

**Ash Wednesday - March 6, 2019**

Joel 2:1-2,12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12, 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10, Matthew 6:1-6,16-21,

Psalm 103 or 103:8-14

Presented by Jean Kernen

Recently, I was gifted with a lovely blank notebook with a note explaining this is to be my “Happy Book” by writing each day in it something that made me happy.

Not a problem. Then along comes Lent and thoughts of years past when I had to think about what to give up, chocolate for sure and what to take on? Now in my “senior years,” in preparation for Ash Wednesday I kept re-reading the collect, lessons, psalm and Gospel and came to the conclusion that for me Lent is not all about sack cloth and ashes, sacrifice, “mea culpas” it is more about God’s love, compassion and forgiveness.

In meditating on these readings it makes me not only happy but also very, very thankful. My “Happy Book” fills up and “my cup runneth over”. This Lent consider happy thanks in your giving, daily reading, praying and yes singing too.

**Thursday after Ash Wednesday - March 7, 2019**

Deuteronomy 30:15–20, Luke 9:18–25, Psalm 1

Presented by Doris Steeg

From Richard Rohr

Try reading the following ideas in a contemplative way:

***Christ is everywhere.***

***In Him every kind of life has a meaning and a solid connection.***

***Every life has an influence on every other kind of life.***

Jesus Christ came to earth so ***“they all may be one” (John 17:21).***

And ***“to reconcile all things in himself, everything in heaven and everything on earth” (Colossians 1:20).***

Pick one idea and linger with it. Focus on the words until they engage your body, your heart, your awareness of the physical world around you, and most especially your core connection with a larger field. Sit with the idea and, if need be, read it again until you feel its impact, until you can imagine its larger implications for the world, for history, and for you, (In other words, until ***“the word becomes flesh!***)

**Friday after Ash Wednesday - March 8, 2019**

Isaiah 58:1–9a, Matthew 9:10–17, Psalm 51:1–10

Presented by Maria Gonzalez

“They’ll Know We Are Christians” is one of the first hymns I can remember singing in church. It’s also a favorite at High School Youth Conferences. Young people, ninth through twelfth grade, link arms to sing: “And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, Yeah, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.” These lyrics teach us that our faith is defined by love—a lesson we too often forget. Isaiah 58:1-9a reminds us that faithfulness is not about fasting, or even humbling ourselves before God. Faithfulness is about our ability to trust in God, to follow the commandments with a true heart; it’s about our capacity and willingness to love our neighbor. Today, aim to love others wholeheartedly and without reservation. Love friends and family. Recognize injustice; love the hungry, the vulnerable, and the oppressed. Love the least, the last, and the lost. Cast away selfishness. They will know we are Christians by our.

***Dear God, open my heart and give me strength. Help me show others the same love that you have shown me. Amen.***

**Saturday after Ash Wednesday - March 9, 2019**

Isaiah 58:9b–14, Luke 5:27–32, Psalm 86:1–11

Presented by Sylvia Poyner

**What is Spirituality?**

Sometimes people get the mistaken notion that spirituality is a separate department of life, the penthouse of our existence. But rightly understood, it is a vital awareness that pervades all realms of our being. Someone will say, "I come alive when I listen to music", or "I come to life when I garden", or "I come alive when I play golf". Where ever we come alive, that is the area in which we are spiritual. And then we can say "I know at least how one is spiritual in that area". To be vital awake, aware in all areas of our lives, is the task that is never accomplished, but it remains the goal!

Brother David Steindl-Rast (Benedictine Monk)

**First Sunday in Lent - March 10, 2019**

Deuteronomy 26:1-11, Romans 10:8b-13, Luke 4:1-13, Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

Presented by Jessie and Mack McKenzie

**Reflection:** In the Gospel story, Jesus resists the temptation of the devil, because he is anchored in both his love of the Father and the Father’s love for him.

The Psalm gives us the scripture that the devil twisted in the gospel, but it also gives us the rest of the story, which is the key, and that is cleaving to God in love. When we cleave to God in love having called on God as stated at the end of the passage from Romans, there is no distinction. This is where we are to live, recognizing that we are separated from God and brought back to God through Jesus the Christ. We also have to love God, as Jesus loved God, and trust that it is the same love that comes back to us from our Father in Heaven. Then we are living in the fullness that comes from being in right relationship with the God who created all, and who will bless us in ways that even our neighbors will notice and give thanks to God. It may not be easy, or the way we would want it, but as we look to Easter we can see a result that will surpass our imagination.

**Monday in the First Week of Lent - March 11, 2019**

Leviticus 19:1–2,11–18, Matthew 25:31–46, Psalm 19:7–14

Presented by Roberta Newell

Matthew 25:31–46

When I read this, it seems to be a call to action, a call to become involved and to see other as beloved children of God. If you are like me, the problems seem so big and so many issues, like homelessness, children going to school hungry (I was hungry and you gave me no food); the school to prison pipe line (I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me), racism and immigration (I was a stranger and you welcomed me). What can I do, and will it make a difference?

I was reading Draw the Circle the 40 - Day Prayer Challenge by Mark Batterson, he talked about God rejoicing in the smallest step we take in the right direction, that God starts rejoicing when we just get started. Here are his words; “Like a parent that celebrates a baby’s first step, our heavenly Father rejoices when we take the smallest of steps in the right direction. And those small steps become leaps in God’s kingdom. If we do the little things, God will do the big things. But we have to do the little things like they are big things.” ~ Mark Batterson.

This lent what small step do we need to take in our community? ‘So we hear ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’

**Tuesday in the First Week of Lent - March 12, 2019**

Isaiah 55:6–11, Matthew 6:7–15, Psalm 34:15–22

Presented by Fr. Paul Rietmann

***“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.”*** Isaiah 55:6

The above verse from “The Second Song of Isaiah” provides us with wonderful guidance for these early days of our Lenten journey. It commands us, “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.” This verse can spark our spiritual curiosity. What does it mean for you to “seek the Lord” at this particular time in your life? How will you go about seeking the Lord this Lent? Isaiah tells us that now is an excellent time to seek the Lord because now God is drawing near. It is now that God may be found. Not in the past; not in the future. But right here, right now, in the present!

Where can we seek the Lord in our lives? Here are a few ideas that come to mind:

In silence and stillness. ***“Be still and know that I am God.”*** Psalm 46:10  
In solitude, spending time alone with God.  
In the pages of the Bible, studying and meditating upon God’s Word.  
Reading a good devotional book for Lent.  
Spending time in nature; going for a walk or sitting in a garden.  
Learning meditation or contemplative prayer.  
Doing yoga, Tai Chi or some other movement practice.  
In service to our neighbors in need, like volunteering at the Food Bank.  
Spending time with a friend whose company we enjoy.

The important thing here is that now is the time for us to sincerely and enthusiastically “seek the Lord.” Now is the time for us to draw near to God as God draws near to us. Now is the time to put away our distractions and focus upon the most important relationship in our lives, our relationship with God who graciously draws near to us.

I want to conclude by offering a couple more inspiring Scripture verses which speak passionately about “seeking the Lord.”

