



JOURNEY WITH JESUS THROUGH THE SEASON OF LENT

Reflections on Lent

The mission of Jesus Christ was a journey of service, sacrifice and salvation. He has asked us to join Him on this sacred journey. Let us go together with Him.

2022

(Adapted from Rev. Stan Beard's
2016 devotional)



The season of Lent is a time of preparation. It is not simply a day, but instead it is intentionally called a season. A period of time to reflect, and pray, and to prepare ourselves for the celebration of Easter.

In the early days of the church, it was a time when people would prepare themselves to join the faith community. They would study the Scriptures, learn the ways of Jesus and then publicly profess their faith on Easter.

This year, we are using the words of the late Rev. Stan Beard as our guide. This Lenten devotional was written by Stan in 2016 and as I “re-read” it, I am reminded of the wisdom he shared with so many, and the influence he had on my life.

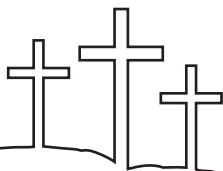
I am grateful for the friendship we shared and so thankful for the devotionals he shared with our church family.

As we journey with Jesus to Jerusalem, I encourage you to use this devotional guide as a way of daily preparing yourself to celebrate the good news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter morning.

There are no devotionals provided for Sundays and my hope is that you will join us for worship – either online or in person.

Grateful to be on this journey with you,

Rev. Dr. Paul Cunningham



1st Day - Wednesday, Mar. 2 Ash Wednesday

Scripture

Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life." "But what about you?" He asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "God's Messiah."

Luke 9:18-20



Reflection

The journey of Lent begins each year with the confession that Jesus is the one sent by God to bring life, truth and hope to a lost humanity. We go nowhere without this word. We accomplish nothing without this affirmation. Life makes no sense without a Savior. To walk with Him, learn from Him, become like Him can only happen when we recognize, like Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Let us stay close to Him in our pilgrimage this year. May we listen attentively to His teaching, marvel at His compassionate healings, and be struck with awe as He transforms lonely lives, and redeems broken hearts. Together, let's journey with Jesus to Jerusalem.



2nd Day - Thursday, Mar. 3

Scripture

"Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

Luke 9:44-45



Reflection

When Jesus brought up the issue of suffering, crucifixion, and death, His disciples were not only unable to understand what he was telling them; they were afraid to ask Him to explain. They simply did not want to know the truth! A Savior is one thing, a suffering Savior is quite another. Why is it so hard for us, like the disciples, to grasp the fullness of Christ's love for us through the experience of pain and sacrifice? Why does comfort and safety seem to so often block out the difficult, but important areas of our lives? Why do we miss learning the big lessons of life because of our fear of discomfort? Teach us to grow, Lord, as we walk with You. May we not miss the fullness of our relationship with You when darkness begins to replace the light. Keep us on the road with You even when the challenges are many.



3rd Day - Friday, Mar. 4

Scripture

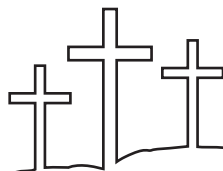
An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. Then he said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest."

Luke 9:46-48



Reflection

Do you want to be great? Do you yearn to be better than others? Is being the best a high value for you? Why? What do you gain? Is it really worth it? Is seeking after humbleness, perhaps, the better way to go? Does life bring more joy to the humble? What would it take to set aside the constant pursuit of greatness for a while and pour your energy and effort into childlike humility? Jesus seems to encourage this. Why not pick up this challenge? He promises fulfillment and eternal rewards. Let us walk humbly this season not needing to be noticed, admired or special. Being great, staying great is exhausting. Being with our Lord should be more than enough. It is simply amazing how attitudes change when people begin to believe we are more interested in hearing their stories than telling our own. Let's assist others in making their lives great, not our own.



4th Day - Saturday, Mar. 5

Scripture

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all." He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

Mark 9:35-37



Reflection

It's an amazing thing to be so committed to a cause or an idea that nothing else really matters. To "lose" yourself in work, family, conviction, or faith is seldom seen. Jesus is challenging us to think of our trust in Him in that way. Giving up rights, taking up a cross becomes the direction that leads to joy and salvation. To follow Him means just that. Follow, don't lead. Let someone else take over. The trust factor takes over instead of personal control. Knowing where we are headed is no longer as important as knowing the one who does. Losing our lives only seems to makes sense if we find it in another! To find our lives in Christ, as we give up our own, seems like a winning trade.



