



# DAILY DEVOTIONS

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Lent 2025



# Introduction

The season of Lent is a time for reflection, for repentance, to make space for God, and to put some extra effort and intentionality into our faith lives. It is too easy to allow our faith lives to get stagnant. But our faith should not be something that remains static—it is every growing, ever changing. It is a living faith. None of us are the same today as we were when we were children, and throughout our lives our faith grows, develops, and deepens through our experiences, our encounters with God, and even the faith community that we surround ourselves with.

As we journey to the foot of the cross in this season of Lent, we will be reading, hearing, pondering, and praying about what it means to have a “Living Faith.” A faith that the Holy Spirit continues to breathe life into each day. The TSLC Staff has written weekly devotions that seek to draw us closer to God and one another in faith. Each a week a staff member has provided the devotion for the beginning of the week, a prayer, along with questions to reflect on. There are also scripture readings for each day to read, pray over, and reflect on as well.

Our prayer this Lent is that each of us will make space to hear the Holy Spirit speak to us in new ways, to be open to turning back to God in repentance for the parts of our lives that need renewing, and to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ. May we all experience this year’s journey to the cross as a time to deepen our “Living Faith.”

In Christ’s Love,  
TSLC Staff



ASH WEDNESDAY -  
LENT BEGINS

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March 5 - March 8, 2025

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## Ash Wednesday Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10

So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As we work together with him, we entreat you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says,

“At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.”

Look, now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: in great endurance, afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; in purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors and yet are true, as unknown and yet are well known, as dying and look—we are alive, as punished and yet not killed, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing everything.

Timing is everything, as the saying goes. It comes to my mind when things go just right—like when something or someone was just meant to be. I feel that way about meeting my husband, Jerry, even though our path to marriage was filled with ups and downs, and admittedly some difficulty. Especially in the beginning, when we seemed to be headed in different directions. At one point I was convinced it was over and was filled with the sadness of a broken heart. But then came a turning point and we began again; we found a way to make things work. Paul’s letter addresses the ups and downs of life, especially a life in faith. He reminds the people of Corinth, and us, that we will endure wonderful things through the power and love of God, but we will also experience the struggles of life because they go together. Life in faith does not mean our troubles go away, or that everything will be wonderful all the time. In that time of uncertainty for Jerry and me, we were both praying, listening, and hoping; we believe God was guiding us as we found our way. We live in that tension daily, not always knowing if things will work out the way we want it to, or if the timing will be just right, but knowing we are never alone as we live in faith, hope and love.

On this first day of Lent, we are reminded of what it means to live and die in faith; it is marked on our foreheads with a cross made of ashes. We hear the words “you are dust and to dust you shall return” as we receive the visible reminder of our mortal death. Although mortal life is but momentary, we have an eternal life with Jesus Christ, who has brought the day of salvation to all people; a time to be reconciled with God. And the timing is just right my friends, because God has made it so. This moment and each moment of our baptized lives we are called respond to that great gift; to live, love, and serve in faith.

## Daily Scripture Readings:

### *Thursday:*

“Because he loves me,” says the LORD, “I will rescue him;

I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

He will call on me, and I will answer him;

I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.

With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”

-Psalm 91:14-16

### *Friday:*

“I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.” -Exodus 6:7-8

### *Saturday:*

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. -Ecclesiastes 3:1

# Reflection Questions:

1. Has there been a time in your life where everything went just right? Did you expect it or were you surprised?
2. How do you respond when things don't go right? What/who holds your steady, and in what ways?
3. What challenges are there in living a life of faith?

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# Prayer

God of Eternal Love,

We have made our commitment to You,

and have started a new journey into purposeful growth.

But, we know that if we are to remain faithful

we need Your help and Your strength.

So, we ask...

Teach us to pray with faith and read Your Word

with understanding.

Teach us to worship with passion and gather together with love.

Teach us to give generously,

serve compassionately,

and use our time mindfully,

so that we may reflect Your goodness,

and that others may discover Your grace through us.

In Jesus Name.

Amen.





