “What is it that gives you life?” The commercial was so different from my normal snooze routine that I actually rolled over and pondered the meaning of the simple question. How often in our ordinary lives are we symbolically sleeping and are in need of a voice, or a catalyst, to realize that things need to be changed?*

*During the season of Lent, we hear the Gospel writers, Matthew and John, describe people’s interactions with Jesus. We hear about Jesus moistening mud and placing it on the blind man’s eyes in order to heal him. We listen to the interchange of Jesus with the woman at the well, where she asks “Where can I get this living water?” We engage Lazarus, Mary and Martha as Jesus wakes Lazarus up from his “sleep.” In each of these narratives, the question “what is it that gives you life?” swirls in the background because what gives us life is Jesus himself.*

*Throughout the course of the day Jesus is present to us in many different ways, but how often do we miss the opportunity to connect with Him because we were blind to the moment? In the upcoming weeks, let us take the time to listen to God as we examine our lives and our relationships to each other, asking “What is it that needs to be changed in order that I might more fully live?”*

*May the reflections in this booklet be a companion as we journey through these forty days of preparation, penitence and prayer. Blessings for a holy Lent and a joyous Easter to you and your loved ones from the people of St. Catherine’s!*

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THIS BOOKLET IS ALSO AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE AT  
[WWW.STCATHERINES.ORG/REFLECTIONS/LENT.HTM](http://WWW.STCATHERINES.ORG/REFLECTIONS/LENT.HTM)

SEE LAST PAGE FOR ACTIVITY SCHEDULE FOR LENT, HOLY WEEK, EASTER DAY

# ASH WEDNESDAY DAY 1

MARCH 9

*MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21*

*... do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret.*

*Then your father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

This is truly one of the great scriptures in the Bible, lifted directly from the Sermon on the Mount. The key to this passage is the phrase, repeated three times by Jesus (in case you missed it the first two times), “your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” It seems to me that Jesus is saying that God knows everything that we do, so we don’t need to worry about what anyone thinks about us, because the Creator loves us and sees us and knows what we are up to. If we pray in quiet, or we fast in quiet, or we give to the needy anonymously, God knows and will reward us. And, Jesus doesn’t say it, but seems to be implying that God will reward us really well if we do these things discretely.

So let’s go about doing these good things (praying, giving, fasting) secretly, quietly, anonymously, without any expectation of being recognized by others,



because we know our Creator will know what we are doing and reward us appropriately at the right time.

The last passage has the famous saying: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” I’ve often puzzled over this phrase and why it comes directly after Jesus’ discussion about doing things in secret for God, and not for others. I think it simply means that God has treasures much greater for us than the wealth and material goods that we value. God wants us to be true to ourselves and to Him, and do things secretly, and then we will benefit in ways that we can’t imagine. But, above all we must trust that God has a wonderful plan for us. Trusting is the key and yet one of the hardest things for us to do. We must learn to truly trust in these good things.



*DAY 2*

THURSDAY, MARCH 10

*2 CORINTHIANS 5:20B-6:10*

*See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!*

Yesterday, we began Lent in our typical fashion: with a somber service that reminded us of our shortcomings and our mortality. In the light of our human limita-

tions, God's love and mercy towards us appears truly extraordinary.

In today's reading, however, Paul presents our struggle towards faith and grace in considerably more active and vigorous terms. We must reconcile with God—repent and ask forgiveness—because we are his ambassadors; it is our task to spread the word. Nor should we shrink from our duties or put them off to some other time: now is the time! He does not berate us for our sins but exhorts us to act and rejoice.

Paul does not shirk from listing the deprivations that he and his assistants have suffered on behalf of the Christian communities; this list is one of the great catalogues of the suffering of the early Church. But note that he balances beatings, imprisonment, and labors with the gifts of the spirit, including knowledge, patience, genuine love, and truthful speech. The entire passage ends with a resonant tribute to the paradoxical nature of the power of God: everything the world perceives is reversed in Christ: we are rich, not poor; alive, not dead; well-known, not obscure. We appear to have nothing, but we rejoice in the abundance of God.

Lent is a time of preparation for the great festival of Easter by a time of austerity. But it should not be done sorrowfully or bit-

terly but with a joyful spirit, an open heart, a love of the God who asks small sacrifices of us so that he can give us great riches. Jesus also tells us: do not fast like hypocrites; don't wander around looking gloomy and sorrowful to display your righteousness. Live righteously by reconciliation with God and rejoice in the freedom that it brings.



DAY 3

FRIDAY, MARCH 11

*PSALM 51:1-17*

*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

In Psalm 51, we have a picture of a man who is really sorry for his sin. This psalm is attributed to David after his sin with Bathsheba and its subsequent exposure. David's sins included murder and a cover-up that lasted almost a year. A prophet, by the name of Nathan, called David out for his sins. Through Nathan, David was finally forced to ask God for forgiveness.

The psalmist, David, thanks God for his love and mercy and asks Him to cleanse him (David) of his sin. If you really think about what is being said, it's that we as sinners must both be cleansed *and* changed to keep from falling

into sin again. It means, that we have to walk the walk and talk the talk... and accept full responsibility for our affronts against God. It doesn't do anyone any good to say "oh yeah, I'm sorry" and then go and do the same thing over and over again.

If we are not sincere in our repentance, it takes us that much further away from God in our relationship with him. The best part is, He is our loving Father and if *we are truly sorry and we humbly repent*, then that relationship is restored. That restoration puts us in God's presence and back into the most rewarding and loving relationship we can know.



DAY 4  
SATURDAY, MARCH 12

JOEL 2:1-2, 12-17  
*"Blow the trumpet...  
sound the alarm..."*

At any given time there are many familiar sounds that alert us. Most of us begin our day bolting out of bed to the buzzing of the alarm clock. The rest of the time is filled with the ringing of cell phones, fellow commuters blasting their horns, ambulances drivers and police cars sounding distress signals as they speed toward their destinations. Anyone can

enter a shopping center or a restaurant and be bombarded by the cacophony of sounds. With so many alarms, which ones are we to give our attention?

The prophet Joel wrote "Blow the trumpet, sound the alarm" to alert the community of God's presence. Like the siren alerting us to the possibility of inclement weather, Joel described God's coming as a day of "darkness and gloom." The warning not only put the community of the faithful on notice to take the necessary steps to ready themselves for God's appearance, but the alarm also proclaimed God's nature, "For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love." Just as Joel spoke to the people thousands of years ago, Joel is calling to us today to prepare ourselves through self examination, so that we might be more fully open to God who is always calling to us to be in relationship. During this Lenten season may we be more focused in listening for God's will in our lives.



*FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT*

MARCH 13

*Jesus, you are the way through the wilderness: show us your truth in which we journey, and by the grace of the Holy Spirit be in us the life that draws us to God.*

— “THE PRAYER MANUAL”, P.29, FROM  
*ENRICHING OUR WORSHIP*, P. 52

*DAY 5*

MONDAY, MARCH 14

*ROMANS 5:12-19*

*For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many.*

When I was a child, I was raised, as are most southern children with a widely extended family. One grandmother had only raised boys and she had no idea what to do with a girl. She was also of a different faith and belief and we clashed often. She was a primo gift giver though—she could figure out something uber cool to give me almost before I knew that I wanted it. With her, though she loved me very much, there were always strings. She expected me to behave and believe the way she wished.