5th Day - Monday, Mar. 7

Scripture

Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaeus”), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.” “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Mark 10:46-52



Reflection

The blind man wanted to see. He was not worried or embarrassed to shout out for help. He was desperate. Bartimeaus had one chance with Jesus. He would not miss it.

Would we have been that bold? Would we have taken that risk? Would shouting out to Jesus been our way of getting his attention?

What would you have asked our Lord to do for you? What one thing would you want to be different in your life? And then would you, like Bartimaeus, get up and follow Jesus? Or would you, like so many, return to your daily routine and normal patterns of life? When we ask Jesus for real, solid help in our lives, be ready for change, life altering change.



6th Day - Tuesday, Mar. 8

Scripture

Then He said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

Luke 12:15



Reflection

The journey of Lent reminds us to travel light. Heavy packs make walking difficult. Envy another's overloaded pack would seem to be ridiculous. The only time to fill our backpack, I suppose, would be when we are going nowhere, or if we hire someone to carry it for us. Real life means movement, action, and destination. The thrill and adventure of the abundant life is not found in our packs, but rather in our travel experiences. Extra things and possessions hinder, they do not help.

Are we going anywhere with Jesus, or are we settling down? Is this a trip that calls for all we have, or will excess items not really matter? Pack accordingly for our journey with Jesus! The direction we go is far more meaningful than the luggage we carry.



7th Day - Wednesday, Mar. 9

Scripture

Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Luke 14:12-14



Reflection

Hospitality, generosity, sharing meals together, are high values to Jesus. Time and again our Lord speaks of situations involving gift giving banquets, dinner parties, etc.

Quite often we are challenged to add people to our invite list who have absolutely no capacity to pay or re-pay. This Lent include the hurting, lonely, and helpless in our social lives. Make room, create space and love for the ones who have little or nothing. Widen the circle of guests in our lives. Repayment in God's time and way will be plentiful. He is very aware of what we are doing. Make unconditional hospitality a habit this Holy season. Let us open our hearts and homes to God's special people. The blessing from God will touch both groups.



8th Day - Thursday, Mar. 10

Scripture

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. The tempter came to Him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Matthew 4:1-4



Reflection

Family and church tradition quite often include withholding something from our lives during Lent. Food, drink, trips, recreational purchases, etc. The idea seems to be that to do without will build abundance in our lives in other ways. Jesus was fasting in the desert. He was hungry. The tempter offered Him a quick satisfying solution. Stones to bread! Emptiness to fullness. But our Lord refused. The instant, filling solution at this moment was not the right solution. For Jesus, and perhaps for us during a portion of Lent, fasting might be more helpful than eating. To be nutritionally empty might be better than full. Perhaps fullness will come in other ways as we, like Christ, do not "live by bread alone." Think of some meaningful ways to back away from normal abundance and live off something else for a while. Let Jesus fill us up with a different life of love and joy. Feel and reflect on what sacrifice might look like in our own lives.



9th Day - Friday, Mar. 11

Scripture

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Matthew 6:19-21



Reflection

What gets your heart pumping? Where does excitement come from in your life? How do you measure joy? Is the anticipation level relatively high for you on a daily basis? What keeps you charged up?

The systems of our world persuade us to accumulate, save, store up, insure, protect and guard. They tell us that our fulfillment factor is related to our abundance. To have much is to live well.

Much what? Jesus tells us to store up things that have eternal value. Things that don't wear out, don't rust, or go out of fashion. Save the right things! Accumulate permanent assets! Give your heart to the unbreakable, the lasting. What is that for us? Let's make a list this Lent of heavenly treasures. Keep them forever.



10th Day - Saturday, Mar. 12

Scripture

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

Matthew 5:7-8



Reflection

Phillip Yancy's book, *Vanishing Grace* warns us that the drought of mercy and grace continues to grow in our spiritually parched world. We seem to demand justice for others as we yearn for mercy for ourselves. The word seems to be, "do unto others as they deserve, but do unto me as I desire." Getting even, paying back, harsh punishment seems to be the rule of the day.

Lent speaks of another way to go. This season reminds us that forgiveness, gentleness, and mercy should fill our hearts, and shape our actions and decisions. Rejoicing in the joy and blessing of others should surpass our own need for those things. Grace and mercy are eternal realities. Let them live and flourish in us.