***“You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”***  
Jeremiah 29:13

***“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be give to you as well.”*** Matthew 6:33

### **Wednesday in the First Week of Lent - March 13, 2019**

Jonah 3:1–10, Luke 11:29–32, Psalm 51:11–18

Presented by Donna McCracken

Two meditations from the book MOONLIGHT GRATITUDE by Emily Silva:

Illumination comes from within and reflects outward. Sleep offers the time to recharge your inner light. As you drift off to sleep, reflect on how your light shone today and how others shared their lights with you. Breathe in this light and allow the day’s shared illuminations to wash over you and cover you from the inside out. Offer gratitude and fall asleep knowing that this light is always glowing as you recharge your sparkle.

Sitting under a full moon’s light is peaceful and empowering. Look up at the moon, notice how it uses the sun’s light to illuminate and glow. Contemplate how you can reflect the moon’s reflection of the sun to do the same. Breathe in radiance and breathe out darkness. Imagine yourself shining brightly, lighting up any dim or dark places that surround you. Pay attention to what your light reveals and resolve to continue to shed light in this space.

### **Thursday in the First Week of Lent - March 14, 2019**

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

Presented by Staci Guffey Ellis

**Strengthen us, O Lord, by your grace, that in you might we may overcome all spiritual enemies, and with pure hearts serve you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Today's readings communicate how God calls us to both give and receive. As Psalms 138:3 states, "You answered me when I called to you; with your strength you strengthened me." The headline reading for today also conveys this point: "Strengthen us, O Lord, by your grace, that in you might we may overcome all spiritual enemies, and with pure hearts serve you..."

The reading from the Book of Esther emphasizes the importance of full submission to God in order to receive strength from God. By our full submission we are able to be in the place that God wants, and even commands, in order for us to give and receive. Esther did not readily do as God asked of her, in fact, she said "No," when asked to go to the King to save her people. She knew the risk was her death if she was not accepted to speak. How many times do we say "No." to doing God's will? But it was the still small voice of Mordecai and Esther's willingness to put all her faith in God to change her mind and risk her life to save her people. She was not alone, though, she had her community with her, praying for her and fasting. Sometimes it is our human nature to resist changes, especially when you know in your heart that you will be exposed, pointed at, and maybe at risk of losing something precious as your status quo, your serenity, or even your life. But with God we can be bold and courageous to do His will and give and receive. During this Lent, Esther reminds us how we are called to be leaders, even if we feel incapable of taking risks, even if we say "no" initially to God's calling. to remember that we are a community and we are to pray for each other and stand beside each other in times of need. God's call to GIVE is perhaps best exemplified by Matthew 7:12, which we often refer to as the Golden Rule: "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets." This is an enormous charge, when you really think about it. We've all been through situations in which people haven't come through for us. Maybe it's something small, like a not having someone recognize your birthday. Or maybe it's something large, like being betrayed by a friend whom you thought you could trust. Or maybe it's bigger than that like having friends or your own family members walk away from a relationship with you when your child suddenly dies. In any case, once you have developed a mental inventory of all of those circumstances, and then you read the Golden Rule, you realize the massive scope of what God is calling each of us to do, and specifically how much God is asking us to give to others. God is calling us to ALWAYS come through for others, by giving of ourselves-regardless of how others treat us. And to emphasize the importance of this command, God refers to it as THE law and THE prophets! But, God doesn't leave us out in the cold with this enormous task. Instead, God gives us help, but we must be willing to RECEIVE that help. And in order to receive the help, we must be willing to fully submit to God, we must have faith and trust in God, even when it goes against what we want. And, by so doing, God will strengthen us in ways that we cannot understand. He will show up in your life and put people in your life to help sustain you through the hardships. As we go through this Lenten season, may you submit to God fully and exercise the Golden Rule.

### **Friday in the First Week of Lent - March 15, 2019**

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

Presented by Kathie Forbes

**My thoughts are renewed by the creative spirit of God within me.**

In Romans 12:2, it is written, ***"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect."***

The altar represents the sacred point of the divine renewal at the center of our being. It is the place in consciousness where our human nature meets and gives way to our divine nature. Our lower thoughts are released to make room for higher thoughts to appear. Discernment occurs through the creative power of Spirit, and in a holy instant, we know “what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Through prayer and meditation we kneel at the inner altar with a desire for spiritual growth, a longing for a greater experience of God. We surrender to a higher order and are lifted in consciousness as our awareness of God expands.

**The Altar** By Jacquie Lenati

**Saturday in the First Week of Lent - March 16, 2019**  
**(Saint Matthias the Apostle Day)**

Deuteronomy 26:16–19, Matthew 5:43–48, Psalm 119:1–8

Presented by Fred McIlroy

“O, by your Word you marvelously carry out the work of reconciliation: Grant that in our Lenten fast we may be devoted to you with all our hearts, and united with one another in prayer and holy love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever..” - Collect for Saturday of the First Week of Lent

“Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” - The Summary of the Law, Holy Eucharist, Rite I

Today’s readings weave the tapestry of the Law of the Lord throughout scripture and the development of it over time. They begin with the Law of Moses as it was given to Israel through his sermons to them on the plains of Moab. They continue further through the Psalms of David. Conclusion and, in the opinion of this author, perfection of the law comes through the Gospel appointed for the day as Christ calls upon us to love even our enemies. We can call this law perfection because, in keeping it, Christ tells us that in doing so we will be made perfect “even as the Father is perfect.”

As always, it is difficult to keep to the higher calling as we should. Life throws things at us that we don’t expect to have to deal with. Life throws people at us that we don’t expect to have to deal with. And before we know what’s happened, we react in ways we might not normally choose to. And then we sometimes blame ourselves for our failure. All of these are very human things to do. And we need to remember that we can only achieve true perfection not in this world but the next.

Thankfully, we have a crystal clear example of the life we should live. Christ shows us, not only in his words but in his deeds, just what we should do to fulfill the Law of the Lord. It is not for nothing that he called himself “the way, the truth, and the life.” We learn how we should live through reading living word in the Gospels. But to me, we receive his love and learn his ways through weekly (or even more frequent) reception of his Body and Blood. In the Mass, we are gathered together, we hear his word, and we are physically united as one body of believers through the sacrament. These are all essential to leading us to perfection.

But what if we fail in life? What if we don’t live up to what God expects of us? What if we, or those we love, forget or abandon God? The truth is this: No matter what we could possibly do, God will never forget or abandon us. Again, we have Christ’s assurance of this. We have his assurance in his Word and in his action of giving himself for us on Good Friday. And we have God’s own assurance of his constant love for

us in that, when Christ became all of mankind's failures, God raised him to eternal life in glory everlasting. For me, that gives me the strength to continue to try (and sometimes to fail) each day to live the life that God has called me to live.

Praised be Jesus Christ! – May he always be praised!

**Second Sunday in Lent - March 17, 2019**

Genesis 15:1-12,17-18, Philippians 3:17-4:1, Luke 13:31-35, Psalm 27

Presented by Shelby Forbes

From where my life has been this past year, these passages could not be more fitting or more needed. I do need to put more trust in the Lord. Know that He always has a greater plan for us all and that there is never an obstacle too great that we cannot overcome or conquer with God's help. At times, we must remember that it is okay to ask for help and to admit that we are not expected to shoulder everything ourselves. There is always someone who is willing to help carry the extra burdens and lighten the load and He is always ready to answer the call for help.

