

Christ Church Episcopal 2018 Lenten Devotions



Reflections by Members and Friends of our Parish Family

Invitation to a Holy Lent

Book of Common Prayer 265

*“I invite you, therefore,
in the name of the Church,
to the observance of a holy Lent,
by self-examination and repentance;
by prayer, fasting, and self-denial;
and by reading and meditating
on God’s holy word.”*

Dear Friends,

Every year on the First Sunday in Lent, we hear the story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. The first three gospels tell us that immediately after Jesus was baptized and heard the words "You are my Beloved; with you I am well pleased," he was led into the wilderness where he was tempted by Satan. I believe that in the wilderness, Jesus wrestled with his identity as the beloved Son of God. In the wilderness, where there was nothing and no one else on whom to depend, Jesus had to fully rely on his identity as the Beloved Son of God.

Lent is such a wilderness for us. During Lent, we wrestle with what it means that our primary identity is as beloved children of God. We learn to deepen our dependence on God for our security rather than people or things. We give up habits or make new habits to help us put our trust in God.

Unlike Jesus, however, we do not enter the wilderness of Lent alone. With this Lenten Devotion book, written by members and friends of Christ Church, we journey together through the Lenten wilderness. These reflections and meditations come from the hearts and minds of a community of faith that prays, practices, and plays together. Weekly we gather for worship, study, and fellowship as we work to deepen our understanding of our identity as God's beloved children. With this book, we are able to gather daily as well.

Thank you to Heather Swift for her tireless efforts to produce this book, to Kathy Garber for her administrative assistance, and to all of you who offered your faithful reflections to guide us this Lent.

A blessed Lent to each of you,

Charlotte +

February 14, 2018 ~ Ash Wednesday

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12

2nd Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Psalm 103 / Gospel: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

I love ritual. I mean I REALLY love ritual! The more ancient and mysterious the better: chanting the psalms, sharing bread and wine, candles, incense, liturgy, communal prayer – bring it on! So when it comes to Holy Days, Ash Wednesday is hard to beat – fabulous enough on its own, it also starts a whole season filled with ritual and mystery. We get to wear our ashes like a badge of honor and "give up" for Lent - chocolate, carbs, Netflix, yelling at the kids or spouse...whatever it is, we like to talk about it.

I look to today's readings for confirmation of all of my favorites. But Isaiah challenges that we "serve (our) own interest on (our) fast day." Jesus says nothing about walking around with ashes on my head, but urges me to "go into (my) room and shut the door," urging that I "not look dismal." Wait...what?!? Really?!?

Okay...re-boot. I keep the ancient and mysterious with lit candles and psalms read quietly, but now I "add on" rather than fast – commit to an extra act of generosity or kindness every day, spend extra time in prayer, give away whatever I would have denied myself. Just don't look too closely at my forehead today...I'm a work in progress!

Midge Karam

February 15, 2018 ~ Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy Name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 30:15–20
Psalm 1 / The Gospel: Luke 9:18–25

The two Old Testament lessons for today seem to have a very similar message. In the lesson from Deuteronomy, we hear Moses' third and final address to "all Israel" reaffirming the covenant between God and the people of Israel. Those who keep the law, received by Moses on Mount Horeb, will prosper and live long in the land. Both Old Testament readings stress the importance of loving and obeying God in order to receive a life of blessing.

In the passage from Luke, Jesus also tells his disciples that to have life, they must follow him. The disciples are only beginning to understand who Jesus truly is through the revelation spoken by Peter, [Jesus is] "The Messiah of God." They are hearing for the first time that Jesus must suffer, be killed and then raised from the dead! It must have been very difficult for the disciples, and yet, all but one followed Jesus. It remains a challenge for us, but we are clearly called to be in relationship with our God, to love God, love one another, and be God in the world. It sounds like the reward is abundant life!