11th Day - Monday, Mar. 14

Scripture

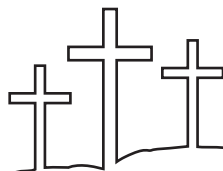
When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

Luke 19:5-6



Reflection

Zacchaeus was rich, short and no doubt very lonely. Not many of us like tax collectors. He paid a price for his career and his wealth. To see Jesus coming through his town on the way to Jerusalem was an opportunity not to be missed. Observation was all Zacchaeus desired. He didn't expect more. When Jesus stopped, looked around and spoke to Zach his entire world began to change. Encounter is so much different than observation. Knowing Christ is so much more than simply seeing Him. Jesus invited Himself into a lonely man's life, a life filled with regret and shame. Zach jumped at the chance for relationship. Seeing was good, friendship was far better. Are we content to see Jesus from a distance? Could we seize the moment, leave our place of indifference and walk into a new life with a forever friend?



12th Day - Tuesday, Mar. 15

Scripture

People were also bringing babies to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to Him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

Luke 18:15-17



Reflection

Children matter to Jesus. His kingdom is designed and shaped for the young. As our Lord moves closer and closer to His ultimate purpose of suffering and sacrifice He reminds us to come alongside Him as children do, holding hands, staying close, laughing a lot, asking simple, honest questions, trusting the leader and never getting too far ahead of ourselves.

Kids intuitively know how needy they are. Deep down they sense their lives don't go very well without someone older to lead and to give to them. Little kids are not hungry for independence. They are not yearning for autonomy. They love the warmth and the strength of someone who knows and cares about them. All is well with children when they are loved and protected. God wants to provide this for us. Let's come to Him as kids.



13th Day - Wednesday, Mar. 16

Scripture

When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask Him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.

Matthew 11:2-5

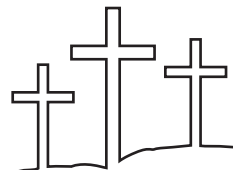


Reflection

John was in prison. He had lost his perspective; the walls of his jail cell had the effect of reducing and distorting his understanding of Jesus, his cousin. Idle time, hour after hour, put doubts in John's mind. His dreams were dashed. His hopes of a restored, redeemed Israel were disappearing. He wondered if Jesus really was the one to set his people free.

It's not hard to give up. There are times when the natural thing to do seems to be to throw in the towel, call it quits, and walk away. That joyous, worked so hard for outcome, is just not happening. Darkness seems to overtake the light. Thank God for Jesus' reply to us. Miracles are happening. People are being healed.

Don't let the prison perspective of the world block out the kingdom reality of Christ's presence in our Lenten journey. The Good news is being proclaimed!



14th Day - Thursday, Mar. 17

Scripture

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:1-2



Reflection

The often used, but grossly misdirected phrase, "I don't want to be a burden on anyone" misses the entire point of the message of Christ. The central teaching of our Lord is to share burdens with one another. Jesus taught us to serve. He gave us example after example of ways to be helpful to others. He goes so far, in our text for this day, to say we fulfill the law of Christ by bearing, and carrying the burdens of others.

Ironically it seems that the point of purpose in our lives springs from our acts of sacrifice, not our quest for independence and security. It comes from compassion, not comfort. Joy is found more through shared tears than surplus supplies. Burden bearing can become a habit. I need your help, and you need mine. Lent is a perfect time to begin.



15th Day - Friday, Mar. 18

Scripture

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Romans 12:3-5



Reflection

Unrealistic expectations, exaggerated self-image, inflated estimate of personal capabilities; all of these traits lead to broken relationships and unfulfilled dreams. We need to know who we are! The value God places on each of our lives is priceless, but make no mistake it is not distorted. He knows we need help. He is well aware of our tendency to get lost, find trouble, and to deny it's our fault. He is not surprised when we hide from people and hurt one another. He knows we are lost.

But what joy it brings to His heart when we face our faults, recognize our ugly side, and decide to come home. God loves to have us close by. He hates to see us alone. He wants to walk together with us on our journey of Lent. Let's be honest with ourselves and tell Him the truth!



16th Day - Saturday, Mar. 19

Scripture

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39



Reflection

On a field trip the other day the preschool teacher reminded the children several times, “stick together, don’t get separated, stay close to me.” Her words were not enough. To guarantee compliance without added adult leadership, the wandering tendencies of children would have caused a crisis. These children needed not only to be spoken to, but guided, watched, and corrected. Separation seems to happen naturally.

