

# *Lenten Reflections for DaySpring*

*2008*



## What is Lent?

Originally “Lent” (A derivative from Middle English) meant nothing more than the spring season, but Christians use the term to denote the forty-day period preceding Easter. The early Church called it the Quadregesima, or The Forty Days. There can be no doubt that the examples of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus were important in determining the duration of the season. While there was considerable diversity with regard to customary Easter celebrations in the first centuries of Christianity, the Church was unified on the importance of Easter. In his letter to Victor (Bishop of Rome), Irenaeus (second century) wrote of a controversy concerning the date of Easter and the duration of the preliminary fast. Evidently, some fasted for one, two, or even several days in preparation for Easter. By 331, Athanasius (Bishop of Alexandria) was encouraging his parishioners to fast the forty days prior to the stricter fast of Holy Week. By the fifth century, writers such as Leo, Jerome, and Socrates (not to be confused with the Greek philosopher) supported the idea of a forty-day fast.

Lent is not an end unto itself. It is a time of preparation, soul-searching, and repentance. It is a season for reflection and taking stock. This tradition originated in the very earliest days of the Church as a preparatory time for Easter, when the faithful rededicated themselves and when converts were instructed in the faith and prepared for baptism. By observing the forty days of Lent, the individual Christian imitates Jesus’ withdrawal into the wilderness, remembers his death and burial, and longs for his resurrection.

- ❖ The forty-day period (excluding Sundays) before Easter Sunday
- ❖ Begins on Ash Wednesday (February 6)
- ❖ A season of soul-searching and repentance
- ❖ A time for reflection
- ❖ Ends on Saturday of Holy Week (March 22)

## What can you do?

First, spend time daily preparing for Easter. Toward that end, Dayspring has prepared a Lenten devotional packet. Scripture passages, devotional thoughts, and prayers are included for you. As you will see, devotionals have been prepared by members of Dayspring. May we all be encouraged, challenged, and renewed as we read and reflect together during Lent. An asterisk (\*) denotes the passages used for the devotional. The devotionals and prayers written by Henri Nouwen are taken from *Show Me the Way* (The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992).

Second, consider giving up something for Lent. By denying ourselves something enjoyable, we discipline our wills so that we are not slaves to pleasure. By disciplining the will to refuse pleasures when they are not sinful, a habit is developed which allows the will to refuse sinful pleasures. It is customary to break the fast on Sunday during Lent, since it is the day on which Christ arose. Thus, each Sunday during Lent is like a mini-Easter.

Third, could you make it to one additional worship experience per week? DaySpring will have two options. First, a time to reflect at the Stations of the Cross will be available on Tuesdays during Lent. Second, the weekly contemplative prayer services will aid the Lenten process. You may find that during moments of silence, scripture readings, or prayer, your mind and spirit are refreshed and challenged to engage the path Lent lays before us.

## Ash Wednesday, February 6

Psalm 95

Amos 5:6-15

Hebrews 12:1-14

Luke 18:9-14\*

We all know this story. It's a common one that Jesus seems to tell over and over again, or at least we hear it over and over again. And we know the moral of the story: Don't be a self-righteous Pharisee! Simple enough, right?

Don't be like those fundamentalists who don't seem to know anything about grace. Those guys just don't get Jesus, do they? All you ever hear is how bad everyone is. We all know they're just covering up their own sinfulness... I'm sure glad I'm not like them.... wait a minute.

What I meant was don't be like those self-righteous liberals who go around pushing their cause on everyone. They claim to be open-minded, but if you disagree with them they're pretty sure you must be dumb, or stubborn, or some combination of the two. I'm sure glad I'm not like... wait.

What I actually meant was don't be like those contemplative folks who think they have a monopoly on spirituality. All their talk about *nous*, silence, and centering makes you think no one else has ever encountered God. If you don't use the right term with them they're liable to think you're hardly a Christian. I'm sure glad I'm not... wait.

What I actually meant was don't be like those people who think they go to the only good church in town. Those people can be so smug, can't they? It's like they think they're the only ones actually worshipping and serving God. I'm sure glad I'm... wait.

I guess what I actually mean is...

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner... As I enter this Lent season, help me to see myself for who I actually am. Hold my eyes open, even when I'm too afraid to keep looking. May I remember what I am... from ashes I've come and to ashes I will return. And as I wear the cross on my forehead this day, may I remember whose I am. Have mercy on me, O God...*

Chris Fillingham

## Thursday, February 7

Psalm 37:1-18\*

Habakkuk 3:1-18\*

Philippians 3:12-21\*

John 17:1-8\*

Our fledgling Russian church had never been taught about giving. We Americans generally evidenced an unspoken attitude that they were too poor for us to demand much in the way of material things. But a good sermon on giving could not hurt; so I diligently prepared for the next Sunday.

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As people were arriving at my flat for our small cell group the next week, Olga pulled me aside and exclaimed excitedly that she had given her last rubles away to a beggar on the street and so had walked the three miles to my house with her little girl tagging along. Understand she was a teacher with a salary of \$600 a year, but had not been paid for months. Her husband left her because she refused an abortion and he wanted no children. She was the sole support for her retired parents. I learned they had existed on bread and water for some time. Yet because she took my words to heart, she gave. With a radiantly happy face she told me of all the things they had found along the way they would have missed had they taken the tram.

The next day as I was thinking about Olga's story, Misha came to our door. He had overheard me talking with someone the Sunday before. Probably because of my poor Russian, he got the impression that we were out of food. Though unemployed and almost penniless, he offered me a loaf of bread and two fish he had caught as his way of helping us.

As stories like these piled up in the following days, I became ashamedly aware of how shallow our American practices of community and giving are.

May God grant us all a deeper understanding that we are not "giving up" something for Lent, but are freeing ourselves from it that we may freely give.

Terry Martin

### **Friday, February 8**

Psalm 95

Ezek 18:1-32

Philippians 4:1-9

John 17:9-19\*

John presents Jesus as being the ultimate devotee in this passage. He is undeterred in his quest to please the Father and has come to grips with his need to pay the ultimate price. Here, in the final moments before his arrest, Jesus prays that his disciples would likewise be unwavering in their devotion, for he knows that their persecutions will be many. Jesus led by example, for he knew that the greatest danger to be faced was not physical abuse or even death, but *distraction* from the call.

Aaron Glenn

## Saturday, February 9

Psalm 30, 32

Ezek 39:21-29

Philippians 4:10-20

John 17:20-26

Why are things the way they are? Why can't I live my life like I want? And even 2700 years ago Ezekiel opens the same question: why and how did we wind up in Babylonian captivity? When I cut authentically through the layers of the onion, I find the answer—in many ways—is my life story, my autobiography: experiences, values, choices, influences, direction, successes, failure, accomplishments, achievements, relationships, possessions, ego....

My call in following Jesus is to live in the world and not be part of the world because He has opened-revealed to me why I am here, what my life means, the plans He has for me, the purpose of the journey in my time-space segment. And it's not for any of the reasons I envisioned when I was a child and thought like a child—like I could have a significant life in pursuit of happiness by being a big chief. And if I do not know why I am here, what my life means, and some purpose of the journey, then I clearly have some homework assignment to do. As a disciple, I march to a radically different drummer from that of the noisy crowded go-getters. I am juxtaposed to, aware of, and affected by (infected by) life under the big, busy, boisterous, blockbusting tent; still I am distinct, different, dichotomized from the world. A glass curtain separates me from a life centered on power, control, affection, esteem, recognition, security, survival, et al... So life is an on-going process of conversion, evolving into a new creature, a new creation, a new birth like a hungry caterpillar evolving into a gourmet butterfly.