Julie Micheletti

February 16, 2018 ~ Friday after Ash Wednesday

Support us, O Lord, with your gracious favor through the fast we have begun; that as we observe it by bodily self-denial, so we may fulfill it with inner sincerity of heart; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Isaiah 58:1–9a
Psalm 51:1-10 / Gospel: Matthew 9:10–17

A New, True Type of Seeing

Early in Lent, I may still be establishing my Lenten “routines.” Years ago I was introduced to the idea that Lent involves more than “giving something up” – it is also a time for “taking something on.” The whole concept of fasting is more than not eating – it is consciously not doing certain things or acting in certain ways that distract me so that I may rediscover my true being as a living member of creation. My persistent ego-centered focus gets in the way and must go! I’m referring to the self-centered focus on things other than the appreciation and love of all the good around me (even the things that annoy me are full of God’s spirit and goodness). Put simply -- Love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Today’s lessons inspired me -- my Lenten practice isn’t about doing right things (giving up or taking on) but about stopping (fasting from) the focus on the small, temporary, unimportant thoughts that dominate my consciousness -- and directing my vision to truly see (feast on) the eternal life already and always around me in nature, friends, family, and, especially, strangers.

Reed Stith

February 17, 2018 ~ Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, and in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth your right hand to help and defend us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Isaiah 58:9b–14
Psalm 86:1–11 / The Gospel: Luke 5:27–32

The prophet Isaiah calls us to conscious living. He does so with an if-then style that shows us that our attitudes and actions have consequences. If we refrain from pointing a finger and speaking evil and if we meet the needs of the afflicted, then our light will shine. If we keep the Sabbath rather than pursuing our own interests, then we will take delight in the Lord and He will feed us. A relationship of mutual love and care is established and it is empowering. One who is vigilantly faithful is compared to a watered garden, a spring of water, a restorer, and a builder. It is only a small step to see Jesus as our example of one who fulfills Isaiah's call to right living.

Several of us at Pub Theology in January spoke about the importance of Sunday worship in the rhythm of our week. Sunday services bring us together to worship God in community. We are nurtured in the lessons of scripture and the fellowship of the faithful. It is an opportunity to step away from the influences of our current culture and realign ourselves.

The humble voice of the psalmist acknowledges his need for God and calls on the Lord to be with him all the day long. His reverence extends beyond the Sabbath and he seeks a continual relationship with God.

In the Gospel reading, the contrast between the attitude of the Pharisees and their scribes, and Jesus, brings us back to Isaiah's instructions for right living. Who is judging and criticizing and who is in loving relationship with others? When we are tempted to join the complainers and those who find fault, let us remember to consider the consequences of our choices. And keeping our humility, let us also remember that when we fall short of the mark, our awareness can bring us to repentance and we can know the Lord's forgiveness and choose again. As Isaiah says, "The Lord will guide you continually." We have but to ask.