God won’t let it happen. No power, plan, or purpose can break up His family or fracture His kingdom. He knows who we are and where we are! No power can pull us apart. Now our eternal journey, with God at our side, is filled with confidence. We can grow and explore the entire universe because we know we are never alone! He not only tells us, He leads us!



17th Day - Monday, Mar. 21

Scripture

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

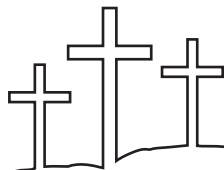
Matthew 6:11-15



Reflection

Looking directly into a network news T.V. camera, just hours after the horrific destruction of the twin towers in New York on 9/11, a national elected official stated sternly, "I will tell you this, God may forgive this horrible action, but be very sure we never will."

Living life alienated from one another is no answer. Unwilling and incapable of exploring ways of doing what God, our creator, our leader, our father, commanded us to pursue makes no sense either. Our Lord knows how hard real forgiveness can be. He understands how terribly difficult it is to drop our weapons of revenge, anger, retaliation and hate in order to find a way to forgive. It seems impossible to make it happen. Human nature rages against the response of forgiveness. But without this divinely directed, different way to live we have no chance. All other options are simply too dark. Our Lenten journey will lead us to the light. It matters not how horrific the offense might be. What only matters, "does God forgive sins?"



18th Day - Tuesday, Mar. 22

Scripture

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;

Philippians 1:21-23



Reflection

A difficult part of the journey of lent is that death is a central event of the story. Almost everyone turns away from facing this inevitable reality. Very few move with eagerness and anticipation toward that day. The mystery is too great. The unknown is simply too real.

The apostle Paul seems to be an astounding exception. He desires to go. He thinks it would be better for him to be with Christ. For him, that seems to be the highest honor, the most fulfilling way to live, the finest finish of a faithful life. There is no hint of fear. Not a thought of guilt or remorse. He never mentions loss or unfulfillment. Paul is ready to go. Paul desires to be close to his Lord.

Could this, should this, be a cause for reflection on our journey? Is this a truth we need to consider? "For me to live is Christ. To die is gain"?



19th Day - Wednesday, Mar. 23

Scripture

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:1-2



Reflection

The systems and philosophies of our contemporary world have a firm grasp on how we think about things. To be out of step with modern trends is not what most of us want to do. Ben Franklin was once quoted, “people would sooner be in hell than out of style.” It’s hard to be different.

But the scriptures, in so many places, remind us that repentance and conversion clearly teach us to take another path, to go in another direction. To be holy is to be set apart.

What might that look like for us during our season of Lent? What needs to change? How could we enrich our faith and contribute to God’s kingdom on earth by not getting sucked into the ways of the world? What are some important ways to add “yes” to following Christ and “no” to things that don’t really matter. Let’s be different. Let’s be like Christ.



20th Day - Thursday, Mar. 24

Scripture

He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!" After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away." Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Matthew 26:72-75



Reflection

Denial, deception, and disowning are words all too real to Peter. He didn't know how fearful he really was. His true colors, when exposed, revealed such awful cowardice and dishonesty. He hated who he was, what he had become. Coming this far with Jesus still had not been sufficient to remain faithful. Self-guarded protection continued to rule his life.

Walking alongside Jesus when the sun shines is filled with such joy. Blessings are abundant and miracles happen. Life is good. We love to be with Him when great things are going on. But oh, how easy and natural it is to move away, keeping a safe comfortable distance when challenge and confrontation arrive. Staying loyal and true is so difficult when we are fearful and terrified. May our Lenten journey not finish like Peter's. Stay close. Stay true.



21st Day - Friday, Mar. 25

Scripture

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Colossians 1:15-17



Reflection

Do we really know who is walking with us on this Lenten path to Jerusalem? Have we ever stopped to consider just how majestic is Jesus Christ? Is there an adequate way to put into words the vastness of His power and the creativeness of His ability to maintain day after day, year and year His entire universe? And still He has the time and the will to love us with all His heart. He delights in our humanness. He watches carefully when we lose our way and miss the mark. Through forgiveness and mercy He tenderly draws us back into His circle of love and keeps us on the right road with Him. He knows our name and is overjoyed when we want to know His. Creator? Oh yes. Friend, Father and Savior? Even better!