The prayer of Jesus carves that differentness “I gave them your word, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world anymore than I belong to the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one. (John 17) “Do not love the world or the things of the world...” (I John 2)

Why are things the way they are? Ezekiel adds “because of its sins the house of Israel went into exile; for they transgressed against me, and I hid my face from them and handed them over to their foes.” (Ezekiel 39) Israel lived in and became part of the world culture.

Dry bones in a desert waste is the current predicament of Israel in captivity and the prophet's vision projects the resuscitation of this skeleton (ch 37) rising to new life, new spirit, new heart, from the graveyard of Babylon looking to a new Covenant and fulfillment in the New Testament. “No longer will I hide my face from them, for I have poured my spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord God.” (ch 39)

In the epistle reading, St. Paul underscores that he knows why he is here (the big Here). He does not belong to this world and its culture of consumption, conveniences, comforts. His life is not spent in a self-indulgent agenda of what do I like? What do I want? I have “learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need...” Phil 4) His dry bones have been molded into a new creature, new heart, and spirit. He is transformed—not attached to—possessions of the world. He understands why he is here, the purpose of the journey, what life means, how could he be concerned with living in abundance or with being in need?

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And in the fullness of time, God's gift of self was opened before human eyes when the word became flesh to tabernacle among us. Revelation, truth, mystery, love, empathy spill from the Word to redeem, surprise, heal and bless us in our search to find out why. In one voice, both Ezekiel and St. Paul each proclaims in his own context the message of Jesus "They do not belong to the world anymore than I belong to the world."

Edgar Speer

### **First Sunday of Lent, February 10**

Psalm 63, 98

Daniel 9:3-10

Hebrews 2:10-18

John 12:44-50

Thirsting and hungering for God as a solitary wanderer struggles for food and water in the desert wilderness. Is this mere hyperbole, or a signpost for what should be a common experience for spiritual pilgrims? The psalmist's terminology seems too physical, too extreme to offer anything but the most tenuous insight for us 21<sup>st</sup>-century American Christians; surely what is 'really' being affirmed is merely that we should put God first in our lives. This talk of 'thirsting' and 'fainting,' of covenant love that is 'better than life,' of literally 'lifting up our hands,' of 'clinging' to God...surely this is all a little over the top, isn't it? As we adopt such an attitude the spirit of the psalmist is tamed, spiritual fervor takes on a more insipid tone, and we are left with a quiet religion designed for our comfort, a religion that informs our moral outlook and channels our grosser inclinations in respectable directions. Still, we are uncomfortable being known as 'too' religious, as having a manifest orientation towards God that may label us as being a little fanatical because our speech and actions are fairly full of indications of our fervent love and devotion to God. We like not only separation of church and state, but we also value separation of private and public devotion. David the king, singing of his devotion to and hunger for God before his subjects...this is indeed a foreign thing. Oh, that it would become much more the common experience for our lives as Christians!

Steve Hawk

### **Monday, February 11**

Psalm 41, 52

Genesis 37:1-11

1 Corinthians 1:1-19

Mark 1:1-13

The journey of Lent sometimes seems predictable and redundant. We know what is coming and we wait just like we did at Advent. Yet there's something different about this waiting. It is uncomfortable whereas during Advent we are excited with the anticipation of the birth of our Lord. During Lent we can feel our stomachs tighten, our hearts begin to ache, and our lungs lessen in capacity as Holy Week approaches. It is the week we walk purposefully with heavy feet towards the cross. Then the longest wait of our lives begins Friday with the coming of darkness. We wait and our faith is tested. Finally on Sunday morning we hear the bells ring and the light pierces the darkness. The heavy feeling of death is lifted as our Father has kept His promise.

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Life is much like the church calendar which we reenact each year. We find ourselves in seasons of waiting more often than we would like. Sometimes those seasons are full of hope and expectation, while other periods of waiting seem to suck life right out of us. Then who can forget the “ordinary” time when every day seems like the day before. Each season has its purpose. It usually isn’t until after a particular season has passed that we can look back and know or understand what purpose it served. In fact, it may be several seasons later before we even get a glimpse of its purpose.

But whatever season we find ourselves in there is one purpose which every season has: preparation. The Gospel passage for today is about preparation. All the seasons of Christ’s life prepared Him for this moment. We find Him taking His last steps of preparation before beginning His ministry. But it’s not Jesus who I find myself relating to in this story. It’s John. A man who has also been prepared through various seasons of life and his task is to prepare the way for the Messiah. I believe that our purpose in any season of life is to prepare the way for the Messiah. No matter where we find ourselves we need to prepare our hearts daily for the Messiah. Preparing it for daily encounters and for His return. As we prepare ourselves, we need to be mindful that we are also preparing the way for others to encounter the Messiah. As disciples of Christ our lives should show the way to the Messiah. We must be careful that we do not put up any mountains or dig any valleys or make the path rough for those the Messiah is drawing near to Himself. Lent for me this year is a season of preparation. A time for me to prepare my life for the Messiah so that my life might show others a straight path to the Him.

CJ Wood

## **Tuesday, February 12**

Psalm 45

Genesis 37:12-24

1 Corinthians 1:20-31\*

Mark 1:12-28\*

The people Jesus called to work on the “inner circle” were not the people we would expect. They were not the ones equipped to start a revolt or overthrow power. Instead they were the least likely, maybe even a foolish choice. Men adept at baiting hooks, but not necessarily trained in rhetoric or law, no real power to at their fingertips. If I were starting a movement, I would most likely choose people who serve as CEO’s in Fortune 500 companies, maybe a few medical doctors, educated people who are steeped in the well of effectiveness and efficiency, people with clout. Surely there is a better way for Jesus to find followers; surely “better” people were available. We might even call Jesus’ choice for followers foolish, forgetting that the Kingdom of God only comes through surrender and not power. As we continue the Lenten journey, bear in mind that you may see God in places that were hidden before. We might even begin to see God in the foolishness that surrounds us.

Matt Vandagriff

### Wednesday, February 13

Psalm 119:49-72

Genesis 37:25-36

1 Corinthian 2:1-13

Mark 1:29-45

When I was new to being a disciple of Jesus, I developed a small concern that I might be a “wolf in sheep’s clothing”; sneaking in among the “true” believers to wreak havoc. Even as I strove over the next several years to live according to His teachings; even as I matured in my understanding and follow-ship, I harbored that little worry. I wondered, “What if I’m one of the bad guys? From time to time I have bad thoughts; I wish ill on those who seek to do me harm; I lust; I sometimes place God second, or third, or worse.” On and on. Many years passed before I discovered “God’s secret wisdom”; that when we accept the Lordship of Jesus, we also must accept His forgiveness; that we who are forgiven by Jesus are not, despite how clearly we may see our own shortcomings, wolves in sheep’s clothing. Rather, we are just plain old sheep; willful, stupid, smelly, prone to stray from the path and to follow another sheep instead of the Shepherd. And yet, our Shepherd, the Lamb of God, has clothed us in Himself. God’s secret wisdom is that we are redeemed from the outside in; we are first sealed by His Spirit, and only then do we enter into a process by which we are, eventually, transformed. We are still sheep; but now we are His sheep, sheep in lamb’s clothing, on our way to becoming like Him.