**Monday in the Second Week of Lent - March 18, 2019**

Daniel 9:3–10, Luke 6:27–38, Psalm 79:1–9

Presented by Roberta Newell

**The Gospel reading is Luke 6:27–38**

Some people call this the “Do to others as you would have them do to you” gospel. I feel it may be the gospel that Jesus is telling us what to do and what not to do.

Love your enemies; bless those who curse you; pray for those who abuse you; Do not judge; Give to everyone who begs from you; Do not condemn; Forgive and Be merciful.

As I read this gospel, the one thing that keeps calling to me is Love your enemies, Jesus did not say this in passing but He said to us listen, in other word stop what you are doing and pay attention.

Jesus my Lord and Savior is telling me to Love my enemies. Truly love them. Show them mercy. Forgive them. Above all allow judgment to come from Him. Jesus is calling me and you to be children of the Most High. Jesus is calling on us to be your best self, the one He made us to be.

This Lent what are we putting out into the world and what would we want coming back to us?

**Tuesday in the Second Week of Lent - March 19, 2019**

**Saint Joseph**

2 Samuel 7:4,8-16, Romans 4:13-18, Luke 2:41-52, Psalm 89:1-29 or 89:1-4, 26-29

Presented by Frank McCracken

Psalm 89:1

*“I will sing of thy steadfast love, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim thy faithfulness to all generations.” (RSV)*

Many times, we are often in a ‘valley’ of deep emotions, and it seems so very dark, lonely, and weary. Yet this verse gives comfort, and a rock to cling to during such times. We simply need to focus on this and persevere, walking in faith, knowing that we will come back into the sunshine.

**Wednesday in the Second Week of Lent - March 20, 2019**

Jeremiah 18:1–11,18–20, Matthew 20:17–28, Psalm 31:9–16

Presented by Roberta Newell

**The Old Testament reading is Jeremiah 18:1–11, 18–20**

As I read the first part of the lessons, a song came to me *“Lord You Are The Potter”* by Norman Hutchins from the album *“Nobody But You.”*

The chorus is as follows; You are the potter, I am the clay. Mold me and make me, have Thine own way. You are the potter, I am the clay. Mold me and make me, have Thine own way.

We are all like the house of Israel, clay in God hands. Do we follow God’s laws and turn from our evil? Surrender our will to God? This Lent as we walk with Jesus in His last days here on earth and look forward to being with Him forever how do you want to be molded?

I love the last verse of the of the song:

Lord, I give my life, I give my all to You,  
to be a willing vessel, to use me through and through.

Lord, I need Your Spirit, Lord, I need Your grace;  
help me run his Christian race.

**Friday in the Second Week of Lent - March 22, 2019**

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

Presented by Beth Bowen

Due to my job as “the Sunday School Lady,” I often find myself approaching scripture from a perspective of how can I make this relative to a child’s life. We LOVE parables in Sunday School because they are relatable (usually: try teaching the parable of the 10 minas...yikes!) and easier to wrap your brain around.

For me, this day’s lessons seem to center on greed. Greed is a doozy, hence being one of the “seven deadly sins.” When teaching kids about greed, it’s easy to find examples in their own lives. The problem is that it can be difficult to recognize in our own adult lives. I find teaching this to kids is similar to being married, or in a family: it’s so easy to point out how YOU and THEY are being greedy and selfish, but it’s hard to own the greed in MY life and MY heart. For adults, greed can look very different than it does for a child, often sneakier.

So for my own sad attempt at a parable on greed, here goes:

Greed is like the ever present blackberry plant in the northwest. So infectious and greedy that it is called a “noxious weed,” even though it has the most delicious fruit as a cloak to hide its power. It spreads over anything and everything and quickly. A property owner is wise to inspect and seek out blackberry plants and eradicate them before they spread. If left alone, ignored and assumed ok because it is more benign, than say, the nasty hogweed, it will easily choke out all other plants in your garden. Good things can still grow but they have to fight out an existence. The wise land owner will tend to the blackberry plants and take inventory and weed out the culprits, on a regular basis, to allow room and fertile soil for other, more desirable plants.

On our Lenten journey, and as spring sneaks up on us, let us do some spring cleaning and Lenten preparation in our own hearts regarding greed. Try to seek out the greed in your heart and move it aside to make room for Jesus. You will be amazed at what can grow when the weeds are tended to and kept in check (for they always return).

“Be contented with the things of the world. Develop greed for God.”

-Shri Radha Maa

“Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed.”

- Mahatma Gandhi

#### **Thursday in the Second Week of Lent - March 21, 2019**

Jeremiah 17:5–10, Luke 16:19–31, Psalm 1

Presented by Arden Johnson

These lessons remind me of Jonah and the whale, where Jonah tries to hide himself from God. We know that this cannot be done. Presented in these passages, however, is the more positive side of this truth. That is, God knows the heart and the mind of all. Despite what one may do in life, what sins they may commit, God knows their heart and soul, and treats his people with mercy and grace. We are constantly blessed with his grace and rewarded according to our character, what we “deserve” as mentioned in Jeremiah. This concept of deserving is also interesting, because really, God has freely gifted us with life. Life itself is such a precious thing that we are born in a sort of debt to God (therefore deserve nothing, and certainly not mercy). He has given us these lives to do what we please with them, and we live them out either in

accordance with his teachings or otherwise. It is the sheer grace and love of God which provides us with eternal life through living in love. Despite any naiveties or doubts, the course of our lives being in love grants us this additional gift. So, standing with love and acceptance is truly necessary for a life successfully led for God.

**This was a service project brought to you by**

**St. Mary's Chapter of**

**Daughters of the King**

**We hope it has enhanced your Lent.**

Here is The Motto for our Order. It is a good one for everyone to live by:

*For His Sake:*

*I am but one, but I am one.*

*I cannot do everything, but I can do something.*

*What I can do, I ought to do.*

*What I ought to do, by the Grace of God I will do.*

*Lord, what will you have me do?*

**L E N T E N**

**D E V O T I O N S**

**2019**

**Saint Mary's Episcopal Church - Lakewood, WA**

**Saint Mary's Episcopal Church - Lakewood, WA**

Saint Mary's Episcopal Church, Lakewood

## Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;  
taking, as He did, this sinful world  
as it is, not as I would have it;  
trusting that He will make all things right  
if I surrender to His Will;  
that I may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with Him  
forever in the next.

Amen.

- Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971)

## Prayer Attributed to Saint Francis

**Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is discord, union;  
Where there is error, truth;  
Where there is doubt, faith;**

**Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.**

**O Divine Master,  
grant that I 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;  
It is in dying that we are raised to eternal life.**

**A L L E L U I A !**

**C H R I S T I S R I S E N !**

**T H E L O R D I S**

**R I S E N I N D E E D !**

**A L L E L U I A , A L L E L U I A !**

**Saturday in the Second Week of Lent - March 23, 2019**

Micah 7:14–15,18–20, Luke 15:11–32, Psalm 103:1–4(5–8)9–12

Presented by Linda Collins

## **MERCY**

Mercy is perhaps one of the most defining qualities of God, and without it, none of us would be here, never mind able to enter heaven. Mercy is integral to understanding God's dealing with us.

Mercy is defined not only as an act of forgiveness and compassion, but as not giving us what we deserve, whereas Grace is God giving us something we don't deserve.