22nd Day - Saturday, Mar 26

Scripture

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,

Philippians 2:5-12



Reflection

The method and motive of Jesus Christ is shocking, unlike any other we know in a position of ultimate authority. His determination is to empty Himself of all those things most leaders believe are of prime importance. The humble, powerless path to express life and truth make more sense to Jesus than any other way. To be weak and vulnerable, to Him, is far better than strong and powerful. To be a servant is much more impactful than to be a king. To depend on and trust in his Father is more effective than to be in charge and have absolute control. To follow is the best way to lead.

And He asks us to be like him! To have His mindset, to pick up His example! The task seems overwhelming, but the outcomes seem to be worth it all.



23rd Day - Monday, Mar. 28

Scripture

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

Matthew 5:43-45



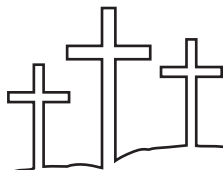
Reflection

To love has as a natural human response to be loved in return. Giving our best emotion, action or virtue to another without any appropriate return is hard to handle. What is even more deflating is when a response does come, and it is misdirected or filled with unloving reactions.

Loving someone who continually does not love you is hard to do. We, therefore, find ways to usually pick the person, or group, or culture, or color, or religion where we will have our best chance for our most rewarding response to our expressions of love.

Our Lenten journey challenges us to do otherwise. Our Lord teaches us to care for people who may not care for us. To respect those that perhaps disrespect us. To show compassion to those who might pay us back with contempt, makes our journey quite difficult.

Don't give up! Jesus is teaching us a better way.



24th Day - Tuesday, Mar. 29

Scripture

Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground, terrified.

Matthew 17:4-6



Reflection

Peter was impressed and inspired. He wanted to say something and do something he thought he would be helpful. Peter wanted to make a conspicuous contribution to what he had just witnessed. It took him no time at all to plunge into his part of the project. He knew what to do.

The heavens stopped him! God's voice told him to listen, not speak. Worship not construct. Just drink in the spectacular grandeur of being in the presence of the Christ. Life isn't always about noise and action. Silence, pause, attention also has its place.

Interrupting, dominating conversations, finishing others' sentences, constantly correcting someone else's thoughts, do not work well on our Lenten road to Jerusalem. We need to listen well, worship often, and gaze awestruck at the remarkable person of Jesus Christ.



25th Day - Wednesday, Mar. 30

Scripture

Now on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As He was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met Him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

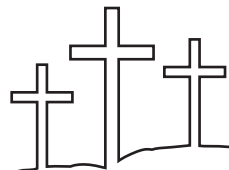
Luke 17:11-13



Reflection

Prejudice, in biblical times, was just as prevalent as today. Samaritans and Galileans did not do well living next to one another. Very seldom did they cross borders into one another's land. Fear, grudges, beliefs, values, mistrust built up year after year. These neighbors were not friends. No love was lost between them.

Jesus chooses to cross boundaries and enter into a Samaritan's world. Not to fight or condemn or to judge, but to heal. Hurting people are everywhere. No border can wall off pain. Compassion should have the courage and conviction to move into dark and unknown places to bring a healing touch. National hatred should never rule out personal, loving, service. Let us cross borders with love and healing, even when it is hard.



26th Day - Thursday, Mar. 31

Scripture

As He approached Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes."

Luke 19:41-42



Reflection

As Jesus moved close enough to Jerusalem to actually see the great city He began to weep. He did not well up with pride over the construction of a spectacular temple. The centuries of rich Jewish faith and tradition did not grab his attention. His heart was breaking because they did not know God was visiting them. They had no idea, no need, for the Messiah in their midst.

War and destruction were coming. Fighting and combat were all they knew in the battle for peace and truth. To turn to the Messiah for a different way to succeed never occurred to them. They just could not see Jesus. What about us? Is our journey this Lenten season opening our eyes to change, or is Christ continuing to weep over the choices we have made in our battle to survive? Do we need Him in our city with His message of forgiveness and redemption?



27th Day - Friday, Apr. 1

Scripture

"What shall I do, then, with the one you call the King of the Jews?" Pilate asked them. "Crucify him!" they shouted. "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Mark 15:12-15



Reflection

Pontius Pilate was political. Crowd satisfaction meant more to him than human justice. The life of Jesus Christ was not as important in his eye as a controlled mob, a calmed down city, and Pilate once again in charge of his territory. Taking an innocent life seemed better to him than a political setback. "My career, my position is worth a human sacrifice here and there."