Linda Irving

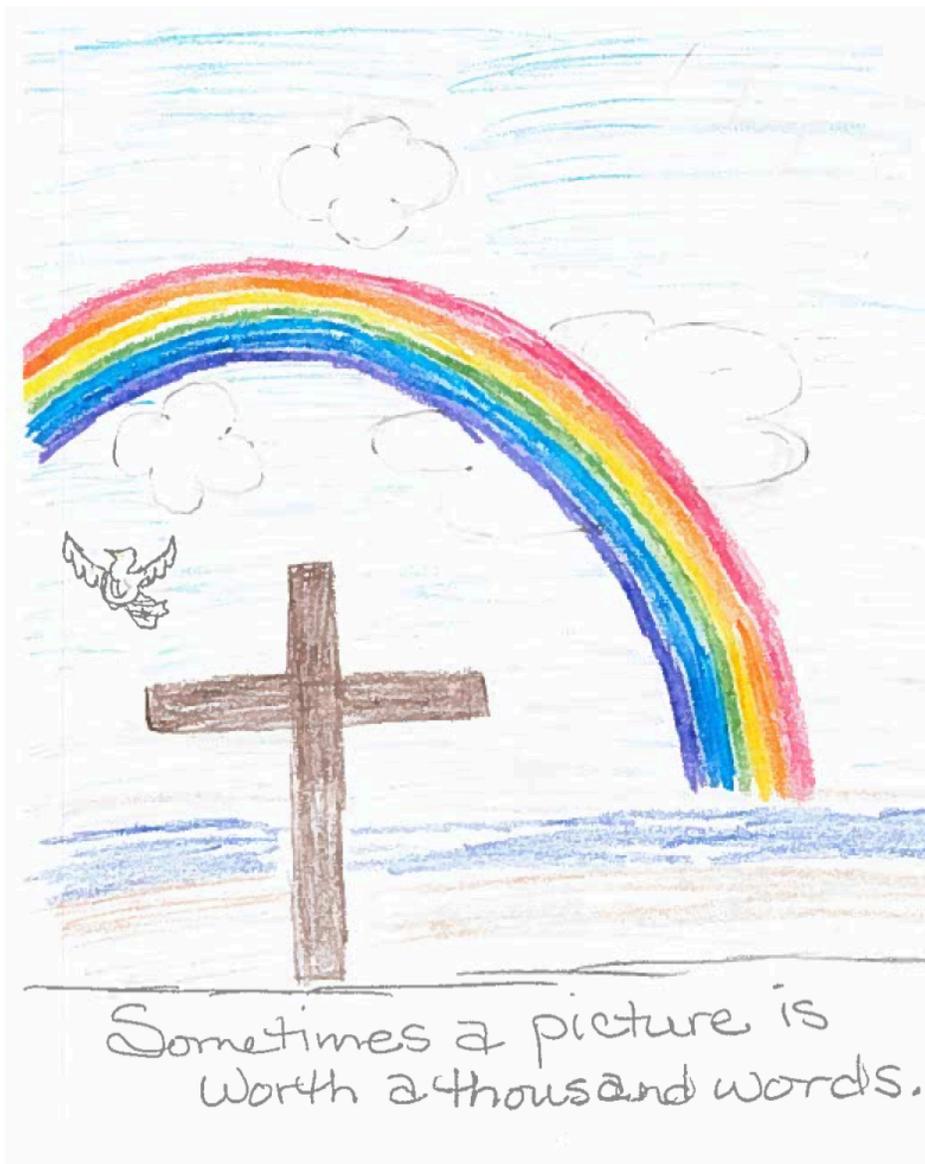
February 18, 2018 ~ First Sunday in Lent

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Genesis 9:8-17

2nd Reading: 1 Peter 3:18-22

Psalm 25:1-9 / Gospel: Mark 1:9-15



Susie Spearman

February 19, 2018 ~ Monday in 1st week of Lent

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully increase in us your gifts of holy discipline, in almsgiving, prayer, and fasting; that our lives may be directed to the fulfilling of your most gracious will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Leviticus 19:1–2, 11–18
Psalm 19:7-14 / The Gospel: Matthew 25:31–46

Are you a sheep, a goat, or a goat in sheep's clothing?

Last fall I noticed a young girl standing on 303 at the entrance to Acme Plaza. She was holding a sign, the exact words I do not remember, but she was obviously asking for help, or put another way, begging, for food, a job, etc. My first reaction was, "Wow, we don't have that here in Hudson." I went on with my errands. A few weeks later I saw another woman doing the same thing in the same spot. Once again I passed her by. It is after all an awkward spot to stop. I felt a nagging, and I ignored it. What could I do anyway? Take in a stranger? How do I know it wouldn't cause trouble for me? Well, the third time, when I saw a man standing in the same spot, also begging for something, I still thought, "I don't know how I can help them, and besides I'm busy. This is not allowed in Hudson, is it?"

These events were so out of the ordinary for Hudson, so unexpected, I had a hard time figuring out what to do. By the time my car reached Acme, I was removed from it, and it was not my problem. You see? I am a goat in sheep's clothing. I have thought a lot about it, and I do not know those people's stories, or what happened to them. But next time I have a plan of action. What were my options?? I could buy food at Acme and give it to them, I could go to the police so that they could refer them to one of Hudson's churches for help, or to Hudson Community Service, or I could just stop and talk to them to see exactly what they needed and get a better idea of the situation. I think it must have taken a lot of courage to stand there in public asking for help.

What if it was a scam? That was not my reaction any of the three times, but if it was a scam, then they are the ones that need to answer for it. I only need to answer for me, and I failed the test. We are all going to be judged on not just our actions, but also our thoughts and what is in our heart. The flock will be separated. I hope next time I'm brave enough to answer the call. I hope to become a full-fledged sheep!