Micah 7:18 teaches us concerning the vast mercy of God, saying “Where is another God like you...you will not stay angry with your people forever, because you delight in showing unfailing love.” It actually pleases the Lord to show mercy to people like you and me because He is a God of mercy. As Psalm 103: 8 states, “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”

Having been shown great mercy, we ought to be more merciful to others. Knowing that God is merciful and has forgiven our sins, surely we can forgive those who have sinned against us and show them mercy.

Whatever situation you’re in today, you can rest in God’s mercy.

Includes excerpts from Jon Dyer, *The Attributes of God*

**Third Sunday in Lent - March 24, 2019**

Exodus 3:1-15, 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, Luke 13:1-9, Psalm 63:1-8

Presented by Kathie Forbes

**I release what no longer serves my highest good.**

In this season of transformation, we shed any thoughts, habits, feelings, or belongings that do not serve us. We gently release anything that does not further or support the great expression of our innate Divinity.

Just as some animals shed old skins, we prayerfully eliminate old ways no longer meant to be ours. We create space for what is new in us to grow and shine.

If a new habit is to be formed, we pray and begin it today. If a possession no longer serves us, we return it to the universe for recirculation. If our thoughts are not uplifting, we cleanse our minds of fear and doubt. We make sacred space for new, ever-better ways of being who we are meant to be.

**Elimination** by Joyce Flowers

**Monday in the Third Week of Lent - March 25, 2019**

**The Annunciation**

Isaiah 7:10-14, Psalm 45, or Psalm 40:5-11, or Canticle 15 (or 3), Hebrews 10:4-10

Luke 1:26-38

Presented by Kathie Forbes

**I use my powers to manifest the life I want.**

Although we sometimes think life happens to us, life happens *through* us - and we direct its course. We have innate power to choose and direct our thoughts and feelings. At any moment, we can decide how we wish to think about ourselves and others. In any situation, we can consciously choose how to respond.

We can use our divine power to overcome negative self-talk, to avoid “we/they” thinking. And to find the opportunity in every challenge. We can expand our awareness by choosing thoughts aligned with Spirit rather than ego.

We are the artists painting the picture of our own lives. Through the wise use of our divine power, we create a life of triumph, fulfillment, and joy.

By Rev. Paula Mekdeci

**Tuesday in the Third Week of Lent - March 26, 2019**

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

Presented by Loretta Clubb

King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue whose height was sixty cubits and whose width was six cubits; setting it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. He assembled all of the leaders and people of all the lands he commanded and the herald proclaimed aloud that when they were signaled they were to fall down and worship the golden statue that he set up, and that whoever did not fall down and worship would be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire.

It was reported to the king that there were three Jews who had been appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon who had chosen to pay no heed to the king’s order and did not worship the king’s golden statue. The king ordered that the three righteous Jewish men—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego--be delivered to him and made to fall down and worship the statue. When presented to the king, they responded “If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us.”

Nebuchadnezzar was so enraged by this response he ordered the furnace heated up seven times more than was customary, and ordered some of the strongest guards to bind the three young men and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire.

As this was taking place, Azariah, a friend of Daniel’s who was sent to be a companion of the three young Jews, prays that God will save these three from the flames and thereby demonstrate God’s story to the world. God responds by sending an angel into the furnace with them. The angel blew and drove the fiery flames out of the furnace, and made the midst of the furnace like a moist whistling wind, so that the fire did not touch any of the men at all or hurt or trouble them. The songs sung by the three young men while in the furnace were of God’s great acts among the Jewish people and in all the earth, giving thanks for their deliverance from death in the fiery furnace.

King Nebuchadnezzar watched with astonishment and said to his counselors, “Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire?” They answered it was. To which the king replied, “But I see four men unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the fourth has the appearance of a God.” He went to the door of the furnace and commanded that these “servants of the Most High God, come out!” Unsinged, not harmed in any way nor with any smell of fire coming from them, Nebuchadnezzar said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him.”

The king then issued a new decree that no other god could deliver in the way that the God of the Three Young Men had, and they were freed and promoted in the province of Babylon.

**Wednesday in the Third Week of Lent - March 27, 2019**

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

Presented by Suzanne Brown

***“Trust in the Lord with your whole heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.”***

**Proverbs 3:5-6**

***“Trust in the Lord, and do good, so you will dwell in the land and feed on His faithfulness. Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.”***

**Psalm 37:3-4**

“Trust in the Lord”!! So easy for me to say, but when anxiety raises its ugly head it is so hard for me to do! I recently have found inspiration from David who, from the time he was a shepherd until he was crowned king over all Israel, he experienced one victory after another because of his deep relationship with the Lord; he stayed in His presence, continually asking for His guidance and obeying. I tend to give anxieties to the Lord, only to quickly take them back again, unable to release control thinking, “I can solve this!” I realize that for there to be victory over the pitfalls the evil one likes to put in my path every day, I must continue to deepen my relationship with my Lord and Savior. Now more than ever the two verses above give me the strength and encouragement to come before Him not only when I have a problem but also when things are going well, to immerse myself in His word every day, to stay in His presence, and to continually listen for and trust His guidance with my whole heart. Amen!

**Thursday in the Third Week of Lent - March 28, 2019**

Jeremiah 7:23–28, Luke 11:14–23, Psalm 95:6–11

Presented by Anonymous

It’s not about the demon, it’s about the goodness.

This whole concept of demons is difficult for the modern believer. Today’s gospel starts with Jesus giving speech to a mute person by casting out a demon. Was the demon a little creature with horns and a devilish smile like we see in the movies? Was it a figurative explanation for a poorly understood physical deformity? Did it mean the afflicted individual had done something evil to deserve his possession by evil? Of course not. And all of that distracts from a major point of the story.

When the miraculous event happens the crowds are amazed, then they become suspicious. Fearful of evil, they assert that Jesus is casting out the demon through the ruler of the demons, some ask for a sign his action is from heaven, from goodness, not from evil. But, hell has no torture as great as the fear of hell. And the witnesses to Jesus’ merciful healing, like us, are fearful. Something new, something different, something we don’t understand, is filtered through our concerns. It is an understandable preservation reaction. But it draws us from the love of God.

Jesus commits a good act, the restoration of the person to what he had been before he was made mute. The good act could not have been done by something related to the bad act, because the thing that caused the bad situation cannot work against itself. Notably, Jesus uses logical reasoning to overcome emotional fear. The contrariness of the good act to the bad situation shows the good act comes from goodness, the kingdom of God. With that understanding, we can relax our initial, fearful, concerns. We can choose, when looking at what happens in front

of us, to think it through and see that it is good. We can stop worrying that something new is something dangerous. This is what Jeremiah is trying to get across, despite all his harsh language. Walk in the way God instructs and all shall be well with you.

It really will. Today, choose to look anew at a concerning event. Find the good. It is there. The Kingdom of God is at hand.

**Friday in the Third Week of Lent - March 29, 2019**

Hosea 14:1–9, Mark 12:28–34, Psalm 81:8–14

Presented by Linda Collins

**LISTENING TO GOD**

“Return, O Israel to the Lord your God.”

Psalm 81:8-14 is a saga of a people who would not listen to God. Even though Israel refused to pay attention, because of His compassion, God continually attempted to gain their attention and devotion. The question is why didn't they listen and how can we avoid the same fate that Israel suffered.