My other grandmother was the epitome of all things good in religion. She believed that I was

good, no matter what. That is a very powerful message to grow up with. I really don't remember what she gave me for Christmas or for any birthday except for a gold heart necklace when I turned sixteen. I did not understand the gift, but it really didn't matter. It was part of being loved and cherished. A good deal of my faith in myself comes from her faith in me.

In this Bible verse, we are told that Adam sinned and thus we were all punished. And then Jesus gave us a gift. He didn't forgive us because of the magnitude of our sins or what we had done with our lives. He just gave us the unbelievable gift of grace and righteousness.

Being loved and always forgiven is the most powerful gift in the world.



DAY 6

TUESDAY, MARCH 15

PSALM 32

*Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*

This psalm is rejoicing in God's love for us. It talks about how wonderful and loving God is with us, His children. All we have to do is confess our sin(s), and God will forgive us. No strings attached!

If we do not confess our sin(s), our guilt becomes a large burden that we carry around with us, and we are weighed down with it. The guilt is like an anchor, pulling us down and away from God's amazing light of love.

Once we had over our sin(s) to God, he takes that burden from us and frees us from the guilt. It is that simple! Yet too often, we humans try to hide our transgression(s) from our all-knowing Father.

The psalm also talks about how we can be so "stubborn" by not going to God so that He may release us from our sin. As the old expression goes, "You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink." God is always there for us. We just have to open up our hearts and minds and trust in His love in order to let Him in. He will set us free within His love and forgiveness so that our

hearts may always be joyful. No sin is too great. All we need is to honestly and wholeheartedly confess our sin(s). So, "Rejoice in the Lord!"



DAY 7

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16

GENESIS 2:15-17;3:1-7

*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good... she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband ...and he ate it.*

At first I struggled with this passage: what is there to say about temptation? It has always been with us, is always with us, will always be with us, and at some point in time we always give in. We give in to the lightweight temptations: we eat the extra piece of pie, we roll our eyes at a co-worker, we do not correct the sales clerk who rings up the wrong price in our favor. And we walk through the doorway of temptation to commit much worse offenses through our actions (or lack of actions), resulting in consequences that are hurtful or harmful or both: we say the words that should not be said, we fire off the email that is best put in the trash file. Temptation: it is out there, it is real—we give in.

And then I realize... maybe this is *exactly* the line of thinking the

serpent would applaud (if a serpent had hands!): “temptation is always with us, why bother worrying about it? You know you’ll give in—it’s only human!” But this is defeatist thinking, and doesn’t take us through another doorway to the *other* truth: God’s love is also always with us. God’s love in the person of Jesus, in the whisper of the Holy Spirit, in the hand of the Almighty guiding our thoughts and actions. By asking God’s help every day, by asking for strength to resist the temptations that beset and besiege us—we draw closer to the source of our Life. And in that drawing closer, we are better able to turn away from the temptations, and turn toward God.

Lord, may I turn to You daily for strength to see and resist the temptations before me.



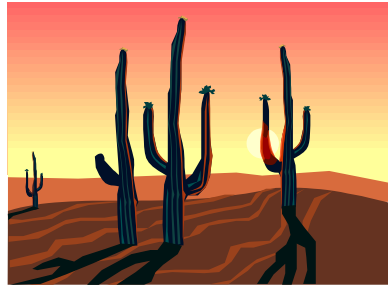
*DAY 8*

THURSDAY, MARCH 17

*MATTHEW 4:1-11*

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness...*

In this scripture the first sentence says that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. What notes attention is the that Jesus was led by the Spirit. God wants us to know that struggle with tempta-



tion and the devil is always going to be present. And even though He knew the outcome would be for Jesus to overcome the temptations of the devil, He wants us to know that no one is immune to these experiences.

In a study over the past year, we discussed how when there is something good happening for the glory of God we should be aware of the attacks that Satan will try to make on that work. It has bothered me to think of Satan at work like this. Naively I would love to go to the doctor and get my Satan immunity booster. But the teachings that God gives us is that no one is immune and our booster shot is to know that we are to “Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.”

After Jesus overcame the devil, the devil left and the angels came and attended him. What comfort this brings to know that God will tend to us after our struggles and we will not be alone. Praise you, God, for loving us and sending your angels for our care.



DAY 9

FRIDAY, MARCH 18

PSALM 25:3-9

*Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.*

I read this passage and thought to myself, "This is the faith I hope to have. I would like to be the person who can say and mean, "Teach me your ways, Lord." We all know what happened to Job when he asked for patience. Sometimes the road through God's teachings is rough and we don't understand the reasons. This psalm reminds us why it's worth it. We do it (or at least try to) because "Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sin-

ners in his ways. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his ways." I think the key to this phrase is humble. We can't learn God's ways if we insist on doing things our way. We must learn to let go, admit to our frailty, our faults and let God take the lead. Easier said than done, I know, but I have found that when I am successful, a great weight is removed and the place I find myself in is better than the place I was.



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*Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and ends at sun down on Holy Saturday.  
The season of Lent spans forty days excluding Sundays, since  
Sundays are considered Days of the Resurrection.*

*On Ash Wednesday, ashes are placed in the sign of the cross on our  
foreheads as a sign of our mortality and acknowledges our belief  
in Jesus as our Savior.*

*The ashes are burnt each year from the palm fronds used on  
Palm Sunday from the previous year.*

*Among the early Christians, the time of Lent was the forty days of prepa-  
ration for Baptism which was held during the Great Vigil of Easter.*

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DAY 10

SATURDAY, MARCH 19

MARK 1:9-13

*He was in the wilderness for forty days...*

My husband has road rage. I wish he'd give it up for Lent, and I'm sure he wishes I'd give up something more meaningful than chocolate. Passages like this one in Mark inspire all of us to do just that. This first week, what have you given up? TV, alcohol and Starbucks are ideas I've heard recently. Maybe they're appropriate since we don't live near a desert. But this passage urges me to dig deeper into the baptism and tempting of Jesus to ask myself: What inner test does God see me facing right now? How am I handling it? Where is *my* wilderness?

Today, think about your own personal desert where you wander and feel lost. You may struggle with loneliness, fear, money, family or health problems, addictive behavior—or, if you're lucky, you may think your life is pretty great. Maybe your to-do list is done for today—including reading this booklet. But test yourself. Are you sometimes just

going through the motions of Lent? At St. Catherine's on Sundays, are we sometimes just doing the familiar "reps" of the liturgy by rote without pushing harder to build new "spiritual muscle"?

Mark's verses call us to do more. They remind us that Lent is not just about choosing something superficial to forego for forty days—and then waiting it out. You'll notice that Jesus didn't sit in the desert marking time. He moved ahead, not knowing what was next. He actually walked the walk. He faced the unknown, with angels beside him.

Let's challenge ourselves to do the same. Let's dig deeper inside ourselves each day. Take time to listen to the angels that may be trying to guide us. Commune with the Spirit. These things can help us stride right in to our personal wildernesses and tackle our challenges. And keep on walking. Who knows what may happen next?



SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT  
MARCH 20

*Be present, Spirit of God, within us, your dwelling place and home, that this house may be one where all darkness is penetrated by your light, all troubles calmed by our peace, all evil redeemed by your love, all pain transformed in your suffering, and all dying glorified in your risen life.*

— THE NEW ZEALAND PRAYER BOOK

DAY 11  
MONDAY, MARCH 21

MATTHEW 17:1-9

*'This is my Son, the Beloved;  
with him I am well pleased; listen  
to him!'*

The description of Christ's Transfiguration is written with nearly identical wording in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is a miraculous event ending with a voice from heaven saying in words identical to those said after Jesus' baptism, "This is my son whom I love; with him I am well pleased." And at the Transfiguration adding, "Listen to him!"

Like Moses who wore a veil because his face glowed with such brilliance after receiving the Ten Commandments, Christ's face and clothing shine like the sun during the Transfiguration. Much of Christ's teaching after the Transfiguration, including many parables, the Great Command-

ments, the Lord's Prayer, the first Eucharist, are for our listening and action.

Several years ago I heard a woman speak about her faith and her love of God. She was as close to loving God with all her heart, mind, and soul as anyone I have met. She was radiant. She did not shine like the sun, but her glow was unmistakable. It's easy for me to imagine that an actual encounter with God would change her appearance even more.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke each identify the Apostle John as a witness to the Transfiguration, but John does not write about it. Instead his Gospel begins with the beautiful description of the WORD which became flesh.

All this testimony was originally in languages you and I don't speak, written by people who lived 2,000 years ago at places much different from the world we know. Some of the things they

DAY 12

TUESDAY, MARCH 22

ROMANS 4:1-5, 13-17

*For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith.*

describe are truly miraculous, beyond what our modern education allows us to understand. Puzzling about these factors of language and time might bring feelings of suspicion or doubt. Even John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”

Jesus answers by saying, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.” And, “...wisdom is proved right by all her children.”

The scriptures are filled with history and wisdom and mystery—some of the children sent to bring me to the Body of Christ.



The Apostle Paul chose Abraham, the revered father of the Jews, as the example to illustrate to the Jews that a person is saved by faith—the gift of grace with no strings attached, no required rituals, not even doing great works, is required for this salvation. Abraham believed God’s promise; he did not look for difficulties which might lie in the way of the fulfillment of this promise. God honored Abraham’s faith and Abraham honored God.

Who do we look to today as examples of true believers? Whose faith and strong belief in God’s grace and love inspire us? As we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of St. Catherine’s this year, I would suggest that we look no further than those 35 founders who, fifty years ago, believed God’s word and planted our parish here on Holt Road. Through these fifty years, they have been followed by many other wonderful examples of parishioners whose belief in God’s promise has enabled St. Catherine’s to “bloom where we are planted.”

May we this Lent, continue to trust in God's promise to us. We are saved by faith. Thanks be to God!



*DAY 13*

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23

*PSALM 121*

*I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come?*

Sometimes, it feels like a shower of bricks is raining down on my head. Problems that I did not cause and solutions that I cannot find make it difficult to “lift my eyes to the hills.” Where is my help? I do not know. God seems so far away during my times of trouble. The Scriptures say the Lord is going to help me. I know God can help me during those times, but it is not easy to believe that He will. My prayers are usually boiled down to the minimum in the rough spots in the road. I cry out to God, “Help me! Help me! Help me!” There is really nothing else I can say. God knows what I need, but I do not. I know where it hurts, but I am clueless about how to fix the problem. I want to be whole, but I am broken.

Most of the time, it seems that people even “good, Christian” church people are so afraid of brokenness, theirs and mine, that they turn away. That is not how it

should be. I find it difficult to understand why it is. But it comes down to this. How people should be is not often who they are. But God is always who He is. He is my keeper, the one who keeps me from all evil. While I do not always know what that means, I have to trust that it is true because I have given control over my life to Him and He will watch over me.



*DAY 14*

THURSDAY, MARCH 24

*GENESIS 12:1-4A*

*Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go ... to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation...’*

As is often the case with me and an Old Testament reading, until I began work on my reflection this passage was nothing more than an interesting piece of Jewish history. God approaches Abram with a simple proposition: leave the country, go where I tell you to go, and I will bless you richly. In doing so, Abram—later Abraham—becomes the father of the Jewish nation. But of course, there is plenty more to think about here.

One of the first things to come to my mind is the intimacy of this encounter. God, the creator and ruler of the universe, speaks per-

sonally to Abram, a regular human being, and makes a covenant. We see God and man in a face-to-face encounter. Secondly, Abram says, “yes.” He agrees to go and is forever obedient to his creator. And, God keeps his promise to Abram.

From this scripture, I know that you and I have the very same opportunities that Abram had, without perhaps the potential for fathering or mothering a great nation. Certainly we have the same opportunities for intimacy with our Creator. We can be in touch; we can talk. We can choose to be obedient. In doing so we can reap God’s blessings day after day after day. Thanks be to God!



*DAY 15*

FRIDAY, MARCH 25

*JOHN 3:1-17*

*Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night...*

It is easy to view the world through Nicodemus’s eyes. We filter the meaning of words and phrases through the first available definition, our minds’ literal translation, and stop there. But is this the perspective that God calls us to take, or is it just the easiest one—the one that re-

quires the least amount of thought and compassion?

In this passage, Nicodemus questions Christ’s call to Baptism and spiritual rebirth saying, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Nicodemus’s response might sound close-minded to us who, after two millennia of practice, have become quite knowledgeable in the rite of baptism. We can understand that Jesus is not talking about a literal “birth” as Nicodemus erroneously perceived, but one of becoming an infant in God’s loving embrace. Nicodemus’s literal and “fleshy” understanding of Jesus’ words seems so obviously juvenile, but how often are we ourselves guilty of the same misunderstanding? How often do we hear simply the words of a spouse, child, co-worker, or friend and completely miss the true meaning of what that person is saying because of our own narrow perspectives? As Jesus challenges Nicodemus, God challenges us to evolve our frame of mind from the literal world of science and flesh, to the spiritual world of compassion and grace to really hear other people.

So, what is your perspective today? Are you hearing the world through a literal interpretation of linguistics? Or, are you perceiv-

ing the thoughts, feelings, and ideas of your loved ones and neighbors through the grace-colored glasses that God gives us through Jesus Christ?



*DAY 16*

SATURDAY, MARCH 26

*PSALM 16:5-11*

*I know the Lord is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.*

*[New Living Translation]*

David has been chased into the mountains by King Saul and his army who are trying to kill him. Wouldn't you be terrified? I certainly would be. Not so David. He praises God with the words "No wonder my heart is glad, and I rejoice. My body rests in safety for you will not leave my soul

among the dead or allow your holy one to rot in the grave." He is sure that no matter what happens, he will be safe because God is right beside him. Even at night while he lays sleeping he is sure that God loves him and will never leave him.

I suffer from insomnia. What a miserable thing it is to lie awake at night when your 'night terrors' creep in on you. How will I pay that bill? What is that pain in my chest? Are my children and grandchild safe while they are out on their own in this terrible world? If only I can follow in David's footsteps and remember that God is with me through even the darkest night, I know that I will sleep more peacefully and awake refreshed in the knowledge that I am loved by the Holy One!



*THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT*

SUNDAY, MARCH 27

*Eternal Spirit, living God,  
In whom we live and move and have our being,  
all that we are, have been, and shall be is known to you,  
to the very secret of our hearts  
and all that rises to trouble us.  
Living flame, burn into us,  
Fountain of water, well up within us,  
that we may love and praise in deed and in truth.*

— THE NEW ZEALAND PRAYER BOOK

DAY 17

MONDAY, MARCH 28

JOHN 4:5-42

*A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.'*

The story of the woman at the well feels very familiar. Jesus asks a Samaritan woman for a drink; she asks why he, a Jew, would ask a Samaritan for a drink. They have a long conversation in which Jesus tells her about the gift of God, living water. He then tells her that it is true that she has no husband, but has had five husbands and the one she is living with now is not her husband. She is very impressed, and runs to tell the townspeople about this man who told her everything she ever did. The townspeople come and listen, and Jesus stays two days.

But what, exactly, is the point of this wonderful story? Is it that Jesus is a mind reader or a fortuneteller who knows all our secrets? It is more than that. This is the beginning of the ministry to non-Jews, for though Samaritans claimed Jacob as an ancestor, they were not acceptable to the Jews. And with her as both a Samaritan and a woman, Jesus breaks both these barriers. The mind reading is not what impressed the woman. She realized that he knew her and he still



talked to her, in spite of the fact that she was a Samaritan, a woman and one who was living with a man who was not her husband. To know her and to accept her, when she can hide nothing, is to be loved. In her excitement she leaves her water to tell the townspeople.

How is it that we have been told this story? The disciples were not there, having gone into the town to buy food. Our source is the woman herself, who by telling us becomes the first apostle who is not a Jew.

Where are our barriers?



DAY 18

TUESDAY, MARCH 29

ROMANS 5:1-11

*...since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace...*

It is written we are in the peace of God because of our faith. We have this peace because of the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom we have accessed through faith. Because of our faith, we stand in grace. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

We also rejoice in our suffering because our tribulations produce patience and perseverance. These lead us to developing character and experience. All these lead us to the hope of the glory of God. I offer my own personal version. "What does not kill us, makes us stronger." I find it particularly useful when I am feeling overwhelmed, sorry for myself, depressed, etc.

Hope does not disappoint us. God poured out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, which he has given us through Jesus Christ. That we may be reconciled with God, Jesus Christ died for us. Therefore, if we were reconciled through His death, what incredible wonders await us through His life?

For some of us, the Lenten season may not be a "favorite" time in our church year. It may seem a bit overcast, gloomy and even austere. Yes, I know the purpose. For the flip side, I love liturgy and ritual, both abundant in this season. The preparation that includes cleansing. I actually look forward to using this time to re-examine, to clean and remove not only from my heart and mind, but also in my house and life. Then, there's the offer of reconciliation. Although I ask forgiveness daily, this is the "miracle" time. An incredible wonder received from God, through the life of Jesus Christ. Truly, I know His forgiveness.

Despite possible challenging feelings, the Lenten season does have a part in the flow of my life. I like the routine we follow. My heart opens to greater knowing of the deeper meaning. To bring all of this together, I offer: "For God so loved the world..." Well, I trust you know the rest. With faith, to peace, to grace, all from the love of God for us.

My heart sings with joy on Easter morning as our church family stands together for "Christ the Lord is Risen Today." At the "Halleluiah," well, I just have those tears of gratitude flowing. Life is good, God is great. Thanks be to God!



DAY 19

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30

PSALM 95

*Oh that today you would listen to his voice!*

I wonder how many times I've missed the opportunity to listen to God's voice? The answer I suppose is "God only knows."

If we squirm a bit when we hear these words it is because we know that it's not just the Hebrews who did not listen but we ourselves. The psalmist recounts the times the ancient peoples didn't listen. "As at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness when your ancestors tested me and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work." You remember that day: when the people were faultfinding and untrusting and just downright cantankerous saying "Is the Lord among us or not?"

We squirm a bit because it describes the human condition—our condition. It describes those times when we don't trust the Lord enough to listen—and sometimes even to attempt to listen. It describes those times we think we are in charge and we know best and that our will is what matters when it comes to being faithful. The psalmist calls us to develop ears to listen and feet to follow. All the while, this psalm points to me and all the

times I've failed to listen and follow.

The first part of the psalm makes the second part all the more difficult. If God is so good and worthy of praise, and if we have seen God's glory and were nodding our heads during the first verses of this psalm, why is it that I have so often failed to listen or to follow?

I guess that is what Lent is for—a time to return to the Lord to once again be reminded of this rock of my salvation. To attend worship so that I may give God my thanksgiving. To sing with abandon making a joyful noise in His presence with songs of praise.

O come, let us sing to the Lord.  
O come let us listen to his voice!



DAY 20

THURSDAY, MARCH 31

EXODUS 17:1-7

*The Lord said to Moses, '...Strike the rock, and water will come out of it...'*

The story goes that God told Moses to strike the stone with his staff so that water would come out and the immediate needs of the complaining Israelites would be satisfied. It is a miracle...a

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*Purple is the traditional liturgical color of Lent which symbolizes repentance, royalty and self discipline.*

*Black is the color of mourning and is used on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.*

*Red is used on Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday which signifies Christ's passionate love for humanity.*

*White is the color of Easter, symbolizing joy and celebration of Christ's resurrection.*

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pretty amazing miracle... one of a magnitude that I have not personally witnessed before. What more can be said? OK—perhaps there is more here.

This seems to be yet another story of God's Amazing Grace. Once again, God reaches out to the doubting, unthankful, complaining Israelites (who in truth represent all of us!) and pours out another blessing and fulfills the immediate need.

It seems that during this Lenten season, we all could pay a little more attention to the miracles that God gives us each day. We receive miracles continuously—some amazing blessings that smack us right in the face, some so subtle that we almost pay no attention at all. Can any of us deny that God has taken care of our needs? Do we take time to acknowledge this? Do we sometimes doubt his presence in our lives?

Let's plan to be a little more aware, a little more present in the moments, and maybe a lot more thankful. And while we are at it, let's commit to doing a better job of reminding each other of how richly we are blessed.



*DAY 21*

*FRIDAY, APRIL 1*

*PSALM 19:7-14*

*The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul...*

During the season of Lent, we are called to look introspectively at self and do some soul searching. This Psalm provides us with insights to the laws God had given us to live by and to guide us. These laws are pure and perfect. The laws remind me of the television credit card commercials that show items and prices, but always end with something you

can't buy and it is priceless. God's laws are precious and priceless. We cannot buy our way into heaven; we can only earn our way into heaven by leading a good and righteous life. We need to use these laws to guide us on our personal journey with and to God. We are all human and will make mistakes along our journey. It is inevitable that even those of us with the best intentions will sin on occasion. Jesus tells us to confess our sins and to repent for our mistakes. We look to God to be our guiding light, both day and night, to open our eyes, our minds and our hearts through our journey of earthly life.