## THROUGH PRAYER

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March 9 - March 15, 2025

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## Sunday's Scripture: Luke 4:1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written,

'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written,

'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,'  
and on their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

“Before I go to bed each night, I pray God keep me in your sight.

Hold me safely in your arms and keep me safe from all that harms.

And when I wake with morning light, I’ll love you Lord with all my  
might. Amen.”

This was the bedtime prayer Aaron made up for Elena when she was just a baby. Each night of her childhood these were the last words she would hear before she went to bed. Many of us share similar stories of our early prayer life—a favorite bedtime prayer, the grace your family said before meals, or the excitement when you finally had all the words of the Lord’s Prayer learned and could say it in church with the rest of the congregation. For many, this is how our prayer life begins.

As we grow in faith, we often think our prayers should become more complex, more eloquent, or somehow more “meaningful” to God. We think we should be better at knowing how to pray, what to pray, and how to hear God speak to us in return. But I think that when we think that way, we ourselves are the barrier to growing in our prayer life. God does not care about the “quality” of our prayers, but about the intention of our hearts. God desires to be in relationship with us, and time spent in prayer is how we nurture that relationship.

God hears all our prayers, from the well crafted prayers of intercession spoken in worship, to the bedtime prayers of children, and even our cries of “O God, help me.” Let us take this Lent to commit ourselves to spending more time in prayer, and listen to what God is calling us to as we seek to have a living faith.

## Daily Scripture Readings:

*Monday: Pray knowing God hears you*

I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me; hear my words. -Psalm 17:6

*Tuesday: Pray for justice and truth*

Hear a just cause, O Lord; attend to my cry; give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit. -Psalm 17:1

*Wednesday: Pray with humility*

Then Job arose, tore his robe, shaved his head, and fell on the ground and worshiped. He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." -Job 1:20-21

*Thursday: Pray to God with thanksgiving and joy*

Now my head is lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the Lord. -Psalm 27:6

*Friday: Pray in thanks for all God's blessings*

And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth, and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!"

-Genesis 14:18-20

*Saturday: Pray for God's guidance and direction*

Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path. -Psalm 27:11a

## Reflection Questions:

1. How does prayer help me deepen my relationship with God?
2. When have you felt most corrected to God in prayer?
3. Do you believe God hears and answers your prayers? How do you respond when God's answers differ from what you desire?

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## PRAYER

God of our hearts...here we are!

We've come with thirsty hearts,  
praying that your Word will satisfy us.

We come with aching hearts,  
praying for good news to comfort us.

We come with overflowing hearts,  
praying for a chance to share your love.

You, who know our hearts and hear our prayers,  
be with us now and always.

Amen.



# THROUGH SERVICE

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March 16 - March 22, 2025

## Sunday's Scripture: Luke 13:31-35

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to Jesus, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"



One goal Casey and I had this youth year was we wanted to push our youth to learn how to love and serve others in our community. In our meetings, we talk about servant leadership, so we put our teachings into practice. When we thought about what would be the most beneficial and meaningful way to give back, we first asked “Who can we help?” An idea came to mind--we use Camp Nawakwa throughout the year for ALIVE, Mega-Retreat and Confirmation Camp. We thought, it would be best to give back to a place we use and deeply care about.

So, we reached out to site manager, Paul Askey, to see how our group of 10 could help. Paul gave us tasks. These tasks seemed very small--like assembling 20 fire starter kits, organizing summer camp photos to be made into albums, and laying a new rug in Grove Lodge. Taking the full two hours we were there, we accomplished the tasks. We finally asked Paul, “How much were you dreading doing these tasks by yourself?” He replied, “I knew they would take me months to complete!”

Philippians 3:17—4:1 tells us “Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

The impact that our youth had on Paul and Camp seemed small to us, but saved months of work for them. Often small things can lead to big rewards! Our faith is like that. The Bible tells us over and over how we are called to love and care for others. Our small acts of service can impact people in large ways, even if it is as small as checking in or just being with someone who is in need. There are always ways we can love, serve and care for others each day. You just have to be open-minded and seek them out.