*“Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you! O Israel, will you not listen to Me? There shall be no foreign god among you; Nor shall you worship any foreign god. am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt: Open your mouth wide and I will fill it. My people would not heed My voice, and Israel would have Me. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, to walk in their own counsels. , that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! would soon subdue their enemies, and turn My hand against their adversaries.” (Psalm 81:8-14)*

How many times God has spoken to us and we were not listening? many times has He had something specific we needed to hear, but we were too occupied with other things to pay attention? One of the most valuable lessons we can ever learn, is how to listen to God. the midst of our complex and hectic lives, nothing is more urgent, nothing is more necessary, or nothing more rewarding than hearing what God has to say.

Understanding the art of *hearing* God, as well as *why* God speaks to us and *how* God speaks to us today helps each of us hear God more clearly and follow what He says. His voice waits to be heard. Are we listening? so, we allow ourselves to be launched into a life filled with love, support, and blessings—more than we could ever image.

**Meditation/prayer:** *Help us come back to you, to trust only in you, and then to act out of that trust alone. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Includes excerpts from Randy Rice, “*Hear, O my People*”

**Saturday in the Third Week of Lent - March 30, 2019**

Hosea 6:1–6, Luke 18:9–14, Psalm 51:15–20

Presented by Kathie Forbes

## **I extend myself to understand others.**

I have the divine ability to not only comprehend with my head, but understand with my heart. I move from intellectual knowledge to spiritual understanding. I not only grasp what is said, but the meaning behind it.

Through the power of Understanding, I make an heart connection with others. I sense their needs and feelings. I expand my awareness to see through their eyes. The more I open my heart, the more compassion I feel.

At the core of Jesus' ministry was love and compassion. As we draw on the power of Understanding within us, we remember that at heart and in spirit, we are one.

*Understanding* - by Rev. Paula Mekdeci

### **Fourth Sunday in Lent - March 31, 2019**

Joshua 5:9-12, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32, Psalm 32

Presented by Doris Steeg

## **From "40-Day Journey with Maya Angelou"**

The New Testament informs the reader that it is more blessed to give than to receive. I have found that among its other benefits giving liberates the soul of the giver. The size and substance of the gift should be important to the recipient, but not to the donor save that the best thing one can give is that which is appreciated. The giver is as enriched as the recipient, and more important, that intangible but very real psychic force of good in the world is increased.

When we cast our bread upon the waters, we can presume that someone downstream whose face we will never know will benefit from our action, as we who are downstream from another will profit from that grantor's gift. Since time is the one immaterial object which we cannot influence neither speed up nor slow down, add to nor diminish - it is an imponderably valuable gift. Each of us has a few minutes a day or a few hours a week which we could donate to an old folks' home or a children's ward. The elderly whose pillows we plump or whose water pitchers we refill may or may not thank us for our gift, but the gift is upholding the foundation of the universe. The children to whom we read simple stories may or may not show gratitude, but each boon we give strengthens the pillars of the world.

### **Monday in the Fourth Week of Lent - April 1, 2019**

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

Presented by Kathie Forbes

Your vision is only limited by your expectations.

There are promises bearing truths in the dimly lit places of your life.

You are equipped with everything you need to succeed,

You have been given the strength, ability, and fortitude you need.

You can overcome all obstacles and accomplish every goal.

You were born to win, to be a Champion.  
God created you in his image.  
You are predestined to conquer.  
You are a child of God Almighty.  
You are talented, well able, and empowered.  
His favor surrounds you like a shield.  
Blessings are going to chase you down and over take you.  
You have already been crowned with victory.  
Seek your divine vision.

By Unknown

**Tuesday in the Fourth Week of Lent - April 2, 2019**

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

Presented by Mary Jean Fischer

This Ezekiel reading talks about the ecology of a river, estuary, and ocean. What does that have to do with me? Let's look at John.

The John lesson tells the tale of when Jesus healed a man who could not walk on the Sabbath. This was the beginning of trouble for Jesus. He said, "My Father is always at work to this very day, and I too am working."

Psalm 46: 1-8 GOD is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give away and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea...there is a river whose streams make glad the city of GOD, the holy place where the MOST HIGH dwells."

Altogether, maybe these readings mean that GOD is in the streams, rivers, estuary, and ocean. HE is in the orchards, fish, and fishermen. HE is always at work for us and in us. The LORD Almighty is with us, everywhere! Well, that is good news and something to draw upon when we feel alone, overworked, afraid, or are in trouble.

**Wednesday in the Fourth Week of Lent - April 3, 2019**

Isaiah 49:8–15, John 5:19–29, Psalm 145:8–19

Presented by Staci Guffey Ellis

In Today's Lessons we read of the constant theme of all Jewish and Christian history: the relationship between God and his people. In Isaiah we witness the people of Israel hearing of the faithfulness of God to restore what has been lost, but Zion responds, "The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me." The Lord responds to the servants' unfaithfulness with continued faithfulness: "Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you." Even when we let the Lord down with our sins, insecurities, willfulness to do things our way, The Lord is ever faithful to stay right with us - showing his never failing love. In Psalm 145, we read of the many sorts of occasions in which the Lord is loving and faithful. "The Lord is trustworthy in all He promises and faithful in all He does." We also read what our part of the bargain in this relationship is: "The Lord is near to those who call upon him, to all who call upon him faithfully." Finally, John explains what a faithful calling upon the Lord

might look like: "...he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."

We live in a world where being independent and self-sufficient is highly regarded. This way of life is ingrained in us, so turning to God first (instead of as a last resort) means we must override our natural instincts to do it our way vs praying to God for help and living a life of faith daily. Our instinct might be to pick up our phone, tablet, or computer, but we have our "order of operations" wrong. Our mistake is in thinking that we can figure everything out in the million moving-pieces - orchestra that is life. When I had difficulties in my life, I have often panicked, researched, and contacted as many friends or professionals as possible. Though I did call on God a lot, it seemed to happen most when I had reached dead ends and was completely overwhelmed. What I was begging God for was absolute healing and restoration. I couldn't accept the brokenness in my life. It wasn't part of my plan as a mother to live through such sorrow. When my prayers weren't answered in the way I wanted, I worried that I had been "forgotten." I couldn't see how God was working "good" into my life in the process. Then I learned that a big part of having a full relationship with God is surrendering to His will, trusting His plan is what is best. It all reminds me of the Hillary Scott song, "Thy Will," "I'm so confused, I know I heard you loud and clear. So, I followed through. Somehow I ended up here, I don't want to think, I may never understand, that my broken heart is a part of your plan. When I try to pray, All I've got is hurt and these four words - Thy Will Be Done." Then the song goes on with, "I know You're good, but this don't feel good right now and I know you think of things I could never think about. It's hard to count it all joy, distracted by the noise, just trying to make sense of all Your promises. Sometimes I have to stop and remember that You're God and I am not."

Use this Lenten Season to exercise Faith daily. Learn to rely on Him daily. Turn to Him Daily.