As I wrote this, a childhood song came to mind – “This Little Light of Mine.” It rings as true now as it did many years ago. Each of us needs to be a beacon by letting that little light shine in us and not hiding it under a bushel and not letting Satan blow it out. So we ask God to perpetuate the light in us for others, to be our light and guide each of us through our life journey, but also to keep us from sinning and not to let the sins control our life and our journey.

The final verse is a familiar one that truly sums up the essence of self and God's guidance. We ask

God to guide us in all we do and think, as well as to be our strength and guiding light. *May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight, O God, our strength and our redeemer.*



DAY 22

SATURDAY, APRIL 2

JOHN 2:13-22

*In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables.*

In this passage from John's gospel, we see the indignation and anger of Jesus directed at Jewish officials, money changers, and livestock sellers who had taken over the outer courtyard of the temple. According to Jewish law (that light reading in Exodus and Leviticus), all members of the Jewish faith were required to pay a temple entrance tax and to provide animals for sacrifice as part of their worship. The money changers and livestock sellers provided a service, making it easier for the faithful to fulfill the law. You could arrive at the temple with any currency, have it changed into the proper Jewish coins, and purchase your sacrificial lamb at the same time. How convenient.

But Jesus didn't see things the way the Jewish establishment did. He saw an unfair system of taxation run by individuals who focused more on making money than enabling right conduct and worship. I think he also saw people thinking more of rules and errands as they arrived at the temple than glorious worship and God. Tax money? Check. Correct currency? Check. Lamb or dove? Check.

Beyond commerce and law, Jesus also knew that the time was coming for a new system of atonement. He says that he will rebuild the temple in three days. I don't think he meant the building that the Israelites had been working on for 46 years! Jesus sees the temple tax and animal sacrifices as an old, very human system for attempting right relationship with God. With the death and resurrection of Jesus, the need for this system passes away.

Lent calls us to repentance and self-examination. How might we use this passage to reflect on our own priorities? Our own corruption? Our own distractions from righteous worship? Easter brings us pardon and restoration. The offering of Jesus at Calvary provides our fee and sacrifice forever. Let's show up to worship.



*FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT*

APRIL 3

*Lord, you now have set your servant free,  
To go in peace as you have promised;  
For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior,  
Whom you prepared for all the world to see:  
A Light to enlighten the nations,  
And the glory of your people Israel.  
Glory to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning,  
Is now and will be forever. Amen*

— *THE SONG OF SIMEON, BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, P. 93*

DAY 25

MONDAY, APRIL 4

JOHN 9:1-41

*His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'*

I suppose it is human nature to link sin and failure—whose fault is blindness anyway? All around us we seem to have evidence that good things happen to good people: we look up to people with wealth or possessions, and implicitly—sometimes explicitly—assume there must be something the matter with people who are not similarly “blessed.” But we are here reminded that God’s works are revealed even in a blind beggar.

The reaction to having the tables turned is as predictable now as it was in the first century: disbelief (“Is it he?”...“No, but it is someone like him.”); accusation (“for he does not observe the Sabbath”); fear of rejection (“He is of age; ask him.”); and rejection itself (“they drove him out”). More so, I think, because the physical properties (curing blindness with mud and spit) form the narrative structure for an examination of the spiritual properties of revelation, vision, worship, and the alternative of spiritual blindness.

We don’t see many blind people in East Cobb today. I wonder if

that is because there are fewer of them, or is it because our peculiar environment makes it impossible for the blind to be independent in a community like ours. (Is it different in a city where the services we need to survive are within easy walking distance?)

When I was growing up, our piano tuner was blind—it was thought that blind people were uniquely adapted to listening so they were trained as piano tuners. Their particular insight was to hear what sighted people could not. As the account of the (formerly) blind beggar ends, vision changes to hearing, too. He is told about the Son of Man— “You have seen him, and the one speaking to you is he” — and he worships him.

And the final turn of the tables is that those who say they see remain in sin.

Where are we in this picture?



DAY 24

TUESDAY, APRIL 5

*EPHESIANS 5:8-14*

*Live as children of light—for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.*

This verse advises us to live as children of the light (not grown folk of the light). Children love and trust those who care for them. They are dependent on a parent for physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well being. Children also imitate their parents. Before my oldest granddaughter could talk she would pick anything that looked like a

phone (television remote, calculator) and put it to her ear and pace the floor babbling. A little girl puts on mommy's dress, jewelry and lipstick. A little boy puts on daddy's coat, tie, hat and shoes. We are advised to be imitators of God as beloved children. The fruit of light is goodness, righteousness and truth. Let's play dress up and let our light shine!



DAY 25

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6

*PSALM 23*

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*

When this writer received this scripture assignment, I grinned. There was no doubt about it... my great Aunt Susan (for whom I was named and was also my Godmother) is up there smiling. She helped me memorize this psalm... my very first. I was age 4. She definitely had the patience

of Job teaching me this psalm and the Lord's Prayer! It feels like strong arms are wrapping me in a snug hug; it calms; it restores; it gives new meaning to every situation; and after all that, I get to live in His home forever! I shall not want. It doesn't get any better than that!



DAY 26

THURSDAY, APRIL 7

1 SAMUEL 16:1-13

*...the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.*

Saul has rebelled against God and has been rejected as king of the Israelites by God. So God tells Samuel to go to Bethlehem to anoint the new king chosen from among the sons of Jesse. Jesse's sons pass before the prophet, one by one. When Eliab, the first of Jesse's sons appears, Samuel thinks, "Surely, this is the one." But God says, "I have rejected him." Seven of Jesse's sons are rejected in like manner. None of them possess the right kind of character. God sees what man cannot see! Samuel is looking at men through human eyes; God looks at the character of a person's heart, not their outer appearance.

After the seven sons of Jesse have passed before Samuel and all have been rejected, Samuel discovers that there is another son, the youngest who is out doing the job of a humble servant, taking care of the sheep. He's so insignificant that he is not even summoned with the rest of the boys, but he is left out of the feast and the sacrifice. When David walks in, God tells Samuel to

anoint this one! The one rejected and passed over by the others is the very one picked by the Lord!



When we look for leaders, we often seek those who have certain characteristics: people of influence, power, intelligence, and means. But God looks for people of integrity, character and faith. We are well into Lent, the season for self-examination and repentance. When God looks at your life, what does God see? God doesn't see your physical appearance, God sees your heart, the real you. Does God see a heart that God can use, or does God say about your life the same thing God said about Eliab, "I have rejected him/her?" What does God see in your heart? If you don't like what you see, remember, God also looks at what we can become. Thankfully, God isn't done with any of us yet. There is forgiveness for those who return. Thank God we are judged, not on what the eye can see, but on the basis of amazing grace!

When God chose David, there was no time to prepare. He was ready and he was doing the job he had been given to do. If you want to be used by God, be faithful where you are, grow where you are planted. Allow God to

develop your character, your integrity, your faithfulness and your sense of responsibility in the ordinary, everyday events of life. Be ready and reliable, for you never know when the call of God will come. God knows where you are. God knows how to find you. God knows how and when to open all the right doors in your life. Just be faithful and walk with Him. In God's time, God will use you for God's glory.