# Daily Scripture Readings:

*Monday: Serve with thankfulness and joy*

“O give thanks to the LORD; call on his name; make known his deeds among the peoples. Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works.” -Psalm 105:1-2

*Tuesday: Serve with love and forgiveness*

“And now, therefore, let the power of the LORD be great in the way that you promised when you spoke, saying, ‘The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression.’”

-Numbers 14:17-18a

*Wednesday: Serve with belief in God*

“O our God, will you not execute judgment upon them? For we are powerless against this great multitude that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you. Believe in the LORD your God and you will be established; believe his prophets and you will succeed.” -2 Chronicles 20:12, 20b

*Thursday: Serve as a blessing to God*

“Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on your name.” -Psalm 63:4

*Friday: Serve with wisdom and strength*

“Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”

-Daniel 12:3

*Saturday: Serve with an abundant heart*

“The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil, for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.” -Luke 6:43-45

# Reflection Questions:

1. First, ask yourself, who can you help?
2. Can you add one act of service, big or small, into your life this Lenten season?

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# Prayer

O Lord,

open our eyes that we may see the needs of others;  
open our ears that we may hear people's cries for justice;  
open our hearts that we may assist sojourners near and  
far.

Show us where love, hope and faith are needed.

Use us as ministers of your healing.

Let us not be afraid

to protect the weak because of the anger of the strong,  
or to defend the poor because of the power of the rich.

Sustain us so that in these coming days

we may be able to do some work of peace for you.

We ask these things in your blessed name.

Amen.



# THROUGH TRIALS

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March 23 - March 29, 2025

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## Sunday's Scripture: Luke 13:1-9

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Jesus asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."

Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?'<sup>8</sup> He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

It is difficult to admit when we struggle. Admitting our struggles requires that we be honest and vulnerable – with ourselves, our spouses, family, friends, and even God. That vulnerability often comes with fear. We may be afraid of judgment or rejection from others, admitting that we need help, or feelings of inadequacy. We can boil that fear down to one phrase: I am not enough.

At times, it seems our struggles never end. Maybe we're grappling with family conflict, battling illness or addiction, or even the loss of a loved one. In the midst of these battles, we often feel isolated and lonely. We may even feel far away from God. Struggle turns to fear, fear turns to isolation, isolation turns to feelings of distance from God. Rinse. Wash. Repeat.

The truth is that we all struggle. A lot. We hate to admit it sometimes, but it happens almost daily. So, what can we do? How do we get through periods of strife? We need to remember that we are never far away from God. No matter how distant we feel, God is always with us, and we must seek his help. God promises us that through faith, we will endure all conflicts.

“On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. I cling to you; your right hand upholds me” (Psalm 63: 8-10).

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Will we ever be struggle-free in this life? Probably not. Will it get easier? Again, probably not. But, it is important for us to know that God is always with us, and through our faith we can endure anything. With God, we are enough.

## Daily Scripture Readings:

*Monday; In trials, show humility*

Show me, LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Everyone is but a breath, even those who seem secure. -Psalm 39:4-5

*Tuesday: In trials, seek God in prayer*

Hear my prayer, LORD, listen to my cry for help; do not be deaf to my weeping. -Psalm 39:12a

*Wednesday: In trials, seek ways to grow in faith*

Then Jesus asked, "What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds perched in its branches."

-Luke 13:18-19

*Thursday: In trials, seek assurance in God's promises*

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. -2 Corinthians 4:16-18

*Friday: in trials, seek God's strength*

For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for the one who for their sake died and was raised. -2 Corinthians 5:14-15

*Saturday: In trials, seek God's presence*

Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. -Psalm 32:6-7





## PRAYER

Holy God, by the grace of Jesus Christ,  
you know the tests and trials we face.  
Walk with us through this wilderness.  
Come to us with ministers of healing  
and visit us with messengers of hope,  
so that we may return to you in faith,  
believing the good news of the gospel;  
through Jesus Christ our Savior.  
Amen.