*Dear Father, We cannot do anything on our own. We need you. Gently remind us, we should always turn to You first, and we can wholeheartedly trust Your plan, because it is best. Thy will be done. Amen*

**Thursday in the Fourth Week of Lent - April 4, 2019**

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

Presented by Jessie and Mack McKenzie

**Reflection:** God is angry at the Israelites, and Moses then intercedes on behalf of the people.

The Psalm tells the story again just as the passage from Exodus does, and they point to something that is human nature and that we fail to see the forest because of the trees. In our Gospel passage, Jesus is having another discussion with the religious leaders, who are missing the point. Moses is able to accuse them because Moses was correct in his calling God to account regarding a choice that God has made. God listens, and so God turns from the current course of action, which is destruction and chooses mercy instead. The religious leaders are looking at the scriptures and seeing only the strokes of the pen and the letters. The scriptures have become an end in themselves and not what God intended, which is a living document that points to God. Luther says it is the scriptures that form the cradle for the Christ. We need to engage the scriptures each day not as a dreary burden of duty, but rather in the joy of meeting God, who has created us, and redeemed us, and reunited our spirit with God's Holy Spirit. The scriptures are more than a sign. They are a symbol that participates in our lives, if we will open ourselves to such an amazing possibility.

**Friday in the Fourth Week of Lent - April 5, 2019**

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

Presented by Maria Gonzalez

Life does not exist without struggle. As a young girl, struggle was trying to remember all the steps in my ballet routine, or all the notes to a piano piece. Today, as a high school senior, struggle is different. Struggle is an attempt to understand AP Calculus, an aging abuela, and how life will be different when I no longer go to school with friends I've had since Kindergarten. Psalm 34:15-22 confirms that we will all struggle in life, more importantly, it teaches us that struggle isn't a punishment. God is love, and struggle is something that's in God's plan. God's plan is the key to our salvation and is the greatest gift of love we will ever receive. We must trust that God will eventually deliver us from our troubles - that God will protect us and provide refuge. In the meantime, we should aim to see struggle as opportunity for growth. If you are faced with a challenge today, remember that God has given you the strength, courage, and grace to persevere. Remember that you are not alone.

Dear God, please give me strength in my weakness and faith in my fear. Let me not forget that you have a plan, and that everything will be okay. Amen.

### **God's time, God's plan, God's purpose!**

**Saturday in the Fourth Week of Lent - April 6, 2019**

Jeremiah 11:18-20, John 7:37-52, Psalm 7:6-11

Presented by Anonymous

Sometimes, God takes things slowly. So should we. Today's gospel has Jesus proclaiming the availability, through Him, of the living water, the quencher of all sorts of thirst. This stuns the listeners, crowd and police alike, to the point they are frozen, not sure what to do. The Pharisees, however, quickly and summarily pronounce Him a Galilean, and remind Nicodemus that prophets do not come out of Galilee. Wait, slow down, the law requires a trial, hearing a person out and discovering what the person is about before passing judgment on him, Nicodemus reminds them. No need for that. Their reply is swift and dismissive, Are you a Galilean too?

There's a lot of vengeance, anger, and retribution in both Jeremiah and the Psalms. But Nicodemus merely points out that caution is warranted, and lawful. Not caring much for this part of the law, the Pharisees are quick to dismiss him. But in both the Psalm and Jeremiah, we hear

that God judges righteously, gives a trial to the heart and mind, and is slow to show his anger. He doesn't dismiss you because of where you are from, or because what you have to say is stunning. Are you living water? Are you a loving friend? God's way is to help you find this out about yourself, not by rushing and dismissing, but by considering all of you, in your mind and in your heart.

The new covenant is not a change in God, but a change in our understanding of him. A change from having mastered the rules and easily noting that you don't measure up. A change to realizing that if you are thirsty for being understood, God is there for you. If you are thirsty for understanding, so is God. That slowing down and taking our time to achieve righteousness makes rivers of living water flow from our heart too.

### **Fifth Sunday in Lent - April 7, 2019**

Isaiah 43:16-21, Philippians 3:4b-14, John 12:1-8, Psalm 126

Presented by Trish Willebrand

I have a long way to improve. I entertain the idea that I hold my ground at a good product through persistence. And yet, I cannot maintain a level of accomplishment on my own.

Sometimes, we have moments of clarity when we see the path laid out for us. I had one last night: I don't have to understand my path, or be Super Trish right now, and actually, I'm not such a bad gal. I celebrate those moments of clarity: their purpose is not to build up my ego; they are the path leading me closer to becoming the person God wants me to be – they are the drinking water for those who praise Him, as in the text. More than that, they're the "New." New outlook, new growth, renewed energy to send out in gratitude, and this new – this epiphany – this energy - gives us that which we need to empower those around us. But as I tell my eldest child often, we don't get that newness by duking it out on our own; that's like digging in dry sand: yes, one eventually gets somewhere, but all too often, it takes all our effort and yields little. And that little bit is not the glorious sand castle it could be; all our righteous trying could not match a joint effort with the Spirit. If we can let go of Our Work a bit, and share our selves with the One who loves us, then we can forge completeness. Let us be present with our Lord; that is what He asks of us in Isaiah: (imagine a gospel choir,) "Can I get a Witness!" I know I am not "there" yet with what God wants for me. But as God said to the Israelites in exile, "I'm doing a new thing:" you can have Me, even when conditions aren't just right for worship. I, the Lord, am the important thing. I called you, personally. You are mine. I am your Champion, and you are my Witness. Wash away the past! Worry not about the ritual itself, instead spend time with me, alert and present. The New is a gift, available to those open to it, those who seek connectedness beyond themselves. We are seeking Christ: not just some ideal; we seek the Jesus person – the gal shoveling snow on the next driveway over, the student who needs a word of encouragement, the people we can't wait to see at the end of the day. Like Mary, we seek that, we honor it, and with that presence we can be that glorious witness.

### **Monday in the Fifth Week of Lent - April 8, 2019**

Susanna [1-9,15-29,34-40],41-62, John 8:1-11 or John 8:12-20, Psalm 23

Presented by John Michael Forbes, Jr

Jesus will guide us to Heaven as He is the Good Shepherd. We are His Sheep. He will not lead us astray.

**Tuesday in the Fifth Week of Lent - April 9, 2019**

Numbers 21:4–9, John 8:21–30, Psalm 102:15–22

Presented by Jessie and Mack McKenzie

**Reflection:** Are we there yet? Have you ever become impatient in the way?

Like children of Israel, sometimes we get tired of the hand we are dealt. We taste the bad cooking, or peanut butter sandwiches again, and forget to be thankful for life. The serpents crawl through our thoughts and kill our hope. The cure is to look up. Look toward the salvation God has provided. Note that God did not take the serpents away from the people. There are always dangers to life lived fully, but God provides the healing and hope. Jesus came into the world to be lifted up. We set our gaze on him and live.

**Wednesday in the Fifth Week of Lent - April 10, 2019**

Daniel 3:14–20,24–28, John 8:31–42, Canticle 2or 13

Presented by Mary Jean Fischer

King Nebuchadnezzar wanted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to worship his God and alter of gold. They refused saying, “We do not need to defend ourselves before you in the matter. If we are thrown in to the blazing furnace, GOD we serve is able to deliver us from it.”

So Nebuchadnezzar ordered them to be thrown into the extra-hot furnace. The three men said, “but even if HE does not deliver us from this fire, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

So, Nebuchadnezzar had them tossed into the furnace. Shortly later, the three men were seen walking around. Everyone was amazed. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego trusted HIM and defied the Kings command. They were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own GOD.

Is your commitment to GOD, your faith, this strong?