*DAY 27*  
FRIDAY, APRIL 8

*PSALM 122*

*I was glad when they said to me,  
'Let us go to the house of the  
Lord!'*

The overall element that spoke to me most in this passage is the element of invitation to the house of the Lord in the important city of Jerusalem. We as a people receive invitations in a variety of manners on a regular basis. Some may be very meaningful invitations similar to the invitation to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. Others may not be meaningful such as the loud screaming commercial telling us we haven't really lived until we have a particular product.

How should we respond to this myriad of invitations? I would suggest we should give thanks for

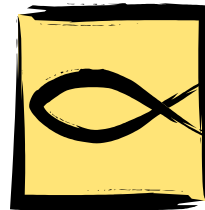
the meaningful invitations and embrace and respond to them. I would also suggest we should do our best to not let the insignificant invitations distract us from listening to God and trying to follow God's plan. Some days it is a more challenging task than others. My hope is that the inner peace that can be accomplished by trying to focus on only the meaningful invitations is worth the effort and will provide new meaning to the words "peace be with you."



*DAY 28*  
SATURDAY, APRIL 9

*JOHN 6:4-15*

*'There is a boy here who has five  
barley loaves  
and two fish.  
But what are  
they among so  
many people?'*



When reading this passage, I was struck by the thought, "Where's your faith? With God, all things are possible!" Then the rational part of me kicked in. The disciples were being sensible—how in the world would they be able to feed all those people? Not enough funds to purchase, no way to provide food. What were they to do?

Then driving to work it really hit

*THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT*  
APRIL 10

*Lord, make us instruments of your peace;  
where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is discord, union;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.  
Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled  
as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

— A PRAYER ATTRIBUTED TO ST. FRANCIS,  
*BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER*, P. 833

*DAY 29*  
MONDAY, APRIL 11

*JOHN 11:1-45*

*Now a certain man was ill,  
Lazarus of Bethany...*

The dance of parable and plain speak is a marriage of divine and human communication. We ask God for signs; He speaks in parables. We ask God to explain the parable; He raises the dead. We ask God to save us; He dies on

the cross. Each exchange leads us along a path that constantly confounds our expectations.

In John 11:1-45 we learn of the death of Jesus' friend, Lazarus, and of Jesus raising him from the dead. This may be one of the most poignant moments of Jesus' humanity interwoven with his

divinity. The moment he learns of Lazarus' illness, he is confident that "this illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." The author gives us the sense Jesus knew what was to happen, and that his delay in getting to Lazarus was deliberate and in preparation for this new sign that he is indeed the Son of God. His reaction surprises us. He doesn't appear at all to worry or fret about what will happen, or what might happen to him going back to the area where people recently attempted to stone him. He is filled with an unearthly purposefulness that emphasizes his divinity. And yet when he comes to Bethany and meets with Martha, then Mary and their grief, there is a very different sense of who he is. He is deeply moved and weeps. We may wonder for a moment if he would be overwhelmed by what he is about to do. Flash forward to the Garden of Gethsemane where he weeps in prayer just before he is arrested (Luke 22:42). In both places Jesus seems fully and painfully aware of the finality and even fear of death. Yet his awareness that God will be glorified does not erase his deep compassion and connection to the world, nor does his humanity muddy his divine purpose. Rather, it breaks the human-established barrier between God and humankind; a barrier

built up over generations since Adam and Eve.

Jesus often spoke in parables, leaving his disciples then (and now) to grapple with the meaning of his words. He told them that Lazarus had fallen asleep and he was going to awaken Lazarus. The disciples cannot comprehend this almost poetical description of raising someone from the dead, a concept not comprehensible to humans. So he speaks plainly when he tells his disciples that Lazarus is dead, but that he was glad he was not there, so that the disciples may believe in him. Even at this point the disciples do not see where this is heading. They are certainly aware of the danger Jesus is in, but not aware that this is part of the plan. The hymn "God is working His purpose out" (Habakkuk 2:14) comes to mind. What we see as a danger to be avoided, God molds into the work at hand. The death of Lazarus some were saying could have been avoided if Jesus had gotten there earlier, and yet Jesus knew of God's purpose and came later to show us God's Glory.

Whenever there is mystery, perplexity and something that goes against our expectations, perhaps it is time to remember the barrier has been broken, and with God's grace, we may be a part of working His purpose out.



DAY 30

TUESDAY, APRIL 12

ROMANS 8:6-11

*But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

In this letter, Paul writes to the new Christian community in Rome and explains how a new life in Christ changes everything without changing anything about our physical form. Paul is sometimes difficult for me to follow. He uses logic to illuminate his understanding of a spiritual reality. He seems to surround the spiritual reality and tackle all the little human distractions one by one until only the spiritual reality remains. I like stories of heroism and miracles better. They are more exciting and easier for me to follow.

However, I wrestled with this passage for a few weeks and to me this passage explains how we are changed when we accept the living spirit of Christ in ways that are not recognizable physically. The form of our bodies is unchanged yet the fullness of our hearts has grown. We are still sinful by nature and facing a physical death, but we are part of the same life and resurrection of Christ himself, by our connection to God through the living spirit.

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think I struggle most with the simplicity of it. We're not above the law, yet we're not subject to it either. Paul doesn't say we must be perfect and personally overcome or reject our human nature. He says that the power of human nature is put to death when "God's spirit lives in you." Paul assures us, just as he assured the Romans two thousand years ago, "If Christ lives in you, the spirit is life for you."



DAY 31

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13

PSALM 130

*Out of the depths I cry to Thee, O Lord!...*

As we draw further into Lent, we draw closer to the brink of despair. In a few days, we will cry, "Oh, God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Lent is a time when we ponder those very darkest days. For most of the

year, we hail Christ with hymns of praise, songs of joy, hallelujahs, and triumphant organ music. But this is all so far removed from the bitterest depths to which he had to sink. What must our Lord have felt those last few days? His followers couldn't be bothered to stay up late and pray with Him. One of those followers betrayed Him—not because he was coerced or tortured, but because he was paid for the information. Another disciple followed to the place He was being held, but when he was recognized, tried to lie about knowing Jesus.

We have all felt some kind of betrayal at some point in our lives, but how does the betrayal we might have felt compare to what Jesus felt? Then there was the indignity, humiliation, and pain of the crucifixion—being paraded through the streets, mocked, and beaten before finally being nailed to the cross for everyone to watch and jeer at this agonizing death.

There is very little left in our modern, comfortable world that can compare to this, and in all

likelihood, none of us reading this has experienced anything that comes anywhere close. How much deeper must Christ's despair have been than anything we can imagine?

And yet, we still despair, and we still cry to the Lord to deliver us—“Lord, hear my voice! Let Thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!” What right have we to despair, when compared to what Christ experienced? What right have we to expect deliverance when our despair is so minor?

And yet, we do have that right—that right of love granted to us by God's covenants. God sent his Son to die for us so that we would not have to despair. God sent Jesus to remind us, “O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord, there is steadfast love, and with Him is plenteous redemption.” Remember, the despair cannot last forever. Lent will end. Easter will dawn, and Christ will rise. But without the despair that comes in the dark, we cannot truly appreciate the hope that comes with the dawn.



DAY 32

THURSDAY, APRIL 14

EZEKIEL 37:1-14

*The hand of the LORD ... set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and ... asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"*

Sometimes, when it seems as if there is no hope at all, the slightest good thing can make a difference. I think that this is exactly what Lent is all about: seeing the good in small things.