THROUGH  
FORGIVENESS

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March 30 - April 5, 2025

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## Sunday's Scripture: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So he told them this parable: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

“In the church, "forgiveness" refers to the act of extending grace and pardon to others, mirroring God's own forgiveness, which is considered a central tenet of Christian faith, where individuals are to forgive others as God has forgiven them, often through practices like confession and seeking reconciliation with those they have wronged; it is seen as a key component of a spiritual life, allowing for healing and restoration within the community.” *(From an AI generated Internet search on forgiveness.)*

Opening communication with someone who we consider has wronged us, or for someone we have hurt, which has caused harm and the ending of a relationship is often impossible. We wind up going to church and deciding to not go to the “same service as the person that hurt me.” Jesus talked a lot about forgiveness because he knew that unless we choose to walk in forgiveness, we limp along the rest of our lives. How do we learn to forgive ourselves? Yes, that is possible and takes faith. When we choose to forgive, we finally get the “dead body” of unforgiveness off our backs we’ve been carrying for a long time.

Start by asking the Lord to help you. Talk with your pastor who can be a mediator in the process. Unforgiveness causes every area of our life to suffer under the weight of not forgiving. No one wins. The thought of “why should I forgive ‘so and so’ for what they did? Then they get off ‘scot free.’ ” Yes, it’s awkward and can be hard, especially if it’s never been modeled for you growing up.

I have a story for you, too long to type here. If you’d like to know, let’s schedule lunch. Let God be glorified. Understand that forgiveness is more about your freedom, healing, and what God wants to do in your life, than the other person.

*“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner was you.”*

- Corrie ten Boom

## Daily Scripture Readings:

*Monday: Accept God's forgiveness for yourself*

O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion! When God restores the fortunes of his people, Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad.

-Psalm 53:6

*Tuesday: Forgiving can lead to restoration*

You shall observe my statutes and faithfully keep my ordinances, so that you may live on the land securely. The land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live on it securely. -Leviticus 25:18-19

*Wednesday: Forgive so all will know abundant life*

And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed and broke them and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were filled, and what was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces. -Luke 9:16-17

*Thursday: We are forgiven children of God*

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. -Isaiah 43:1

*Friday: Forgiving allows us to move on*

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. -Psalm 126:1-3

*Saturday: Christ died that we might know and extend forgiveness*

But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed."

-John 11:49-50

## Reflection Questions:

1. Scripture tells us "If you remember that your brother (or sister) has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother (or sister) and then come and offer your gift". This is our command from Jesus. So, how do we actually DO IT?
2. When we don't "feel" like forgiving, do we give in to our flesh (pride) and not forgive, or do we honor God and listen to his Spirit?
3. Is there something in your past you have not forgiven yourself for? What steps can you take to open that painful door and start to process the wound, the loss, and grief? What did not forgiving yourself, cost you?

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# PRAYER

Loving God, we take this time today to come before you,  
but as we do, we are aware that all is not right within us.  
We neglect your word, we fail to meditate on your law,  
we forget to speak with you, we make plans without turning to you,  
we do things that we know are wrong.  
We did not put you first in our lives.  
Forgive how we have failed to love you  
with all our heart, our soul, our mind, and our strength.

Loving God,  
our relationships with each other are not all that they can be or should be.  
There is hurt and injury between ourselves and others.  
There are walls of anger and hatred between us and our neighbors.  
Forgive us for how we deny our part in this  
and for how we blame others for the brokenness around us.  
Forgive how we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

Gracious God,  
we believe that you offer to us and our world a whole and good life.  
For all that we have done to deny this life to each other and to ourselves,  
we ask your forgiveness and your mercy.

Amen.





# THROUGH WORSHIP

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April 6 - April 12, 2025

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## Sunday's Scripture: John 12:1-8

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

# Reflection

*Ann Kopacko*

True worship of God is when we love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.” In using this definition as an example, I feel that I definitely fall short in expressing my love and belief in God. I know in any given day, that I miss the mark, not giving God ALL of my heart, soul, mind, and strength. My belief has not wavered, just my expression.