*Lord – Help us to understand what you have freely given us; to accept your forgiveness along with your Lordship; and to accept that your transformation of us is a process you will work out in your own time. Amen*

Steve Orr

### Thursday, February 14

Psalm 50, 59, 60

Genesis 39:1-23

1 Corinthian 2:14-3:15

Mark 2:1-12

In today’s gospel lesson, friends of a paralytic go to extreme means to get him to the attention of the Son of Man. They lower the paralytic through the roof! Jesus, impressed by their act of faith, immediately forgives the man his sins. For the moment, however, the man remains unhealed. The religious scribes were incredulous! How could the paralytic’s sins be forgiven? Who are *we* to give that kind of authority?

Jesus takes this opportunity as a teaching moment. He observes that it is not easy for us to forgive sins. In fact, it may even be easier to heal the man than to forgive his sins! So that the scribes would know that Jesus had indeed forgiven the paralytic his sins, the Son of Man instructed him to get off the pallet and walk. And they were all amazed.

Why is it difficult for us to forgive the sins of others, or even more so our own sins? During this season of Lent, we give much thought to our mortality, our sinful nature, and our coming salvation. One of the challenges presented by our sinful nature is the inability to let go of sin. God has forgiven us when we have failed. Our church forgives us when we fall short. Now it is time to forgive ourselves as well.

Jenn & Scott Rushing

**Friday, February 15**

Psalm 103\*

Genesis 40:1-23

1 Corinthian 3:16-23

Mark 2:13-22

*Bless Yahweh, my soul.  
Never forget all his acts of kindness.  
He does not treat us as our sins deserve,  
nor repay us as our sins deserve,  
nor repay us as befits our offenses.  
As the height of heaven above earth,  
so strong is his faithful love for those who fear him.  
As the distance of east from west,  
So far from us does he put our faults.  
As tenderly as a father treats his children,  
so Yahweh treats those who fear him.*

Psalm 103:2, 10-13

**Saturday, February 16**

Psalm 55

Genesis 41:1-13

1 Corinthian 4:1-7

Mark 2:23-3:6

A Prayer by Henri Nouwen

*O Lord, look with favor on us, your people,  
and impart your love to us –  
not as in idea or concept,  
but as a lived experience.  
We can love each other  
only because you have loved us first.  
Let us know that first love  
so that we can see all human love  
as a reflection of a greater love,  
a love without conditions and limitations.  
Amen.*

## Second Sunday of Lent, February 17

Psalm 24, 29

Genesis 41:14-45

Romans 6:3-14

John 5:19-24

There are times in our lives when we are not sure where we are headed or how we will get there. Our confidence, skills, and self esteem may not gain us the answers we believe we deserve. Even the most important among us may find themselves without answers and have to give in to someone else. In Gen 41:14-45 Pharaoh turned to his closest allies and found nothing. No one could answer his questions about the strangest dreams he had ever had. He turned to someone he didn't know whose first response was "I cannot do it but God will provide the answer you desire."

Could it be we should turn to others who trust in God's guidance and believe they cannot do it either, only God can. Maybe we give up ourselves for Lent, our pride, our expertise, our words and let someone else step up and do God's work. As Joseph said to Pharaoh, "the matter has been firmly decided by God and God will do it soon."

*Be still and know that I am God.  
I am the Lord that healeth thee.  
My boundless mercy shall endure.  
I love you with a steadfast love.  
In the Lord I put my trust.*

Gary Stripling

## Monday, February 18

Psalm 56, 57, 58

Genesis 41:46-57

1 Corinthians 4:8-21

Mark 3:7-19a

The world's traffic of comings and goings tramples me.  
In God I trust, in Him I find rest.

The world piles on the stress and strife of daily life.  
I take refuge in the shadow of God's wing.

The world pollutes my heart and soul with its ideas and practices.  
I come to God for cleansing and renewal.

The world attacks me with teeth of greed and swords of anger.  
I am protected by God's steadfast Love.

The world tempts me with promises of success and acclaim.  
In God's will alone will be my glory.

*O, God, draw me ever nearer to you.  
Guide me to give trust, rest, refuge, and love to this needy world, according to Your will.  
Amen*

Jo Anne Beaty

## Tuesday, February 19

Genesis 42:1-17\*

1 Corinthians 5:1-8\*

Mark 3:19b-35\*

Psalms 62\*

These are stories of estrangement and yearning.

Joseph, having been raised up from slavery and prison to govern Egypt, is still yearning for the father he left behind and still suffering the scars of his brothers' cruel rejection. Facing his brothers again, he feels his way carefully, ad-libbing an encounter he couldn't have imagined, but glimpsing in the fulfillment of the dream-prophecy the hand of God mysteriously at work.

Paul, far from his beloved but erring Corinthian friends, rebukes them with his signature combination of indignation and tenderness. Deeply troubled by their complacency about sin, he yearns for them to return to their authentic selves-"as you really are."

Jesus, slandered in the most damning way possible by the scribes, is just as devastatingly misunderstood by those closest to him. His enemies claim he has a demon; his family is ready to certify him insane. "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother," he declares, expressing at once his estrangement from his blood relatives and his yearning toward the family made up of God's obedient followers.

The Psalmist knew the same struggles. "They fully intended to topple him from his lofty place"-that could be said of Joseph or Paul or Jesus as much as David. These readings ask us to pause in the moment of painful estrangement and unfulfilled longing. The Psalm teaches that in such times we must be content with knowing only "that you, O God, are strong, and that you, O God, are loving."

God's salvific plan will be fulfilled. Joseph later realized that his sojourn in Egypt, like Christ's passion, was ordained by God to "save your lives by a great deliverance" (Gen. 45:7). But in the season of Lent we are instructed to reflect on our participation in the suffering of Christ: our estrangement from the world and even from family, our yearning for restoration (like Joseph), purity (like Paul), and justice (like David). And we are instructed to strengthen our faith by believing in God's infinite power and infinite love even in the moments when our experience seems to contradict them-in the midst of those unfulfilled desires.

Susan Colón

## Wednesday, February 20

Psalm 72

Genesis 42:18-28

1 Corinthians 5:6-6:8

Mark 4:1-20\*

*Anyone who is willing to hear should listen and understand!*

In the parable of the sower, Jesus' command is two-fold: first, he calls those gathered to hear the *meaning* of the parable, not to stand on the outside and hear without understanding; second, he calls them to be like the good soil, to hear the word, accept it, and so produce a crop many times

what was sown. To be a person who listens is to be an insider—a follower of Christ.

In today's reading, Paul, too, discusses what it is to be an insider, to be held to a higher standard, to be one who would radically forgive those in the church who wrong her rather than insisting on her own rights. The divided church at Corinth hears Paul's challenging and paradoxical words: he demands that they expel the immoral, and yet he also challenges them to avoid disputes amongst themselves—to prefer to be wronged rather than to wrong. He demands perfect purity within the church, and yet forbids them to judge fellow believers who do them wrong.