As everyone knows, during Lent, everyone who is able tries to 'give something up.' It might be material or not, but whatever it is, it's always a struggle to live without it. This experience often likens to passing through the 'Valley of the Dry Bones' in this piece of scripture. In the beginning, when we enter the valley, it seems vast and desolate. There is no perceptible end in sight, and we set off into it with a sense of hopelessness. However, as we pass farther and farther through, the end approaches, and we can look around us to see that perhaps the valley is not as bleak as we once thought. In fact, we can see the beauty in this place, in the sand and the bones that lie around us, coming to life. By the time we do reach the end of our journey, we can look back and appreciate the task we've completed, and we

value even more those things that we had to live without during our voyage, no matter if they were material or not, big or small.



DAY 33

FRIDAY, APRIL 15

PSALM 51:11-16

*Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

I read an article recently that claimed that the source of many of the problems of today is an overwhelming sense of loneliness. We tend to believe that the world is divided into me and not me—that we are always in competition with, or trying to impress, or trying to get along with someone else. I can feel that way. I can feel that everyone I know has deserted me in favor of their own problems, and that even God is looking the other way. This doesn't happen so much when I am in real trouble. Then, my family, my friends and the people of St. Catherine's come very close. And, at those times, God and I seem to have a real relationship. No, it more often happens late at night, when I have no really big problems to occupy my mind and little to do. Then I worry that no one would be there if I needed them. I feel I am alone and iso-

lated.

Of course, I know from experience that my loneliness is a fiction. In order to receive help I only need to need it. I often don't even need to ask. In order to be with God, all I need do is respond. The action is mine, but only with God's grace. "Restore to me the joy," prays the psalmist, "grant me a willing spirit," then my life will be filled with the love of God and the people around me. Then my tongue will sing of God's righteousness, my mouth will declare God's praise and my life will show the lonely God's ways, so that the desolate will turn back to God and the love of those around them. We just need to join the conversation. Then we can be one together and alone no more.



*DAY 34*

SATURDAY, APRIL 16

*HEBREWS 5:5-10*

*Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him...*

Initially upon reading this scripture and after researching I was distracted by numerous Biblical scholars that argued the differences of Aaronic priesthood

verses the order of Melchizedek. But, upon re-reading I am drawn to the latter half where it addresses Christ's life on earth and how He prays to God to save him from death. Christ fully knows what awaits him in Gethsemane and ultimately on Golgotha, and chooses to be obedient and suffer death on the cross for each of us. His prayer is answered as God does save him from Death through the Resurrection and in turn redeeming our sins.

Every Lent I find myself in awe and wonder as to how any person, divine or otherwise would choose to endure these hardships, suffering and torture for me. This is the most humbling season in the Church year and usually 40 days are not enough to process this even though I have been through this for more years than I care to admit.

It is profound. Christ's love exponentially exceeds anything my inadequate little mind can comprehend and I pray every day that he forgives me for not being good enough. Though, in my heart of hearts I know He understands that our intentions are good and we want to do the right thing every time—but isn't that part of being human?

God gives us the freedom to choose—this Lent let us choose Him.



*PALM SUNDAY / PASSION SUNDAY*

APRIL 17

*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory,  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.*

— BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, P. 367

*MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK*

*DAY 35*

APRIL 18

*MATTHEW 21:1-11*

*A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds... shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"*

This is one of the few passages in the Gospels where Jesus is presented as royalty in the traditional sense and understanding of the word. When the disciples are sent to take a donkey and horse from a stranger, Jesus instructs, "If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." Though many at the time believed Jesus to be the Messiah, they viewed a Messiah as a liberator or a revolutionary leader. They praise Jesus as Lord, shouting "Hosanna," a Hebrew exclamation of praise meaning "save!" Just as one would in the presence of royalty,

they lay down their jackets and palm branches to ease his passage into Jerusalem, the sight of his ultimate victory.

Though these displays of adoration of Jesus as Lord are memorable and impressive, what is central to this passage is the extent to which these displays ultimately miss the point of Jesus' entry to Jerusalem. Jesus enters not as a conquering king on a mighty steed, but as a meek and loving Lord riding a donkey toward an ending that none in the crowd could foresee. Though Jesus is indeed Lord, he enters Jerusalem knowing that he has come here to make the greatest possible sacrifice for those who call him "master," as well as those who do not. He comes not to overthrow oppressors and triumphantly sit on a throne, but to overturn the nature of death itself and to ultimately sit at the right hand of God. Hosanna indeed!



*TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK*

*DAY 36*

APRIL 19

*MARK 11:15-19*

*Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.' "*

It's hard to imagine Jesus as angry as he is described in this scripture—casting out people and turning over tables - it must have taken a lot for him to have reacted this way. He was very frustrated by the way the people were disrespecting a place that was sacred, so he had to do something radical to get their attention. He wanted the Temple to be "a house of prayer for all nations" but instead it had become a marketplace—a loud, busy, crowded place where people couldn't pray or meditate, and where more emphasis was being placed on profit, rather than worship. The focus

was being taken away from God and placed on "things."

That still happens today. It is a constant struggle for most people to focus on what they have instead of what they don't have. It is so easy to ask for more and to forget to be thankful. It takes a real effort to make God and the church a priority: to give of first fruits rather than the leftovers at the end of the month, to make time to participate in activities, to really listen without judgment, to pray for His will rather than individual wants, and to treat our neighbors as ourselves.

I also can't help but to see the comparison of the Temple with our own human hearts. They were created for us to sustain life, to love, to worship and to remind us to seek quiet reflection, but too often they can become like a busy marketplace crowded with the wrong thoughts and focus.

Jesus had to make sure that everyone knew that God would not

*continued...*

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*Holy Week begins on Passion Sunday. Passion, in this context, means suffering and death.*

*On Maundy Thursday we remember that Jesus washed the disciples' feet and instituted the Eucharist during the Last Supper.*

*Maundy is defined as "commandment," and the commandment is Jesus' instruction that we should love one another as he loved us.*

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stand for anything less than our full devotion and respect... in their lives, in their hearts and in the Temple. The message was clear then and it is clear now: God deserves to be first in our lives.



*WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK*  
*DAY 37*

APRIL 20

*MATTHEW 26:1-5, 14-26*

*Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What will you give me if I betray him to you?'*

How does one reflect on one of the greatest betrayals in history, which led to the crucifixion of Jesus? Why did Judas Iscariot go to Ca'iaphas and the other high priests? While the priests were scheming against Jesus because they saw him as a threat, did that threat also include the twelve? And why, if Jesus was fulfilling prophesy, did he not simply turn himself in and remove the burden from Judas? Was it a betrayal, or was it to set the plan in motion in order to bring the events to pass, and the birth of Christianity?

While the high priests were scheming about the growing threat posed by Jesus to their autonomy and rule under the Ro-

mans, Ca'iaphas prophesied that Jesus must die for the unity of the nation and to protect the temple. In his mind, if the Romans perceived that the Jews were gathering strength under Jesus' leadership, and would eventually rebel against Roman occupation—as some sought—it would mean the end. They have already decided to remove the threat when Judas comes to them, offering to betray Jesus for a price. This is crucial in my mind to the survival of the twelve disciples—by betraying Jesus, Judas shows the high priests that the twelve are not a threat and believes they will scatter and return to their lives after Jesus is gone.