At one time I was inclined to save my skin by saying what my would-be killer needed to hear. But after knowing the Bible, and growing in faith and trust, my commitment is stronger today than it was in the past.

In John 8, Jesus says, “If you hold to my teaching...then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” The people answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have not been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?” Jesus said, “If you are Abraham’s children, you would do as Abraham did. If GOD were your Father you would love me, for I have come from GOD. I have not come on my own. God sent me.”

I have never been a slave. I am privileged to live a good life. Would I die for HIM?

Do you follow Jesus teachings? Do or do not. There is no try.

How can you strengthen your commitment to HIM?

Will you be ready when Jesus comes to you?

**Thursday in the Fifth Week of Lent - April 11, 2019**

Genesis 17:1–8, John 8:51–59, Psalm 105:4–11

Presented by Anonymous

**I said a prayer for you today  
And know God must have heard.  
I felt the answer in my heart  
Although he spoke no word!  
I didn't ask for wealth or fame  
(I knew you wouldn't mind).  
I asked him to send treasures  
Of a far more lasting kind!  
I asked that he be near you  
At the start of each new day;  
To grant you health and blessings  
And friends to share your way!  
I asked for happiness for you  
In all things, great and small.  
But it was for his loving care  
I prayed the most of all!**

**by Kathleen Benton (aka Toni Francis)**

**Friday in the Fifth Week of Lent - April 12, 2019**

Jeremiah 20:7–13, John 10:31–42, Psalm 18:1–7

Presented by John Forbes

Everything you do, God watches over you. If you believe in God, you don't have to worry, he is your stronghold. If you cross God, he will be angry but will forgive you.

**Saturday in the Fifth Week of Lent - April 13, 2019**

Ezekiel 37:21–28, John 11:45–53, Psalm 85:1–7

Presented by Barbie Gonzalez

*Almighty God. You are the Alpha and the Omega. You use many voices to proclaim your truth. Help me to reflect upon the scriptures, so I may write this Lenten devotion to the honor and glory of Jesus Christ our Lord. May my meditation be acceptable in your sight. Amen.*

I like to start the scripture readings with the Psalm. For me, Psalms are easy to find (in the middle), and they bring a fond anticipation while I am looking for the verse. Psalm 85: 1-7 feels familiar. It flows with God's forgiveness, his unfailing love, and his promise to restore the people of Israel. I read a happy ending promised by a loving and forgiving God.

Next up is Ezekiel, Chapter 37: 21-28. I am always excited to see Ezekiel in the queue. I never know what to expect! His fantastic messages astonish me, and my brain processes them in images of color and art. These verses, though, are less of wonder and more direct. Yes, still a forgiving God, but stern with Israel. He promises to gather them in, to reunite the nation and make them whole. God will cleanse them, but they must obey and stop their sinful ways.

The sober tone of Ezekiel foreshadows the urgency of John. In Chapter 11: 45-53, we land right in the sensational headlines of the day. Jesus is performing his miracles; Lazarus has been raised; crowds are gathering; people are yearning for the Savior; and the political power structure is gearing up, raising its shields, and preparing to defend the establishment. Enter Caiaphas, the appointed high priest of the time. He is a Sadducee, a member of the political priest class, descended from priestly aristocracy. Caiaphas is not only in charge of the temple, but he is also the spokesperson for the Jews to Pontius Pilate and the public leader of a conquered people. I see Caiaphas and his council to be in the business of political protection and preservation, at all costs. I wonder what were their priorities? Was there a political platform? Was it protection of the Jewish nation first and foremost? Preserve the temple? Personal power? Wealth? Or, a complex strategy of all of the above, grounded in a day-to-day reality of survival as subjects of the Roman Empire? Where did they seek God is all of this? Caiaphas gives a hint in verse 50, with the rabbinical admonishment, ***“better to sacrifice one than to lose the entire nation.”*** Later, in verse 51, he prophesied, ***“(Jesus) will die for this nation...and for the scattered people of God, to bring them together, and make them one.”***

***“And make them one.”*** If I reread the scriptures in reverse order, John/Ezekiel/Psalm, I am overwhelmed by the impending doom in John. I want to cover me eyes and not look at the inevitable cross. Or shout, “Wake up! Do you not see? This is the Messiah! At what price is peace?” I retrace Ezekiel and Psalm 85, and this time, the nation that is broken and adrift saddens me. God gives the road map, but sin keeps them separate, unable to be as one.

So this morning, I prefer to read the scriptures in the order suggested at the top of the page: Psalm/Ezekiel/John. For me it is more optimistic. It reassures me that God is with us, throughout the age, and all is in his hands. His plan stretches from the beginning to the end, alpha to omega. By ending today’s devotion with John, it reminds me of the complex, heavy burden of leadership, and it urges me to pray for those in power:

***“Bless the leaders of our land, that we may be a people at peace among ourselves and a blessing to other nations of the earth.”*** (BCP, pg. 821)

***“Grant...to all in authority, wisdom and strength to know and to do thy will. Fill them with the love of truth and righteousness, and make them ever mindful of their calling to serve this people in thy fear; through Jesus Christ our Lord...Amen.”*** (BCP, pg. 820)

Oh, Lord, hear my prayer.

### **Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday - April 14, 2019**

**The Liturgy of the Palms:** Luke 19:28-40, Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

**The Liturgy of the Word:** Isaiah 50:4-9a, Philippians 2:5-11, Luke 22:14-23:56  
or Luke 23:1-49, Psalm 31:9-16

Presented by Fr. Paul Rietmann

For the purpose of this little devotion for the beginning of Holy Week, I want to focus on what I believe to be is one of the most important passages in the entire Bible. It is Philippians 2:5-11, our Epistle reading for Palm/Passion Sunday and also for Good Friday. This inspiring passage helps us focus upon the deep spiritual meaning of not only Jesus’ incarnation but also his passion, death, resurrection and ascension. It communicates to us the essence of the Christ mystery which St. Paul so profoundly writes about. I invite you to meditate upon this passage during Holy Week and even to memorize it.

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

a cross.

9 Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,

10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Here are a couple of my thoughts on this famous passage:

Notice that in verse 5 St. Paul is admonishing us to “have the mind of Christ.” What does that mean to you? What does it mean for you to think and feel and act like Christ? This, I believe, is the essence of the Christian life. St. Paul goes on to tell us about the mind of Christ in the subsequent verses.

St. Paul says in verse 7 that in becoming a human being Christ Jesus “emptied himself.” The Greek word used here is *kenosis*. *Kenosis* means to empty oneself, to humble oneself, to pour oneself out. It is the essence of Christ consciousness. It expresses the kind of consciousness that we are to take on as followers of Christ when we empty ourselves of egotism and selfishness, and instead pursue a life of humble service.

### **Monday in Holy Week - April 15, 2019**

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

Presented by Gen Grewell

As we enter Holy Week let's turn our focus to the words from Psalm 36. This Psalm reading is sliced out of the larger Psalm which describe human wickedness in detail. It is difficult to understand when you are reading words like: “*Your steadfast love, O Lord.....*” or “*How precious is your steadfast love.....*” or “*continue your steadfast love to those who know you...*” why there is the wickedness. However, after listening to the Passion reading yesterday, and knowing we are following Jesus to the cross, we are looking for something to pull us out of the mire so that we can see God.