These two radical elements exist still within the church. We strive to purify our body by chasing off the "immoral," and too often we end up as white-washed tombs, hiding the sins that we cannot confess for fear that we too shall be judged. Or we strive to accept all and be servants to all, and too often we end up compromised, brazenly displaying the sins we should be ashamed to acknowledge and refusing Christ's call to live holy lives.

In this time of Lent, let us strive to be radical insider-servants, willing to sacrifice everything for the good of another and of God and to abstain from judging our oppressor, even as we strive to purify ourselves and make ourselves free from the yeast that might spread through the church. Let us be so aware of our own need for righteousness and the mercy that makes it possible that we are unable to focus on the failings of others. As we, by his grace, reflect his blessing in our lives, others will be blessed. We will be true insiders who hear the Word and bear a crop many times what was sown. May DaySpring be a community of such "insiders."

*May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed. Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvelous deeds. Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen.*

## Thursday, February 21

Psalm 70, 71

Genesis 42:29-38

1 Corinthians 6:12-30

Mark 4:21-34

Lord, David's desires of salvation ring true when I hear them. There are so many times during the week that I say "Please, God, help me". And, like David, I often wish that people who are frustrating to me will themselves be frustrated. However, unlike David, I don't know of anyone seeking my life.

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In one sense, I'm fine -- I have all the food I could want, clothes and a place to sleep. However, the help I realize I need is spiritual. I'm worldly rich, but I'm spiritually poor.

My needs are met for today, but spiritually I am running on fumes.

David sounds anxious -- his haste is not very subtle:

- "Hasten, O God, to save me"
- "come quickly to help"
- "come quickly to help"
- "do not delay"

I, too, usually want help \*now\*. I'm impatient. God, is it okay to ask for help to come quickly, like David?

*Lord, please come quickly to meet my spiritual needs.*

## **Friday, February 22**

Psalm 69

Genesis 43:1-15

1 Corinthians 7:1-9

Mark 4:35-41\*

The disciples push off from the shore in a boat, leaving the crowds behind and letting the Teacher get some much needed sleep. Without warning, a storm breaks with such fury that they fear for their lives. This is not their first storm on the volatile lake—most of them have worked their whole lives on those waters. But, no matter how often one has faced that kind of storm, fear has a way of taking the helm. “Don’t you care, Jesus?” they scream. “Why are you asleep? Get up and panic with us!”

Jesus is incredulous. He asks, “Why are you afraid?” But his real question is, “Don’t you know who I am?”

And they don’t. When Jesus rebukes the storm like an unruly child—and it dutifully goes to time-out—the disciples only manage to stammer: “Who is this?” They have sailed with him many times, but they still don’t know *who* they have in the boat with them.

We are so often driven by fear. Sometimes it is caused by a furious squall; other times it is just an ominous breeze. In those times our faith grows thin and it is easy to doubt whether the Teacher cares. Perhaps we need to contemplate the question the disciples ask: *Who is this?*

*Lord, you command the wind and the waves, and yet, you are willing to grace our humble boat with your presence. We are so thankful. Help us not be afraid. To the storms in our lives, and to our troubled hearts, please say, “Peace...be still.” Amen.*

Cameron Jorgenson

## Saturday, February 23

Psalm 23\*

Genesis 43:16-34

1 Corinthians 7:10-24

Mark 5:1-20

“My Shepherd Will Supply My Need”

My Shepherd will supply my need:  
Jehovah is His Name;  
In pastures fresh He makes me feed,  
Beside the living stream.  
He brings my wandering spirit back  
When I forsake His ways,  
And leads me, for His mercy's sake,  
In paths of truth and grace.

When I walk through the shades of death  
Thy presence is my stay;  
One word of Thy supporting breath  
Drives all my fears away.  
Thy hand, in sight of all my foes,  
Doth still my table spread;  
My cup with blessings overflows,  
Thine oil anoints my head.

Words by Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

## Third Sunday of Lent, February 24

Psalm 93, 96

Genesis 44:1-17

Roman 8:1-10\*

John 5:25-29

*The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace (Romans 8:6).*

This Pauline statement is enough to get me up early, reading more Psalms and meditating longer so that my mind can be spiritually controlled and my share of the “life and peace” spigot flows unimpeded. Lectionary breakfast companions remind me that the spiritual spigot flows more freely when human encouragement and Jesus’ example are added to my solitary devotion. We humans were advised by God to listen to Jesus, His beloved son. Close listening to those God puts in our paths is another spigot cleaner, especially listening to counsel from a special friend or a spouse. The word *controlled* lends itself to the idea of a daily submission of expectations and viewpoints to the greater plan of God.

*May we continue to submit our wills to a loving God who somehow blends the mix of our devotions, relationships, and submission into a path of life and peace.*

Nan Rentz

## Monday, February 25

Psalms 77\*, 79\*, 80\*

Genesis 44:18-34

1 Corinthians 7:25-31

Mark 5:21-43

In each one of these Psalms the poet asks a similar question: Is His mercy gone? Has God left us forever? How long will He be absent? How long will God be angry? It's easy for us to read the account in Mark about the sick woman whose own blood had betrayed her – a woman who had spent all she had in a desperate but futile attempt to be better – and imagine her asking similar questions. We may even hear her asking herself the question Jarius' servant asks when he delivers the news: why do you bother the Master?

Jesus' answer, though not simple is of course "Be not afraid, only believe."

*Remember not our iniquities, Lord we pray, for we are brought very low; deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake (79:8, 9). Teach us, Lord we pray, to remember: to remember your works, to meditate on all of your doings, to see nature as a reminder that your ways are above and are not known to us (77:18, 19).*

Dan Train

## Tuesday, February 26

Psalm 78

Genesis 45:1-15

I Corinthians 7:32-40

Mark 6:1-13\*

The idea that we could limit what God can do does not sit very well with me. Think about it. Really, think about it. You and me, the created, limiting the work of God.

The townspeople were astonished at Jesus' teaching and miracles. They could see and hear what he could do. That is until they realized who it was. "That's Mary's son. He can't do that. We know his family", was heard in the crowd.

Their unbelief caused the miracles and teaching to stop. It wasn't as if they didn't see the miracles and hearing the teaching so they knew he could do it. Their eyes could see it and their ears could hear it, but their minds said it couldn't be.

Trying to tell God what he is capable of has always been a way to get Him to show what he is capable of not doing. The miracles and teaching didn't stop. He just went somewhere else. Thank God.

*God, after all the miracles that I have seen in my life may I never cause you to wonder at my unbelief. I want to believe; help my unbelief. May you never stop working through me.*

Jason Craig

**Wednesday, February 27**

Psalm 81

Genesis 45:16-28

I Corinthians 8:1-13

Mark 6:13-29

The spiritual life is a gift. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit, who lifts us up into the kingdom of God's love. But to say that being lifted up into the kingdom is a divine gift does not mean that we wait passively until the gift is offered to us. Jesus tells us to set our hearts on the kingdom. Setting our hearts on something involves not only serious aspiration but also strong determination. A spiritual life requires human effort. The forces that keep pulling us back into a worry-filled life are far from easy to overcome.