Pilate knew that Jesus was not guilty. He was convinced no crime had been committed, but he also knew that his stature was a higher value to him than the life of the savior.

Has anything much changed down through the centuries? Are we willing to risk our reputation for His? Will we take the high road or truth of the popular way of crowd pleasing? Is Jesus Christ worth that much to us, or is our own life still our central concern? Lent is almost over. It's time to decide.



28th Day - Saturday, Apr. 2

Scripture

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God; so He got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him.

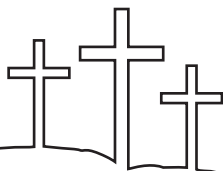
John 13:3-5



Reflection

What would you do if you knew you only had a few days left to live? How would you like to finish your life? What choices would you make regarding meaning, value and purpose?

Jesus washed feet! One by one He served His disciples in a loving, personal way. He made it very clear to each of His friends that to be a leader in his kingdom service would be one of the highest priorities. And not any kind of service, but foot washing service. The kind that involves kneeling, touching and cleaning. The humble kind of service the follower of Christ needs to know what our Lord values. We need this impactful example in order to proceed in our lives of faith the way we were taught. We must learn over and over from the master that giving trumps receiving and sacrificial service is what Jesus Christ requires from us. Even at the point when His physical life was coming to an end Jesus kept on caring for the needs of others. Let us do the same.



29th Day - Monday, Apr. 4

Scripture

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

John 14:1-4



Reflection

Jesus was a promise maker and also a promise keeper. Perhaps the most comforting part of our walking with him by faith is the confidence we have in knowing he's telling us the truth. Nothing is more valued than a friend you know you can trust. It means everything.

Jesus told us he loves us- He does

He promised never to leave- He won't

He said he would die for us- He did

He told us he would conquer death- He did

He promised us a resurrection future- It's coming

He promised to forgive us- He has and does

He told us that following Him is hard- It is

He promised to add joy and purpose to life- He has

The list goes on. He has not let us down. Jesus is the kind of Lord we need to follow! Let us respond with our promise of faith, trust, and service.



30th Day - Tuesday, Apr. 5

Scripture

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep."

John 10:14-15



Reflection

It is difficult to picture shepherds knowing their sheep by name. It seems impossible that those animal care takers were that totally invested in the well-being of their flock. Only a few, I suppose, got that involved, knew their names, gave them names, kept track of their whereabouts and literally gave their lives for the sake of the sheep. That kind of care is priceless.

Jesus states quite clearly that both sheep and shepherd know each other. They have a relationship of trust and dependence that set them free. Somehow, somehow the sheep sense they are in good hands, when the shepherd is a good one. What an image of Christ and his church, freely and joyfully living out their lives to make the other better. Knowing each other, loving each other because the sheep realize that this good shepherd will give his life for the sheep. What a comfort to know that Jesus Christ has done that for us.



31st Day - Wednesday, Apr. 6

Scripture

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

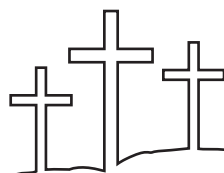
John 15:13-15



Reflection

There is a phrase often heard in the sports world that says, “Don’t explain, don’t complain, just do it.” It is aimed, I suppose, at motivating action instead of conversation. It is geared toward the lie that accomplishment is a higher value than community. The belief seems to be that outcome is better than process, final score becomes the only point, not the participation. Winning, they say, takes care of everything.

Jesus however, was an explainer. He took great pains to let His friends know what He was thinking. Over and over He told them “what and why.” Our Lord put a very high value on understanding, not just achievement. He wanted His disciples to “get it” as well as “do it.” To know the Master’s heart is a priceless gift. Share yours on your journey!



32nd Day - Thursday, Apr. 7

Scripture

Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

John 20:27-29



Reflection

During the summer we would spend one afternoon of a week of camping with teenagers taking them boulder hopping up Slate Creek in northern California. Hiking, swimming, rock climbing up the majestic river took approximately two hours. It was an incredible sight watching a string of two hundred kids one by one work their way up the canyon.

Near the top, counselors had gone ahead earlier to prepare lunch in a lush meadow with a cascading waterfall, a lake and green grass.