We are looking to see a more profound reality, that is, steadfast love and dependable righteousness. Whatever else may be going on in Holy Week, whatever Jesus might experience, whatever that experience may dredge up out of the dregs of our own pain or fear, the assertion that we begin with is that this week is somehow an enactment of God's steadfast love. This love presides over the events of the week, and when it is all said and done at the end of it, God will have stood with Jesus and with us. After all, if we have been journeying through this Lent walking with Jesus in His Way of Love, we will find ourselves transformed into a new way of life.

### **Tuesday in Holy Week - April 16, 2019**

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

Presented by Bettye Craft

Do you feel that God has a plan to use you for His glory? Or do you feel that you are not special enough to be of any use? The Bible is filled with God accomplishing great things with ordinary or less than perfect people. Even in the lineage of Jesus there were less than perfect people,

including Rahab and David, who were part of God's plan. Sometimes tasks are difficult, but we are called by God to live a life in service to others. We need to look outward and not obsess with our own troubles. We need to love our neighbors as ourselves. Are you ready to commit to a life of service? Where is God leading you to be his hands and feet?

### **Wednesday in Holy Week - April 17, 2019**

Isaiah 50:4-9a, Hebrews 12:1-3, John 13:21-32, Psalm 70

Presented by Jimmy Collins

Let us prepare ourselves for the enormous change in the life of our Lord, Jesus Christ, on earth. Heavenly Father we pray that you will be with us in the hours and days ahead. Help us to be mindful of the blessings of our lives and especially for the gift of your Son, Jesus. Prepare our hearts for the events which were about to unfold in his life during this week before Easter. By your grace we pray that we might glimpse the lessons for our life. Amen.

#### **Reflections on the readings:**

Our Sovereign Lord protects and inspires the faithful regardless of the circumstances.

This is a petition to be saved. A request to the Lord to champion his servant. A reminder to be thankful. A request to the Lord: come quickly.

Even when we face difficult and painful circumstances we persevere. Keep in mind what Jesus endured - do not grow weary or lose heart.

There will always be detractors even among friends. Satan may be engaged and oppose The Way.

Silent reflection.

Closing from The Order for Morning Prayer, Book of Common Prayer, September 1945:

#### **A General Thanksgiving.**

*Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we, thine unworthy servants, do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us, and to all men ... We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all, for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful; and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.*

### **Maundy Thursday - April 18, 2019**

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, John 13:1-17, 31b-35  
Psalm 116:1, 10-17

Presented by Trish Willebrand

I love the liturgy. I love participating in the rituals, not for the rituals themselves, but because the words have meaning. The lectionary for today contains stories we know like the back of our hands. Indeed, we hear the words, "do this in remembrance of me," on a weekly basis. Do we still "ingest" each story's meaning, even as we participate in the rites?

God gives explicit instructions in these stories: what, when, how. Paraphrased, OT: "I am the Lord (note: not "your Lord:" THE Lord), here to rescue you, through blood, because you are my people through covenant, and you will remember this for all time," NT; "I am the Lord, here to rescue you, through blood, because you are my people in a new covenant, and you will remember this until my return, with ritual." Gospel: I love you, you are like me. Love me by loving each other. Do this always. I model this through ritual." I mentally follow this last with "I am you, and am within each of you," although the text does not include that at this point. It "remembers" and "re-members" to me that we are each members of one body. A body that is built to move, and gather, and grow.

This last Sunday, I almost wept in love for all of you as I helped serve Communion. We gather together, at first as individual, ingesting the Word (in words, and through the participation in Communion) and through this miracle, this descending of the Spirit on us - all of us throughout the world, whether receiving the sacraments or not - we are rejoined with God, Jesus, each other. We like contemporary services. We like traditional services. We are part of a community, an organism (member), we remain aware of Christ in our presence (remember), we, as Christians, distinguish ourselves as lovers of the Jesus within everyone (community), we share this community membership alike (common), we practice and celebrate all of this formally, and regularly (rite). How I love the meaning of the words - how they draw me in to the Word! Let us feed each other, and be fed. Let us find that unifying Source when we celebrate the rites together, and let us carry it forth - at all times.

#### **Good Friday - April 19, 2019**

Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Hebrews 10:16-25, or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9, John 18:1-19:42  
Psalm 22

Presented by: Ginny Rawlings

***Isaiah 53: 4-5 (RVS) Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.***

I was a child, growing up in a general Protestant teaching, I could never understand why this day was called "Good Friday." There couldn't be anything good about a day when the light of the world was snuffed out. It was unthinkable such a day would be "good."

Then about 20 years ago I began research into Easter customs and traditions, so that I could present a program to young children that might help them understand better how rabbits and candy related to this holiest of days. I began to realize, as the children did so readily, that it was impossible to have an Easter without a Good Friday. And, in fact, the day was actually originally called "God's Friday," with the "God's" evolving into "Good." Who was it good for? Us, of course. As the psalmist tells us, "***surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.***"

Let us never forget that Jesus willingly took the burden of our sins upon himself, that he could show us unequivocally that there was no death, no end, but rather a glorious beginning.

So grieve a little that on this day Christ ended his earthly life for us, and prepare yourself for the glory of Easter morn.

### **Holy Saturday - April 20, 2019**

Job 14:1-14 or Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24, 1 Peter 4:1-8, Matthew 27:57-66  
or John 19:38-42, Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16

Presented by Ginny Rawlings

**Lamentations 3:22-24 (RVS)**The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness.

“**The Lord is my portion,**” says my soul, **“therefore I will hope in him.”**

Holy Saturday has always seemed to me to be a day for waiting impatiently for the glory to come. Why should we have to wait until a third day for the Resurrection?

We wait in part because the holy teaching of Christ’s time repeated over and over that he would die for three days, and *“after three days I will rise again.”* (**Matthew 27:63**). Writers in the Old Testament had so written, and Christ himself had repeated this often. Yet his disciples and followers were so overwhelmed by the reality of the crucifixion that they could only huddle together, hide and grieve. They forgot the hope in Jesus’ message, the promise.

Let us spend a moment on this Holy day to remember that Jesus kept his promise. “Alleluia” is just around the corner. Let us set aside this day to take a quiet interior moment to get ready for that glory.

### **Easter Day - April 21, 2019**

Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 65:17-25, 1 Corinthians 15:19-26 or Acts 10:34-43,  
John 20:1-18 or Luke 24:1-12, Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Presented by Ginny Rawlings

**Psalm 118:23-24 (RSV)***This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

I have always loved that phrase *“it is marvelous in our eyes.”* We are now twenty centuries beyond *“the day which the Lord had made,”* but we continue to be overwhelmed and a little mystified by the glory of Easter. The price that Jesus paid and the promise he gives to us deserve to be celebrated every day, not only this Easter Sunday. But what a joy it is every year to set aside this special day to sing, *“Alleluia, God is with us.”*

Did you know the reason we especially dress up this day (and occasionally parade in fancy hats) derives from the custom of the early Christians to wait until Easter each year to be baptized in their new faith and wear new, clean white robes to symbolize their rebirth? Many of our Easter Day customs and traditions go far back in the history of the church, and many are a blending of pagan springtime practices, given a new Christian view. However we celebrate, let us all delight in this day. Alleluia, the Lord is risen, He is risen indeed!