This community of faith has raised me and taught me how to love God. As a child, I attended Sunday school and learned of God’s love for me. As I grew in faith, I feel that my love of God grew and matured allowing me to become more involved in both weekly and daily worship. As an adult and parent, I tried to teach my children about God’s love for them through how I interacted with them and others. As I thought about this topic, I realized that worship is not just a weekly thing we do as a church, but can be done any time, any place, alone or as a group.

Weekly choir rehearsals are a time when we gather to prepare music for services, but we are praising and worshipping God as we rehearse. I feel that the time when I am most in aware of my faith is when I am practicing alone in the sanctuary. As I prepare the music for each Sunday in the quietness of the sanctuary, I look at the words to the music and the music itself. The music is probably the most impactful part of my worship experience. I can truly feel the presence of God in my life and know then that I am praising God with my heart, soul, mind, and strength.

## Daily Scripture Readings:

*Monday; Worship with a true and hopeful heart*

Let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. -Hebrews 10:22-23

*Tuesday: Worship in the abiding presence of God*

Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he has promised us, eternal life. -1 John 2:24-25

*Wednesday: Worship with awe and ask for mercy*

O LORD, I have heard of your renown, and I stand in awe, O LORD, of your work. In our own time revive it; in our own time make it known; in wrath may you remember mercy. -Habakkuk 3:2

*Thursday: Worship God in steadfast love*

But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, "You are my God." Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love. -Psalm 31:14, 16

*Friday: Worship as brothers and sisters in Christ*

It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying, "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you."

-Hebrews 2:10-12

*Saturday: Worship regularly and rest*

Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no work: it is a Sabbath to the LORD throughout your settlements. -Leviticus 23:3

## Reflection Questions:

1. How do you worship God on a daily/weekly basis?
2. Do you feel that you need to make a conscious effort to follow God, or is it a part of your being?

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## PRAYER

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul:

Guard my life, O Lord, for I am devoted to you;

Guard my heart, O Father, for I love you with all my choices;

Guard my mind, O Jesus, for I fix my thoughts on following you;

Guard my body, O Spirit, for I give it to be your temple;

Guard my relationships, O Trinity, for I center my conversations on you.

Hear my prayer, O Lord.

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul:

I offer my eyes to you, O Lord, to behold your beauty;

I offer my lips to you, O Father, to speak your praises;

I offer my ears to you, O Jesus, to listen to your words;

I offer my steps to you, O Spirit, to follow your movements;

I offer my life to you, O Trinity, to honor you alone.

Hear my prayer, O Lord.

Amen.



PALM SUNDAY -  
HOLY WEEK BEGINS

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April 13 - April 16, 2025

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## Sunday's Scripture: Luke 19:28-40

After he had said this, Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord needs it." Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying,

"Blessed is the king  
who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven,  
and glory in the highest heaven!"

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."



Growing up we would go each summer to my father's family reunion in Kansas. We would also visit my mother's family, since she, too, was from Kansas. It was the only trip we ever took as a whole family, and we did it almost every summer. So, you can imagine that we knew the road well; knew where we would stop for bathroom breaks, and usually a breakfast break (dad insisted we leave very early). I remember all the familiar landmarks, even now. Some are still there, some gone. Of course, the road has been repaired, replaced, and lines repainted many times, but it is the same road even if it is buried underneath layers of dirt, cement and macadam.

The road to Jerusalem is called the Via Delarosa (Latin for the Way of Sorrows). I remember walking on this road when we visited years ago, thinking "here we are walking in the ruts of the chariots, the footsteps of the disciples and Jesus." It seemed surreal to be in that place, the same road that Jesus was on, as he and the disciples made their way from the Mount of Olives down to Jerusalem; where at first, he would be celebrated and hailed with palms waving; as king, leader, messiah, healer, savior. For me, one of the most incredible parts of his journey was that he knew what was coming—for a long time—he warned his followers many times. I have a hard time imagining such a thing. If I knew something awful was going to happen on the road to Kansas, I would insist on a different route or not going at all. But we didn't know, and even though my parents were well prepared, things did happen—car trouble, sickness, arguments, unscheduled stops. It was evident my parents knew the uncertainties of life and were faithful people, because before each trip they would lead us in the Lord's prayer and pray for safe travels.