Cindy Hartman

February 20, 2018 ~ Tuesday in 1st week of Lent

Grant to your people, Lord, grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow you, the only true God; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Isaiah 55:6–11
Psalm 34:15-22 / Gospel: Matthew 6:7–15

Isaiah 55: 10-11 records God's promise that the divine word will not return empty, likening it to the way rain and snow come down from heaven. Just as rain and snow accomplish their purpose - watering the earth, making it bring forth and sprout - so God's word will accomplish the intended end.

Yes, but there is a long time between the sower getting the seed and the eater getting bread. This can be a comfort as we wait in Lent.

I am a Sunday School teacher, a type of sower. Like parenting, teaching means playing a long game. Both require years to see any sprouts.

I do not expect to live long enough to know fully how or if my words will have any effect on the teens I so dearly love. Now past the age of my own Sunday School teachers during my adolescence, I have a glimmer of how much they invested in me and the others in my church - time, listening ears, pizza, drying tears, pancakes, camp weeks. Believing in the communion of saints, I trust they hear my decades-late appreciation for their work, in season and out of season.

Judy A. Johnson

February 21, 2018 ~ Wednesday in 1st week of Lent

Bless us, O God, in this holy season, in which our hearts seek your help and healing; and so purify us by your discipline that we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Jonah 3:1–10

Psalm 51:11–18 / The Gospel: Luke 11:29–32

It's mid-January yet I am basking in sun, sea, and the warmth of Acapulco, Mexico - a beautiful part of God's creation. Like Nineveh, this city is very large, has a checkered past and an uncertain future. The similarities strike me. Today, Acapulco is on the US State Dept. "Travel Warning" list, so many people are afraid to visit and the legitimate businesses suffer. I think it's fair to say that news of doom and gloom has always traveled fast through human populations. Centuries ago, Jonah's message of impending doom for Nineveh seems to have traveled with lightning speed despite the lack of modern social media or government warnings. The remarkable thing is that the entire society responded in the rites of mourning. From the king on down they exercised their faith as they cried out to God in prayer. They hoped and reached for a different outcome; they pulled together against what must have seemed impossible odds; they believed God's heart could be changed. Do we?

How different today are our responses to the constant influx of doom and gloom messages such as global warming, the rise of terrorism, the drug crisis, or the threat of annihilation from nuclear war, to name a few. Are we really as powerless to change as it so often seems? As Luke recounts, in the face of requests for a sign as to when the end times would come, Jesus said, "...no sign will be given except the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation."

Deacon Gretchen Green

February 22, 2018 ~ Thursday in 1st week of Lent

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

1st Reading: Esther 14:1–6,12–14
Psalm 138 / Gospel: Matthew 7:7–12

One evening, when I was about five years old, I sat on my bed and said, “Please God, turn on my lamp.” I waited a bit, for I knew God was quite busy, and my request could take a while to be answered. But eventually, I gave up and turned on the lamp myself. If God couldn’t turn on a lamp, I probably wasn’t going to get the Chatty Cathy doll I had occasionally been mentioning in my prayers! To my young mind, God had not passed the “ask and you shall receive” test.

So now, several decades later, I am thinking about Jesus’ promise to us that God will actually give us “good” things. What are these “good” things? They are not magic tricks or more presents under the Christmas tree - not the kinds of things that will pass away. Everyone who asks? Receives love. Everyone who searches? Finds peace. Everyone who knocks? Enters a place of hospitality. In today’s readings, we see that God gave strength to the psalmist and courage to Queen Esther. God became their companion in a time of great need. Peace, love, and hospitality are the “good” things that God offers us. And God’s companionship gives us the strength and courage to share those “good” things with others.

Pam Zubl

February 23, 2018 ~ Friday in 1st week of Lent

Lord Christ, our eternal Redeemer, grant us such fellowship in your sufferings, that, filled with your Holy Spirit, we may subdue the flesh to the spirit, and the spirit to you, and at the last attain to the glory of your resurrection; who lives and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Ezekiel 18:21–28
Psalm 130 / The Gospel: Matthew 5:20–26

Jesus Is The Way

As I start this Lent, I am immediately reminded of what it is all about. We are going to walk a rough and challenging road that forces us to remember the pain and death of our savior Jesus. No matter how I twist and turn, I just can't avoid it. And why? Ezekiel says it is all about turning away from evil; if we don't, we die. It's that simple. Ezekiel doesn't mess around. He pushes back: Is that fair God? What an incredible conversation to have with God! Where does he get off with such chutzpah? God pleads with us to turn from evil ways and repent. When the wicked do what is lawful and right, they shall save their lives. God wants us to live! But we can't do it on our own. Jesus reminds us in no uncertain terms that we are never going to be good enough or righteousness enough to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. That is just a brutal fact of life. So where are we to turn for hope? To the Jesus on the cross, and, even more importantly, to the risen Jesus of Easter.