We take for granted that Judas betrayed Jesus; maybe because he was unhappy with Jesus' squandering of resources or to get money to support the mission. If this were so important, why did Judas only accept 30 pieces of silver—for that was only the value of a mere slave as prescribed by law? It was not for personal gain, for he had no intention to leave the twelve. Had it been for money, certainly Judas would have been able to convince the high priests that the removal of Jesus was worth more than the price of a mere slave.

Judas is told by Jesus that it is he who will betray him to the high priests—but I think he was also saying it was his duty, to fulfill

the prophesy, protect the twelve and start the Church. Judas asks for payment, feeding the high priests' need for deceit and by them believing in the betrayal, taking part in fulfilling prophesy. Had Jesus simply turned himself in, the priests may have thought he sought to become a martyr, thus bringing down the wrath of the Roman Empire and the destruction of the nation and the temple.

I think we've come to understand that it all had to come to pass, to fulfill the prophesies, and for Jesus to take our burdens of sin to the cross, and die for those sins—showing Satan and mankind that there is no greater power in heaven or on earth, than through Christ.



## MAUNDY THURSDAY DAY 38

APRIL 21

*1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-26*

*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

I have always thought of the Eucharist as a promise of life. Paul reminds us that it is about first about death. There is promise of covenant here, but none of the comforting promises of eternal life, bread of heaven, cup of

salvation. This is about sacrifice. Brokenness and bleeding. Death.

In his former identity as Saul the Pharisee, Paul was one of our Lord's most vehement persecutors. I can picture him as an eyewitness at the trial before the Sanhedrin and one of those who shouted "Crucify him!" to Pilate. He most certainly was not present at the last supper. Perhaps he watched as Jesus died on the cross. Certainly, he knew Jesus was dead and buried.

The Easter message here is that Paul assures us that he received from the Lord Jesus himself what he is passing on to us. Not from Peter, John, James, or any of the others. Nope. The risen Lord himself gave this to Paul.

May he be revealed to us in the breaking of the bread this night. And I pray I will keep the awareness of the pain and sacrifice as I celebrate Eucharist from now on.



## GOOD FRIDAY DAY 39

APRIL 22

*PSALM 22:1-21*

*My God! Why did you dump me miles from nowhere?*  
[The Message]

*The Message* is an "amplified" version of the Bible. Sometimes I

*continued...*



have to read various versions to get out of a rut, or to move beyond some preconceived notions about scripture. This version is more theatrical than our reading, but the message is the same. The psalmist David is lamenting that he feels so distant from God. He feels left out. He feels that God has turned away.

There are times in each of our lives that we may feel this way. There are times when we may have given up; or we may feel like giving up.

Jesus felt that way. He recited the opening verse from this very psalm as he anguished on the cross. He also asked God to “take this cup from me.” He asked why he needed to go through this. He felt that God had left him alone. Yet, he was obedient. He did what God asked him to do.

We know the end of the story. Jesus went through what he did for you and for me. Because he knew that was what WE needed. Forgiveness. Total forgiveness. “Washed in the blood of the lamb.”

Today is wrapped in black... stay here for a moment and accept Jesus’ gift to you. And make sure you send him a thank you note. “Thanks for taking my sins away, Jesus, thanks for making me bright and new.” *The Message* goes on to say, in the last verse of this psalm, “Babies not yet conceived will hear the good news that God does what he says.”

*Most Merciful God, as your Son died for me on Calvary’s Hill, help me not rush to Easter’s sunrise too soon. Let me wait here in the shadow of the cross. Let me be a companion to those on the way. Let me linger. Let me trust in you. Wait with me, Lord. Amen.*



*H*OLY SATURDAY  
DAY 40

APRIL 23

*MATTHEW 27:57-66*

*...a rich man from Arimathea,  
named Joseph... took the body  
and ... laid it in his own new  
tomb...*

It is finished. Jesus has been crucified. Crucified and abandoned by all but a few women and John. Joseph of Arimathea, rich and probably connected, takes responsibility for claiming the body and seeing to its placement in his own, probably quite expensive tomb. The women sit and wait for Sabbath to pass so they can prepare the body for permanent burial.

The women wait. Their dreams and hopes and faith tied up in a body in a hillside. No visible sign of any sort of support from the throngs that hailed Jesus as Messiah the week before. Not even the closest, the remaining eleven apostles. No men at all doing

anything at this point, after Joseph's help.

Jesus' jealous enemies wait, too. They remember what the eleven have seemingly forgotten. He said He would rise... and they wait, afraid that He might. So afraid He might, they seal the tomb and place guards around it. I have often wondered if the guards and the women spoke to one another, and what they might have said.

I think sometimes we all have times, when a deepest hope or fondest dream seems dead, just dead, game over, kaput. And yet, I wonder, does the enemy of Christ, the enemy of our own souls, have more faith in Jesus than we do during these times?

I hope during the coming year that any whose dreams seem dead or whose hope seems gone will remember two things...

God didn't put that rock over the tomb of our hope, and that rock didn't stop Jesus.



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*E*ASTER DAY      SUNDAY, APRIL 24

*HE IS RISEN! ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA!*

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### *ACTIVITIES IN LENT*

Tuesdays, Mar. 15-Apr. 19 ..... 7:00 am.....HE (Holy Eucharist) + Study

Wednesdays, Mar. 16, 23, 30, April 13

..... 5:45 pm.....Dinner  
6:30 pm Programs for all ages, including  
Adult Lenten Renewal \*

### *HOLY WEEK*

Apr. 17 ... Palm Sunday ..... 7:30 am.....HE  
8:45 am Liturgy of the Palms + HE \*  
10:00 am Church School \*  
11:15 am Liturgy of the Palms + HE \*  
Apr. 19 ... Tuesday ..... 7:00 am.....HE + Brief Study  
6:30 pm Children's Stations of the Cross  
Apr. 20 ... Wednesday ..... 7:30 pm.....HE + Healing Service \*  
Apr. 21 ... Maundy Thursday ..... 7:30 pm.....Proper Liturgy \*  
8:45 pm Stripping of the Altar  
9:00 pm All-night Prayer Vigil  
Apr. 22 ... Good Friday ..... 9:00 am.....Morning Prayer  
12:00 pm Stations of the Cross (outdoor)  
6:30 pm Stations of the Cross (indoor)  
7:30 pm Proper Liturgy \*  
9:00 pm Monastic Supper  
Apr. 23 ... Holy Saturday..... 10:00 am.....Proper Liturgy  
7:30 pm Easter Vigil + Baptisms \*

### *EASTER DAY*

Apr. 24 ..... 6:30 am.....Outdoor Sunrise Service  
7:30 am Breakfast  
8:45 am Festival Family Eucharist \*  
10:00 am No Church School  
Reception + Easter Egg Hunt  
11:15 am Festival Choral Eucharist \*  
12:45 pm Reception

\* - Nursery available

ALLELUIA



CHRIST IS RISEN  
ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA



It's Our 50th Anniversary – Remember Rejoice Renew

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