Prayer is important every day but especially for Jesus this week; the one we call "holy." Jesus calls upon his father as he goes face first to what lies ahead on the journey; the one that is filled with ruts, footsteps, joy, tears, celebration, pain, torment, love, trust, and faith. The disciples don't understand yet what will occur, but they follow the one who leads them in faith and love.

## Daily Scripture Readings:

### *Monday;*

I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

-Isaiah 42:6-7

### *Tuesday:*

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

-1 Corinthians 1:18

### *Wednesday:*

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart. -Hebrews 12:1-3

# Reflection Questions:

1. The disciples were sent with instructions by Jesus, not understanding what was ahead. Have you had a time where the direction of your life seemed unclear? What helped you as you made your way on the journey? What were the ruts, the pitfalls, unforeseen problems? Who or what helped you through?
2. Where do you see God in the uncertainty of your journeys? How might prayer and trust help in those times?

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# PRAYER

Almighty and Everlasting God,  
Praise and honor to the one  
who raised Lazarus from the dead,  
as a foreshadow of the coming days.

Blessings and honor to the one  
who marched triumphantly into Jerusalem,  
who turned over the tables in the temple,  
who taught his disciples to be the least of these.

Glory and power to the one  
who submitted to the will of the Father,  
who broke bread with the one who would betray,  
who washed the feet of the one who would deny,  
who healed the ear of the one who would arrest,  
and in his faithfulness will win victory over sin and  
death.

Amen



# MAUNDY THURSDAY

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April 17, 2025

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## Maundy Thursday's Scripture: John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."

"Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Maundy Thursday marks the beginning of the Triduum or the “Great Three Days.” These three days follow Jesus journey from the table with his disciples, to the cross, and to the empty tomb. To me these three days are at the heart of a “living faith.”

In today’s scripture we hear about Jesus humbling himself as he knelt in front of his disciples and washed their feet. I know that most people don’t like having their feet touched or enjoy the thought of touching someone else’s feet, but when we get over our insecurities long enough to be vulnerable with one another it can be a powerful experience of humility and service.

I did not grow up in a congregation that practiced foot washing. So, when I started seminary and Holy Week grew closer, I remember people talking about it. And as they did my discomfort grew. Until Maundy Thursday, as I sat in worship and I vividly remember the portion of the service when we were invited to come forward, take a seat and have our feet washed. After our feet were washed, we then knelt in front of the next person to sit in that chair and wash their feet. The importance of allowing yourself to be washed and then picking up the soap and wash cloth to kneel at and wash someone’s feet was striking.

This practice is a humbling and meaningful experience. We often think of ourselves as either the ones serving or being served, however it is important for us to remember that as disciples of Jesus Christ we need to be in both roles. We first need to be washed by God in order to be of service to those around us. The act of washing and being washed is an act of love. That’s the word that comes up over and over in this Gospel text. Love is how people know that we are Jesus’ disciples. So be washed in God’s love, and may it spill over to those around you.

# Reflection Questions:

1. How does it feel when someone comes to you in sincere humility? Why?
2. What does it look like for you to humble yourself in love? What is necessary for you to do that more often?

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## GOOD FRIDAY

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April 18, 2025

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## Good Friday's Scripture: Hebrews 10:16-25

After the Holy Spirit says,

“This is the covenant that I will make with them  
after those days, says the Lord:

I will put my laws in their hearts,  
and I will write them on their minds,”

he also adds,

“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”

Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The day and evening are approaching of Jesus' death on the cross. You might be wondering how we call the day of death for Jesus "good?" After all, it is by no means pleasant to think about or remember. The truth is we often would like to put away or forget the rough, struggling, or painful times of our life. But God constantly calls us to remember, and not just the good things.

I know I would rather not remember the pain and struggle of my mother's long illness and death, but it was a part of her journey on earth. The truth is that her struggles have shaped me just as much (maybe even more) than the times when she was well and able to live a normal life. The difficult of family relationships, tensions, arguments, grudges—those too, are times I would rather forget. But to learn, be shaped and transformed in faith means that I remember and move forward.