Larry King

February 24, 2018 ~ Saturday in 1st week of Lent

Almighty God, who in the place of Judas chose your faithful servant Matthias to be numbered among the Twelve: Grant that your Church, being delivered from false apostles, may always be guided and governed by faithful and true pastors; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Acts 1:15-26

2nd Reading: Philippians 3:13-21

Psalm 15 / Gospel: John 15:1,6-16

Teacher's Pet

What a dreaded epithet when we were in school. What could be worse than looking as though we were currying the favor of the teacher. We might actually like the subject, enjoy learning about it, and, heaven forbid, like the teacher, but don't you dare show it. In today's readings, I would love to be called Teacher's Pet. Both Paul and Jesus are telling us that what our Heavenly Father offers is superior to anything the earthly gods of our appetites offer. Easy street is a dead end street. Both in school and after school. As the psalmist declares: "Lord who may dwell in your tabernacle? Who may abide upon your holy hill?" For this honor I can appear counter culture, weird, a holy roller (another dreaded epithet), or Teacher's Pet, but I do desire to dwell in that tabernacle and will strive to keep my Father's commandments. That is why we all like to hang with and work beside our church friends. It is good to be in the company of the faithful. We can all be the Teacher's Pet.

Sue Addison King

February 25, 2018 ~ Second Sunday in Lent

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

2nd Reading: Romans 4:13-25

Psalm 22:22-30 / The Gospel: Mark 8:31-38

Have you ever been given an instruction you weren't ready for, or which you did not want to obey? If so you'll know that listening to an instruction is one thing, but to actually follow through on the instruction is another. You may believe that it is a good idea to drink more water, but to actually take the steps to rebuild your habits and constantly make yourself choose to drink water takes so much more effort. I can only imagine what the people in the crowd were thinking when they heard Jesus telling them that in order to follow Him they must deny themselves. Sometimes it is a lot easier to look away from what is in front of us because to move forward takes more work. In this Lenten season of ours, why don't we take the opportunity to appreciate what we have? Let us take this opportunity to realize those things in our days which we don't particularly need any longer. We are not only denying our extravagances, but we are acknowledging the beautiful simplicity we have in front of us.

Allie Heeter

February 26, 2018 ~ Monday in 2nd week of Lent

Let your Spirit, O Lord, come into the midst of us to wash us with the pure water of repentance, and prepare us to be always a living sacrifice to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Daniel 9:3–10
Psalm 79:1–9 / Gospel: Luke 6:27-38

Today's Gospel reading is one I've always struggled with: "Love your enemies ... turn the other cheek." I've always associated those words with the courage and actions of Jesus, Gandhi, and MLK. But they were exceptional, right? He can't expect us to love our enemies, can he?

But then I realize that he's talking about love as a decision, something given regardless of merit. Something we should do, just as we'd want it done for us (indeed, as it has been done for us). And he speaks the same way about mercy and forgiveness.

And as I think about forgiveness, it seems that it is much like "turning the other cheek." It is a decision to give grace, rather than exacting judgment. It is a decision that must be made in pain, again and again. And it is a decision that recognizes that remorse and reconciliation may never come.

And then I remember that in the Lord's Prayer we ask to be forgiven in exactly the same way as we forgive those who hurt us. Which brings me back to what he says about giving, and judgment, and condemnation, as well as forgiveness.

I don't think the "good news" of the Gospel is that it's easy. I suspect the good news is that it can bring thankfulness and healing. And that we have help.