Henri Nouwen

**Thursday, February 28**

Psalm 42, 43, 85, 86

Genesis 46:1-7, 28-34

I Corinthians 9:1-15

Mark 6:30-46

**Let us come away to a deserted place  
all by ourselves and rest for awhile.**

Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
And why are you disquieted within me?

**Let me be transformed.**

My soul longs for You;  
My soul thirsts for You.

**Let me be transformed.**

Bend your ear to me, O Lord;  
Hear me and answer me,  
For I am broken and needy.

**Let me be transformed.**

Gladden the soul of your servant  
For to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

**Let me be transformed.**

You, O Lord, are good and forgiving,  
You abound in steadfast love to all  
Who call on you.

**Let me be transformed.**

Bend your ear to me, O Lord;  
Hear my prayer, my cries;  
I believe that you will answer me.

**Let me be transformed.**

Teach me your ways, O Lord;  
Give me an undivided heart.

**Let me be transformed.**

**Let us come away to a deserted place  
all by ourselves and rest for awhile.**

Regina Easley-Young

**Friday, February 29**

Psalm 88

Genesis 47:1-26

I Corinthians 9:16-27

Mark 6:47-56

A Prayer by Henri Nouwen

*Dear Lord, you once said,  
“The will of him who sent me  
is that I should lose nothing  
of all that he has given to me.”*

*These words are a source of consolation this day.  
They show that you are doing all that can be done  
to keep me in your love.*

*They show me that indeed  
you entered this world to save me,  
to free me from the bonds of evil and sin,  
and to lead me to your Father’s house.*

*They reveal that you are willing  
To struggle against the strong powers  
Which pull me away from you.*

*Lord, you want to keep me, hold on to me,  
Fight for me, protect me, help me, support me,  
comfort me, and present me to your father.*

*It is indeed your divine task not to lose me!  
and yet I am free.*

*I can separate myself from you,  
and you will never take this freedom away from me.*

*Oh, what a wonder of love,  
What a mystery of divine grace!  
Please, Lord, let me freely choose for your love  
so that I will not be lost to you.*

*Amen.*

**Saturday, March 1**

Psalm 90

Genesis 47:27-48:7

I Corinthians 10:1-13\*

Mark 7:1-23

When Paul speaks of putting “Christ to the test,” it is perhaps appropriate to think of our assumption that, if we are faithful Christians, our lives will turn out well—that we will enjoy prosperity and success, that we will not know suffering and pain, and that we will be spared the betrayals and persecutions that afflict others. We grumble against God, therefore, when our pious devotion does not produce happy results. A lady who shared this conception of the Christian life once asked, after I had given a lecture in Cornwall, whether I had noticed that people who don’t believe in Jesus come to a sticky end. I could not help replying, “I thought that Jesus himself came

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to a sticky end.” Many of us will indeed die “stickily”—either of disease or accident or disappointment, perhaps even in a terrorist strike. But this is not what matters. What counts is whether we have lived by God’s own faithfulness to us.

One of the shortest sentences in our Lenten reading may be the most essential: “So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall.” It is not by chance that the word “humility” is rooted in the Latin *humus*, just plain ordinary dirt. To stand falsely is to be guilty of *superbia*, the pride that holds us literally over others as we look down on them from above, from a stance far removed from the ground. John Calvin regarded humility as the greatest of the virtues, declaring that the only true growth in grace is growth in humility. The greater our humility the greater our knowledge that we need more of it. The highest pagan enjoyment, declared G. K. Chesterton, is self-enjoyment, extending the ego to infinity. Christians hold to the opposite view that “the fullest possible enjoyment is to be found by reducing our ego to zero.” Thinking oneself sufficient to stand alone is the greatest temptation; the faithfulness of God in sparing us such egotism, replacing it with Lenten humility, is our only hope to live and thus to die rightly.

Ralph Wood

#### **Fourth Sunday of Lent, March 2**

Psalm 19\*

Genesis 48:8-22

Romans 8:11-25

John 6:27-40

The God whom we long to know is reverently mysterious. He is, by His very nature, a being that is categorically different from us. Yet, there is a profound “closeness” about Him – this deepens the mystery of God. This “closeness” is most evidently expressed in the Gospel message – the good news about Jesus the Christ – delivered to us in the New Testament. However, glimpses of the truths that are fully revealed in Christ can also be seen in many places throughout the Jewish Scriptures, the Old Testament; such is the case with Psalm 19.

The psalmist begins his song with a personification of the cosmos, telling that it “declare[s] the glory of God” and “proclaim[s] the work of His hands” (v.1). After describing how the created world tells of God, the author then begins to speak about the virtuous law of God, using words and phrases such as “perfect,” “trustworthy,” “right,” “pure,” “sure,” “more precious than gold,” “sweeter than honey,” and “great reward” to describe it. Finally, the focus turns to the heart’s response to these revelations of God – repentance. The psalmist is moved to confess his sinfulness, both hidden and willful, and to request the Almighty’s forgiveness.

This response should not be surprising, since encountering God’s greatness and grace through the created order and His holy law has a way of bringing us to the humbling realization of our sin and need for redemption. There is a moral consequence to our experience with the Holy God. As Paul suggests, it is “God’s kindness [that] leads you to repentance” (Rom. 2:4). The God who spoke into existence the entire universe from nothing is the same God who speaks a word of loving correction and forgiveness to our hearts as we submit our lives to Him.

During this season of Lent, the focus is on penitence and repentance. It is here that we stand in clear view of the crucified and resurrected Jesus, in whom God has most directly shown his loving-kindness and through whom He sustains His mystery. Our sin is dissolved by the love of

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Christ and His sacrifice for us. We are, therefore, obliged to offer ourselves as “living sacrifices” for Him (Rom. 12:1). May we pray as the psalmist did after he had experienced God’s holiness: “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer” (Ps. 19:14).

Roy A. Bradley

**Monday, March 3**

Psalm 89\*

Genesis 49:1-28

I Corinthians 10:14-11:21

Mark 7:24-37

Praying with the Psalmist

*I will sing of the Lord's great love forever...  
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne...  
Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you...*

**Voice your own prayers of praise and adoration.**

*But you rejected, you have spurned,  
you have been very angry with your anointed one...  
How long, O Lord? Will you hide yourself forever?  
How long will your wrath burn like fire...*

**Voice the troubling, honest questions about life.**

*Remember how fleeting is my life...  
Remember, Lord, how your servant has been mocked...*

**Voice those things you want God to remember.**

*Praise be to the Lord forever!  
Amen and Amen.*

**Tuesday, March 4**

Psalm 100\*

Genesis 49:29-50:14

I Corinthians 11:17-34\*

Mark 8:1-10

We have been given a heritage of hospitality, we followers of Christ. Hospitality is about committing to be present to one another's physical, spiritual, and emotional needs. Amid the busy schedules or even the peace and quiet we protect with our families, it says something when we invite another to hear our stories and share our days. It takes intentionality and time. It's less about the food and the linens, and more about offering up a piece of ourselves. Our bodily

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hunger can be a great reminder for our spiritual hunger, if we will let it. In this season of fasting, allow yourself to be present to your hunger. Take the time to ponder what needs you have as well as what ways you might meet the needs of others around you.

What would you need to lay aside to be fully present? May God give you those you can love and be loved by. May you take the time and space to be present to yourself, to others, and to God. May you give thanks to the LORD, who satisfies your hunger.

*Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.  
Worship the Lord with gladness;  
come into his presence with singing.*

*Know that the Lord is God.  
It is he that made us, and we are his;  
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
and his courts with praise.  
Give thanks to him, bless his name.*

*For the Lord is good;  
his steadfast love endures for ever,  
and his faithfulness to all generations.*

Jennifer Giles

### **Wednesday, March 5**

Psalm 101  
Genesis 50:15-26  
I Corinthians 12:1-11  
Mark 8:11-26

Prayer heals. Not just the answer to prayer. When we give up our competition with God and offer God every part of our heart, holding back nothing at all, we come to know God's love for us and discover how safe we are in his embrace. Once we know again that God has not rejected us, but keeps us close to his heart, we can find again the joy of living, even though God might guide our life in a different direction from our desires.

Henri Nouwen

### **Thursday, March 6**

Psalms 69, 73  
Exodus 1:6-22  
I Corinthians 12:12-26 \*  
Mark 8:27-9:1

A second grade teacher once told me after a troubling day in the classroom to list each one of my students on a sheet of paper. Then, she instructed me to list the attributes, gifts, and unique  
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qualities that each student brought to the classroom. By the time I reached my last student, I couldn't help but think back over the day that I had and become so frustrated when I thought about the day that I had with this student. She was the reason I was so frazzled. But, as I began listing the qualities that made her so special to our classroom, I realized that without her, our classroom would be missing a major part. She was so compassionate and always rooted for the underdog. Her position in our room was one of great worth. There is so much we can learn from this passage in Corinthians about how a group works together. In any group of people there is such a strong variety, but they form one body and should be committed to, or belong to, one another. Each member of the group has a gift to use. Let us remember that a healthy body is one in which each member is playing their part and sharing their gifts.

*Lord, enlighten us today to how we can continue to share our unique gifts with one another so that our congregation will continue to function well like a healthy body where each member is playing its part.*

Rachel Craig

### **Friday, March 7**

Psalm 107

Exodus 2:1-22

I Corinthians 12:27-13:3

Mark 9:2-13\*

Mark chapters 8-10 is perhaps one of the saddest sections in all of the gospels. It chronicles the utter failure of the disciples to understand Jesus. Here in our section, we see this failure in the juxtaposition of the glory and the suffering involved in the good news. As Jesus is transfigured, Peter says something extremely stupid, "hey, lets make some tents for you (Jesus), Elijah, and Moses." He thinks that the gospel should be filled with only glory. He, and the other disciples still do not understand what Jesus has been trying to beat into their heads—that he must suffer and die on the cross, and they must suffer as well. Furthering the image of the obtuse disciples, they do not understand the concept of the resurrection, and then ask about obscure prophesies. Unfortunately, the situation does not get better within the gospel of Mark. The last we see or hear from the disciples is the threefold denial of Peter.

Let this passage remind us of the weakness of our understanding of Jesus and God. Let it bring us to a state of humility before God, realizing that our faith is imperfect, yet God is gracious. Let us also take comfort in the fact that we are not the first, nor the greatest, to be brought to our intellectual knees by the mysteries of the gospel.

Keith Reich

## Saturday, March 8

Psalm 102\*

Exodus 2:23-3:15\*

I Corinthians 13:1-13\*

Mark 9:14-29

*Hear our prayer, O Lord. Open the eyes of our hearts this day.*

*Help us to see our place within your plan.*

*Are we the ones who need to be heard?*

*Or are we the ones, like Moses, who need to become part of your deliverance this day.*

*Cheer our hearts with the news that we will be heard by you.*

*Help us to see those who are still crying out and praying prayers that we can help to answer.*

*We confess that we know what love is, but we let much of the day pass without loving others.*

*Let us be gathered into your loving plan this day.*

*Let us be gathered into your love.*

*Amen.*

## Fifth Sunday of Lent, March 9

Psalm 118, 145

Exodus 3:16-4:12\*

Romans 12:1-2

John 8:46-59

Psychology studies reveal that the single greatest fear of people is public speaking. In fact, more people fear public speaking than fear death. Perhaps it should not surprise us that even Moses, the leader of Israel's exodus from Egypt, responded to God's call with deep anxiety about his rhetorical ability. Upon hearing that Yahweh's intention was to free the Israelite slaves from their Egyptian taskmasters, Moses initially wondered if anyone would believe him that he spoke on God's authority. Once Yahweh gave him "traveling signs" of a serpent-transforming staff and a miraculously-healed leprous hand, Moses' fear of being "slow of speech and slow of tongue" surfaced. Moses did not question God's ability to free the slaves from the mightiest nation on earth, but he did question God's ability to speak through him!

Scripture does not exhort those who love the Lord to speak eloquently. Rather, Scripture exhorts God's people to proclaim that God's steadfast love endures forever. The people of the Lord are not commanded to achieve a certain level of rhetorical ability. The people of the Lord are urged to give thanks to the Lord, to take refuge in the Lord, and to bless the name of the Lord forever and ever.

Whether we are speaking to strangers, or giving thanks to the Lord – the narrative of Scripture reminds us that we can speak with confidence that God is with us in our speech, and listening to our prayers - for we are all "slow of speech and slow of tongue."

Scott Rushing

## **Monday, March 10**

Psalm 31\*

Exodus 4:10-31

I Corinthians 14:1-19

Mark 9:30-41

In this psalm are the famous words uttered by Jesus during his crucifixion, “Into your hands I commit my spirit.” In the context from which this phrase originates we see more clearly why this particular psalm was in his mind. It evokes a crying out to God for salvation during a time when the psalmist’s enemies have overtaken him. It speaks a prayer that is both a petition for rescue as well as action against his slanderers. How raw and genuine are these words, not covered in civility and politeness, but desperate and angry. How honest are we with God when we experience trouble in our lives? Are we so conditioned to “think positively” and “look on the bright side” of our relationships and circumstances that even our prayers to Jehovah lack the brute honesty that the psalmist utters? Does this reveal a lack of trust and faith, and does it prevent faith and trust to grow deeper in our most eternal relationship?

Father, hear our prayers for help in our desperate hours. Grant that we might trust You to hear us and have mercy on us when all seems dark and beyond hope.

Jerry Z. Park

## **Tuesday, March 11**

Psalm 121\*

Exodus 5:1-6:1

I Corinthians 14:20-40

Mark 9:42-50

Lift up your eyes this day...  
to the one who made heaven and earth...  
to the one who will not let you be moved...  
to the one who neither sleeps nor slumbers...  
to the one who keeps you and gives you shade...  
to the one who guards your coming and going forevermore.

Lift up your eyes this day, for you know where your help comes from!

## **Wednesday, March 12**

Psalm 130\*

Exodus 7:8-24

2 Corinthians 2:14-3:6

Mark 10:1-16

St. Augustine once wrote that “The grace of God does not find men fit for salvation, but makes them so.” Thousands of years before the announcement was made that Jesus came “to save his people from their sins,” believers experienced the grace of God. And so the psalmist confesses: “If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.” Eugene Peterson paraphrases this latter verse saying: “As it

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turns out, forgiveness is your habit, and that's why you're worshipped." Note then that this Psalm is not so much a confession to God for forgiveness, but rather it is a confession of a God of forgiveness. It is not because of anything we do but rather because of who God is that makes him available to us. Confessing sin is surely a part of our Christian life, but surely so is praising God for his forgiving nature, that your iniquities go "unmarked." So in this Lenten season, in whatever "depths" you find yourself, call on the Lord, wait for him, hope on him, knowing all along that "it is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities." As it turns out, forgiveness is God's habit!