It is when I am walking in faith, especially during difficult times, that I am at my most vulnerable. My heart is exposed. We may fall to our knees, literally, desperate for mercy and relief. Perhaps we even get angry at God or others for what is occurring and let bitterness overcome us. But hopefully we stand again, as we lean into what we know in faith: Jesus knows what it is like; he has felt the pain of betrayal, harsh treatment, doubt of who he is, love of parents and friends, the joy of healing and forgiveness, the long and arduous road of knowing what is ahead. The testing of faith, the trials of life. Death of friends. Hunger, thirst, pain. He has experienced it all.

So on this day, I go with him. I feel the anguish, pain and sorrow that humanity is capable of. I dwell here; ponder what it means—the death of Jesus. And walk with him to the cross. remembering, not just this day, but every day, what Jesus has done and keeps on doing in our lives and in the world. I remember that God's covenant is written on our hearts and minds, with love, forgiveness and hope eternal, especially amid the times I would rather not remember.





# HOLY SATURDAY

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April 19, 2025

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## Holy Saturday's Scripture: Romans 6:3-11

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

During the years we lived in Lincoln, our Holy Saturdays were very busy. We started the day at the annual church Easter Egg Hunt, followed by decorating the sanctuary for Easter Sunday service,. We then usually had lunch with friend, often outside in the early Midwest spring, colored Easter Eggs, and put some Resurrection Rolls in the over. They were happy days filled with the anticipation of our Easter celebration the next day.

But on this day, I always try to take time to think about how different that first Holy Saturday was for Jesus' followers. We have the benefit of knowing the end of the story. We know that when morning comes, our church's will be filled with the shouts of "Alleluia! Christ is Risen!" But what would this day look like that first Easter, when the disciples didn't know that they would find the tomb empty? I can only imagine the fear and uncertainty they must have felt. Would I remember what Jesus promised about rising on the third day? Would I have enough faith to believe that to be the truth? Would I have hope during a time that seemed hopeless?

All of us have times in our lives when things seemed hopeless. There are many in our world today who are scared, angry, and are facing the future devoid of hope. What can we learn from those first disciples that can help us have a living faith during challenging times? I think the first is the importance of community. We need to have a community of faith that surrounds us and supports us, and through our support of each other we are strengthened to help our neighbor. And secondly, the importance of clinging to God's promises, even when they seem impossible—especially when they seem impossible. I invite you to spend some time today pondering how we can more fully live out our faith in those scary, in-between, seemingly hopeless times.







# EASTER SUNDAY

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April 20, 2025

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## Easter Sunday's Scripture: Luke 24:1-12

On the first day of the week, at early dawn, the women came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia! Those shouts will be heard all over the world this Easter morning. But that first Easter it just began with a group of women (at least five of them) who quietly and unexpectedly came to the tomb just to do the work for burial that still needed to be done. They were not expecting their lives and the world to be changed by what they would encounter that morning. When I read this account of the Resurrection narrative the question that sticks with me is “why do you look for the living among the dead?”

They didn’t know it yet, but Jesus was alive, he wasn’t in the tomb anymore. They were looking there because where else would they think of looking for him. Then they get the good news, “he’s not here, he is alive.” The question that the angels pose is one that we still wrestle with today: Why do we look for lifegiving things in places that don’t offer life?

There are so many things in our world that promise to make our lives better, fuller, or happier. Whole industries are built upon our desire for a better and happier life. But we should be careful where we go looking for that life. As children of God we have a unique opportunity in the world. We have the gift of life that is found in Jesus Christ, and like the women we have a message to share. God’s message of grace, love, forgiveness and new life through Jesus Christ.

My friends, the message that we have been given is one for the world. Those women were the first to witness and hear the good news that Christ is alive. But they are certainly not the last to hear and share the news. We are now Christ’s messengers in this world. So, soak in the life-giving joy of the resurrection and point others to the life that Jesus offers.



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