To reach this paradise, however, at the top of the Slate Creek everyone, one by one, had to dive 3 or 4 yards under a huge boulder, swim hard for a few feet to get to the other side.

Happy, encouraging voices on the other side said, "Come on" dive under the rock. We are here we, will pull you through! We will grab your hand, you can do it. Fear, thrill, hesitation, uncertainty rushed through every kid. The voices were loud, clear and inviting, but the water was cold, black and scary. To reach that loving hand pulling us through takes faith. Believing what you cannot see! Lent is like that. The other side is real!



33rd Day - Friday, Apr. 8

Scripture

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as You will."

Matthew 26:36-39



Reflection

Jesus knew all about heart break. His agony in the garden that night was not so much about the fear of physical pain as it was the horror of being separated from his father and facing full on the meaning and consequence of sin. His mission, now in its final hours, was unspeakably heart wrenching. Still his final prayer focused on trust "Nevertheless, not my will but Yours." When the worst was facing him, his father was still to be trusted.

Real prayers have that kind of depth and intensity. Not simply prayers of safe travels, good health and convenient outcomes, but life, death issues. Stuff that causes "sweat like drops of blood." Jesus Christ did a lot for us. It cost a lot. It meant a lot. It changed everything let us this Lent respond with, "my Lord and my God."



34th Day - Saturday, Apr. 9

Scripture

They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As He went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Luke 19:35-38



Reflection

Palm Sunday! The journey of Jesus to Jerusalem is complete, though the fulfillment of His mission on earth still lies ahead, the crowd loved the parade. Singing, shouting, riding on a donkey, cloaks spread on the road coming down from the Mount of Olives. It was quite an afternoon. No one but our Lord knew what would unfold in the coming week. He alone realized that parades, parties and celebrations would not solve the deep, dark dilemmas of the human heart. Jesus knew we were lost.

Let us stay on our journey. Palm Sunday begins our passion week, but it in no way answers our questions or heals our sinful hearts. We need to keep going to the cross, the grave, and then the empty tomb.



35th Day - Monday, Apr. 11

Scripture

At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

Mark 15:33-34



Reflection

Is anything worse than being forsaken by God? Is our Lord, hanging on a Roman cross, reciting an old testament Psalm from his Jewish tradition, or is He crying out in terror because the unity and love with His father has been ripped apart? Was His death dutifully expressing his Jewish faith, or is He fully experiencing the darkness of a sinful hell? None of us know, or can comprehend the realities of what is happening to our Lord. A painful, shameful death is occurring for no legitimate reason. The weight of the world corrupted is on him. The betrayal, denial, and feeling of his friends has taken place. And the cry of being forsaken by his father is heard across the hill of Golgotha.

Yet, He remained on the cross. He took all of it. He endured every bit of the enemies' darkness for us. His love outdistanced our lostness. He paid the ultimate price for us. His Lenten journey has been fulfilled.



36th Day - Tuesday, Apr. 12

Scripture

Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the Kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid.

Luke 23:50-53



Reflection

Courage is a priceless virtue. It stares down fear, and continues to move forward. Joseph, a Jew, stood in opposition of so many of his colleagues. He disagreed with the mood of the mob, the decision of the council. He hated what they were doing to Jesus, voted against it and lost! Courage often is revealed when in the minority. Real conviction quite often stands alone. Joseph is not through. Even after protesting the unlawful, illegal, horrifying death of Jesus, even after watching this good, innocent one die, he stays involved! Joseph didn't walk away. There is still dignified, compassionate, thoughtful work to be done. A body lovingly wrapped, a tomb acquired and paid for. A dignified burial. A respectful finish to a tragic death. "I will do it. Give me the responsibility in the midst of opposition. I will do the right thing," determined Joseph.

This holy week, Joseph reminds us of how our lives ought to be lived. He had no thought, yet, of resurrection. All he knew was that Jesus deserved better. Wrong had to be challenged. Right had to be expressed at whatever the cost.



Thank you, Lord, for real, vivid examples for us to follow. With extraordinary courage teach us to go to "Pilate" and ask the hard questions of our faithless, Christless culture. May we, like Joseph, take action, even when vision is not very clear.