*Let us, with a gladsome mind  
Praise the Lord, for he is kind;  
For his mercies shall endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure (John Milton).*

Brian Brewer

### **Thursday, March 13**

Psalm 140

Exodus 7:25-8:19

2 Corinthians 3:7-18

Mark 10:17-31

A Prayer by Henri Nouwen

*Dear Lord, show me your kindness and your gentleness,  
you who are meek and humble of heart.  
So often I say to myself, "The Lord loves me."  
Yet time and again I have to confess  
that I have not let your love descend fully  
from my mind into my heart.  
In the coming weeks, O Lord,  
I will be able to see again  
how much you indeed love me.  
Let these weeks become an opportunity for me  
to let go of all my resistances to your love  
and an occasion for you to call me closer to you.  
Amen.*

### **Friday, March 14**

Psalm 22, 143

Exodus 9:13-35

2 Corinthians 4: 1-12

Mark 10:32-45

This Side of Paradise

The aforementioned readings led me to one conclusion. We are so very far from paradise. One only has to look at the world we live in. Daddy's leave. Children Starve. People kill each other. We are so very far from paradise. The hail comes. Sometimes through no fault of our own.

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Marriages fail. People lose jobs. We are so very far from paradise. God is distant. The silence is deafening. Loneliness grips our soul. We are so very far from paradise. Wars rage. Lions roar. Evil pervades. We are so very far from paradise. Yet even in the midst of this, something miraculous emerges. Light penetrates the darkness. The loneliness is filled. God's presence is evident. In the simple. In the sacred. In a stranger. In a touch. In the unexpected. In a moment. In a glimpse. In our hearts. In the unseen. And we know. Oh, how we know. That even though we are so very far from paradise a new dawn always awaits. God's grace and mercy will eventually show up. And we can be free. If only for a moment.

Rebecca Christian

### **Saturday, March 15**

Psalm 137

Exodus 10:21-11:8

Mark 10:46-52

2 Corinthians 4:13-18\*

### Looks Are Deceiving

I'm now 55 years old and the older I get, the more clearly I see that looks are deceiving, that things often aren't the way they appear.

In junior high, I thought that the rebellious, dangerous risk-takers were really cool because all the girls liked them. But over the years most of them have ended up dead or in jail or addicted to something. In high school, I thought that the up-and-coming youth evangelists were really cool because they could pack a football stadium with teenagers. But most of them have choked on their own egos and ended up on the sidelines. In college I thought that certain of my professors, who were pretty cynical and critical of traditional church life and morality, were cool. But they have stayed trapped in their own cynicism and haven't contributed much to making the world better. Looks are often deceiving.

In our passage, Paul gives a different viewpoint. In verses 8-10, he had noted that he was afflicted in every way, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down. In worldly terms, he was a loser. He wasn't wealthy or admired in the community. He had rebelled against societal norms and values and so wasn't much respected. He had rejected the traditions and values of his family and his childhood religion. His life was very difficult and he was at this point about my age. He had spent the previous twenty or so years as a vagabond preacher with no house building up equity, no 401k, and no grandchildren bouncing on his knee.

But in verse 16 he wrote "we do not lose heart," i.e. he did not give up. Even though his outer nature, his physical body, was wasting away as he aged, his inner nature was being progressively transformed (a DaySpring-type emphasis). So, he embraced this difficult life, which he called only a "slight momentary affliction," because it was separating him from the world and its values and it was bringing him closer to God, to eternal things. The "things that are seen," like money and being admired and conforming to society's expectations, are "transient" – they have no permanent value and do not touch the eternal plane. But he was focused on the "things that are unseen," the things that are eternal and touch the divine plane.

He had learned to see behind the veil of illusion and to see things as they are.

Doyle Young

## **Palm Sunday, March 16**

Psalm 31, 118

Isaiah 50:4-9a\*

Philippians 4:5-11

Luke 19:28-40\*

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-40) on the Sunday before Passover is a great puzzle, isn't it? Why did he do it? Why did Jesus ever "set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31) where he knew he would be betrayed and killed? Long has the Church sought an answer to these questions in the "suffering servant" songs in the book of Isaiah. In those passages, the nation of Israel is pictured as a servant who voluntarily represents before God, through its own pain and suffering and rejection, all the peoples of the world who have turned their backs upon God.

In the lectionary readings for today, Isaiah 50:4-9a compares the suffering servant to a teacher who can "sustain the weary with a word." Rather than a know-it-all instructor who is proud of his own academic credentials and accomplishments, the servant is a humble learner who listens for the voice of the sovereign Yahweh, for "Morning by morning he wakens—wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught." This teacher's transformation is Yahweh's doing: "The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward."

We should ask two crucial questions: In what sense was Jesus and Israel's suffering *for us*? How is God opening our ears at DaySpring so that we may sustain the weary world with a word of grace?

Bob Kruschwitz

## **Monday of Holy Week, March 17**

Psalm 36:5-11

Isaiah 42:1-9

Hebrews 9:11-15

John 12:1-11\*

*And Mary took a pound of costly perfume, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. But Judas, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold and the money given to the poor?" Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me."*

Jesus' response to a disciple pretending to be concerned for the poor never fails to shock us, no matter how many times we hear it. We're not shocked because we learn that Jesus knows Judas' heart, but because Jesus says, in effect, "Be extravagant, Mary!" Especially in an age when our consciousness of global hunger is stronger than ever, when a portion of our tithe is designated to aid the poor, and we at DaySpring (rightly) remind one another of the cold and hungry in our "prayers for the world" during worship services, Judas' question seems to make sense.

And yet, as Jesus travels to the cross he knows there will be plenty of mourning, plenty of pain for his followers and even for himself. His own extravagant gift – giving up his life on the cross – will soon leave persons in pain, in a state of confusion. Jesus knows on this day that Mary too has given all that she has out of love. He alone understands and accepts her generous offering. Though death is immanent, Jesus – the same Jesus who was concerned for the poor – knows that this is an occasion to permit extravagance. Many Jews living in his era would have concurred.

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In reading this passage during Lent, the Church acknowledges that there is a rhythm not only to the Church year, but to all of life. A former pastor of ours used to say “you can’t fully know the joy of Easter without knowing the pain of Good Friday, the feelings of utter abandonment on Holy Saturday.” Similarly, rich and poor alike know the joy of births, baptisms, friendships, weddings – even getting that first steady job – precisely because they have also witnessed or experienced funerals, broken relationships of all kinds, and vocational regrets.

“A trip to Romania? Merely to ‘visit’ missionaries?!?” ... “*Another* baby shower?” ... “An entire week of the year dedicated to Expressions?” ... These are questions our family has asked aloud during our years in Waco, and not without some emotion. And yet, as we read John, we are reminded of a Jesus who changes water into wine at a wedding, who takes the “long way” to Jerusalem to see some old friends, who allows more than one woman to break open the “expensive stuff” in his honor. In Jesus, then, we are confronted both with one who at times asks us to give up things to the point that we are dismissed as “fanatics,” and at the same time to make investments that appear wasteful, or unproductive, on the world’s terms. There is certainly a time for disciplined fasting, but also for feasting – rooted in love for the Triune God and His Body, the Church. As death looms this week, may we therefore be “disciplined” enough to identify with our Lord’s suffering, but also with his extravagance. Amen.

Scott and Shannon Bullard

### **Tuesday of Holy Week, March 18**

Psalm 71:1-14

Isaiah 49:1-7

I Corinthians 1:18-31

John 12:23-27\*

### This Hour

*As the day of Jesus’ crucifixion approached he said “Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—Father, save me from this hour”? No, it is for this reason I have come to this hour” (27).*

The wisdom of the Cross obliterates the wisdom of the world. The wisdom of the world endlessly seeks insulation from life. We want to experience life without hassle or hardship. We want to be left free to pursue our careers and our cars and our houses without distraction or aggravation. When we are unfortunate enough to encounter trouble, we immediately look for the way out. This is the wisdom of the world.

This “wisdom,” certainly, provides some sort of protection from life’s troubles. But the very thing that provides insulation from life’s troubles also insulates us from Life itself. We find we are cut off from community, from creation...for all things of importance are also sure sources of aggravation. However, as we look at the results of our insulated (fragmented) lives we must begin to wonder at the value of it.

The Wisdom of Jesus and the Wisdom of the Cross beckon us to be present to all that life brings. It calls us to look for a way *through* rather than a way *out*. This “hour,” this season of Lent calls us to be present in the suffering of Christ (v. 26). And if we, as a community, walk *through* this season, we will be changed. We will do more than feel guilty for a few weeks before Easter. The insulation will be stripped away. We will be present to the opportunities of service that this hour brings.

Matt Sciba

## Wednesday of Holy Week, March 19

Psalm 70\*

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Hebrews 12:1-3

John 13:21-32\*

*Yet I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God.  
You are my help and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay.*

*After he said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified,  
“I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.”*

I don't feel poor or needy and if Jesus returned today, I would probably have lots of explaining to do, so I find myself reluctant to pray “come quickly...do not delay.” I would rather hope that God's next coming will coincide with my schedule—I'll have plenty of time to get my act together and be ready. If I continue thinking and living along these lines, I'm sure I'm in for a rude awakening. Probably not unlike the disciples' shock when Jesus said, “one of you is going to betray me.” Many sermons interpret John's question, “Who is it?” to mean that all of the disciples considered it possible that each of them could be the one. I understand the point—I could be the one, but I rationalize that at least I've never stood in public and denied that I knew Jesus. Maybe that's the point I really need to hear. If I live self-sufficiently, inverting the relationship—making God fit my schedule and my lifestyle—I've already “betrayed” what I know to be true—I'm the creature in need of a savior. May the truth of my need and the truth of God's love for me break in upon my reality.

Doug Rogers

## Maundy Thursday, March 20

Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

Exodus 12:1-42

I Corinthians 11:23-36\*

John 13:1-17, 31-35\*

We all know the line:

*You will never wash my feet.*

And we know Peter's next fumbling error, too:

*Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head.*

And on most days, we laugh, but we know deep down we make the same errors.

We usually do not want the right things, or we want too much of good things. The Corinthians were also celebrating the Lord's Supper by eating too much and then leaving too little for the others who came to the table. They, like Peter, had misunderstandings about the meaning of ritual acts.

The first time we celebrated Communion after Burt resigned, I was surprised and relieved to hear Chris speak the words that have become ritual for DaySpring: *Come, take all of it.*

(continued)

I only realized the meaning those words have had for me when I wondered if I would continue hearing them. But Chris or Regina, or whoever speaks the words of institution at Dayspring continues to remind us what this ritual means for us. This sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for all who would take part in it. No one gets left out of the meal, and as we celebrate the meal on Maundy Thursday we somehow feel closer to the suffering of our Lord.

But, *Come, take all of it* does not mean that we need to be washed all over. It means that we need to be fully present to the moment and let it do all its work on our souls. Take in, as much as you can, the full meaning of this meal. *Take all of it.*

Amber Inscore Essick

### **Good Friday, March 21**

Psalm 22

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Hebrews 10:16-25

John 18:1-19:42\*

### The Day Called “Good”

Good Friday is one of the holiest days in the Christian calendar. It is the day on which we commemorate and celebrate God’s sacrificial outpouring in and through the death of Jesus. It is in the Paschal Mystery that we see most clearly “God in Christ reconciling the world.” Each of the four Gospels records a distinctive portrait of the death of Jesus, and in each, the last words of Jesus serve as the focal point. In Mark and Matthew, Jesus utters only one word, the cry of dereliction from Psalm 22: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34; Matt 27:46). In Luke, Jesus speaks thrice from the cross, words of forgiveness and trust: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34a); “Amen, I say to you, this day with me you shall be in paradise.” (Luke 23:43); “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” (Luke 23:46).

In John’s passion narrative, we find three more sayings, all of which contribute to the picture of a Christ in control of his destiny: “Woman, behold for your son.... Behold, your mother.” (John 19:26-27). Here Jesus is taking care of business; one of his last acts is to blend his family of flesh with his family of faith. “I thirst.” He said this in order to fulfill scripture (John 19:28). Even here, a saying that on first blush seems to reflect Jesus’ humanity, was uttered, so John claims, in order to fulfill the Scriptures. And the final words of Jesus in John, “It is finished” (John 19:30) indicate that Jesus chooses the moment of his death only after the business of the cross are finished; and only then does he “give up his Spirit.”

The great Roman Catholic biblical scholar, Fr. Raymond Brown, summarizes the canonical portrait of Jesus’ death this way. The Matthean/Markan Jesus in the passion narrative is the forsaken Christ who “plumbs the depth of abandonment only to be vindicated”; the Lucan Jesus is the forgiving Christ who “worries about others and gently dispenses forgiveness”; the Johannine Jesus is the triumphant king who “reigns victoriously from the cross in control of all that happens. . . . It is important that some be able to see the head bowed in dejection, while others observe the arms outstretched in forgiveness, and still others perceive in the title on the cross the proclamation of a reigning king” In truth, we need all four of these portraits even to begin to fathom the marvelous Mystery of Jesus’ saving death. No wonder we call this Friday “Good”!

Mikeal Parsons

## **Holy Saturday, March 22**

Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16

Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24\*

I Peter 4:1-8

John 19:38-42\*

### Pause and Ponder

Well, we've come a long way during this season and hopefully been transformed in the process. In the last few days we've seen palms thrown at Jesus...and stones. We've heard folks cheer him...and taunt him. We've watched God's anointed enter Jerusalem on a donkey...and taken out on a cross. Palm Sunday is behind us and Jesus is no longer nailed to the tree, but lest we move too quickly to his resurrection the *Apostles' Creed* rightly reminds us that he "was buried" and "descended to the dead." We, like Joseph and Nicodemus, find ourselves surrounded by certain death. So, we turn our attention this day – Holy Saturday – to observe the silence and stillness surrounding the entombment of our Lord. It is unlikely that this entire day can be spent in silence, but find time, nay, make time to pause and ponder. Pause to reflect on the journey thus far; ponder what it means to confess "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."