37th Day - Wednesday, Apr. 13

Scripture

The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

"Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

Matt 27:62-66



Reflection

Bodyguards! Is this where that term originated? Religious leaders resentful of His life, fearful of His death, are still worried about what's next with Jesus. So much energy and expertise is wasted in our attempt to seal and guard the tomb. We hire "guards" to keep Jesus entombed and doctrinally pure. We find 'soldiers' to keep watch that the stone of church tradition stays firmly sealed. We think we know who and where he is. We are confident we have Him controlled and cornered. We pay people to protect Him and preserve Him for us, and also from us. We need Him to be where He is supposed to be. We must know what's going on! The Resurrected One needs no bodyguards. It is useless and silly to attempt to seal Him in anywhere. Soldiers don't help. He needs no protection. Secure tombs no longer matter. Sacred places marking the religious "spot" are meaningless. He is not here. He is risen. He goes before us in Galilee. We will see Him there.

He is ahead of us. Don't expect Him in the tomb. He is not predictable or stationary. He is not dead! To find Him we must return to the city. Get out of the garden! Quiet, calm, peaceful settings are not for Jesus. Let us quit guarding the body of Jesus. It's time to follow His spirit!



38th Day - Thursday, Apr. 14

Scripture

Peter Noticed the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to their homes.

John 20:7-10



Reflection

Two thousand years have come and gone, and we still do not fully understand the miracle of the resurrection. We get glimpses of insight, momentary feelings of faith, but most of us continue to wonder, how could the tomb be empty? What have they done with Jesus? What now do I do with my life? It's time to go back home. Bewilderment persists. It does not naturally lead to joy.

Empty tombs are not enough to transform us. Folded linen cloths are not sufficient. Rolled away stones, no matter how large, will not connect the dots. Physical evidence, as logical and convincing as it may be, does not do it. We continue to turn away confused. We go home and ponder what is next for us and our world without God.

But wait! There is more. The disciples went home, but not Mary! She didn't leave. She stayed in the garden, crying, heartbroken, grieving. Mary didn't go home! Then the encounter! Then she heard her name, spoken. Then she, once again, knew He was alive. Evidence was insufficient. It is the living encounter we need. When He calls our name, when we trust that He knows us, when we realize that He wants our companionship, then, and only then, can resurrection be real and vital.



The empty tomb is only the beginning. Jesus, calling us to him in a personal way, is the connection. Seeing him now as our Master and Lord, that's the fulfillment we need! Happy Easter—He is risen!

39th Day - Friday, Apr. 15 Good Friday

Scripture

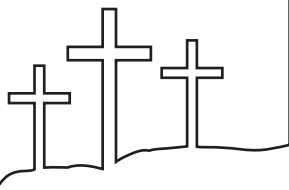
When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.

Mark 16:1-6



Reflection

Two Marys and Salome. Three faithful, heartbroken women. Love and respect drove them to the burial place of Jesus of Nazareth. They were prepared to do what people had done before, anoint the body, but they would do it with such devotion and tenderness. Anointing the body was all that was left to be done. Hope had been dashed. A great life had been brutally ended. Dreams were now only nightmares. "We can't just walk away. We must do something to show our love, close the loop, and express our grief. Our Lord deserves our tender touch. That's the best and final act we know. It is our dutiful and proper way to say goodbye." Thank God for women who didn't quit with Friday. Thank God they kept going, caring, working, anointing until Sunday. Thank God they were in a place close enough to Jesus to be the first to be surprised. Thank God their spices went unused and their anointing plans were unnecessary. May it be said of us this Easter, even when our faith does not allow us to see beyond today that we remain ready and prepared to do what we can until God surprises us with the promise of Easter. And finally may it be true of us when resurrection is proclaimed, like the women, we "go and tell" rather than "stay and anoint."



40th Day - Saturday, Apr. 16

Scripture

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52



Reflection

Those who follow Jesus first, the ones that knew Him after his resurrection, the members of those early churches established by Peter, Paul, John and others, did not think they would die. Their hope and expectation rested in the glorious fact that their Lord was returning to the earth, quickly and soon, to rule and to reign.

They were mistaken! Christ did not come back quickly. Two thousand years have passed and he still has not returned. Millions of faithful followers of Jesus have completed their earthly lives and are still waiting for that blessed hope of Jesus Christ coming back to this world.

Our timing may have been off, but His promise remains true. Whether alive or dead our Lord will transform our human existence into an eternal resurrected existence like His! Lent is over- His promises are kept. Easter is here. Hallelujah!



HAPPY EASTER!

HE HAS RISEN, HE HAS RISEN INDEED!



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