Len Harrison

February 27, 2018 ~ Tuesday in 2nd week of Lent

O God, you willed to redeem us from all iniquity by your Son: Deliver us when we are tempted to regard sin without abhorrence, and let the virtue of his passion come between us and our mortal enemy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Isaiah 1:2–4,16–20
Psalm 50:7–15, 22–24 / The Gospel: Matthew 23:1–12

How many times have people in your life said what you should do but they don't do it themselves? Hypocrisy is a very active behavior in our society today! As a kid, I remember growing up in different parts of the world - the Philippines; San Diego, CA; Washington, DC; and Ridgewood, NJ, to name a few. My father was a Naval Officer so we moved every 18 months or so (just about the time we knew our classmates and the neighborhood kids). We were a self-contained unit in many ways as I was one of four boys and all of us were born within five years of my oldest brother, Grant. We didn't have a big gap, as kids, between what my parents said and what they did. This meant, as I grew up, that I often found myself in trouble with hypocrisy. I believed people and found myself learning again and again the lessons of Matthew's Gospel 23:1-12 - that people don't always practice what they preach! So over the years my hypocrisy radar developed into an early warning system, but I still find it hard to be alive and active without occasionally running into hypocritical situations.

George Murray

February 28, 2018 ~ Wednesday in 2nd week of Lent

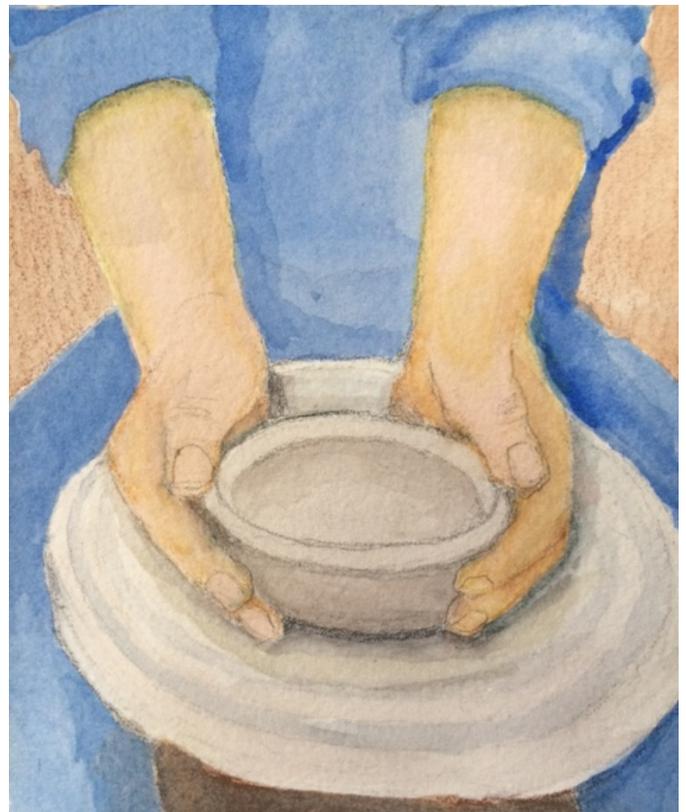
O God, you so loved the world that you gave your only- begotten Son to reconcile earth with heaven: Grant that we, loving you above all things, may love our friends in you, and our enemies for your sake; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Jeremiah 18:1–11,18–20
Psalm 31:9–16 / Gospel: Matthew 20:17–28

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: “Come, go down to the potter’s house, and there I will let you hear my words.” So I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was working at his wheel. The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.

Then the word of the Lord came to me: Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? says the Lord. Just like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand.

Some thoughts: God provides a metaphor to help Jeremiah get the message across to the house of Israel. God says, “I am like a potter and you are like the clay on my potter’s wheel. If I don’t like how you turn out, I will rework you into something that seems good to me. So shape up or I will take the clay you are made of and I will rework you into something else.”



Parallel image: God as creator shaping humans from the earth.

Carol Donley

March 1, 2018 ~ Thursday in 2nd week of Lent

O Lord, strong and mighty, Lord of hosts and King of glory: Cleanse our hearts from sin, keep our hands pure, and turn our minds from what is passing away; so that at the last we may stand in your holy place and receive your blessing; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Jeremiah 17:5–10
Psalm 1 / The Gospel: Luke 16:19–31

The Gospel, Luke 16:19-31... Jesus said, "There was a rich man....

In my opinion this Gospel lesson is focused on the consequences a wealthy man would suffer upon his death if he were not to share his wealth with the less fortunate. In this case it is Lazarus who is less fortunate, covered with sores, and laying at the gate of the rich man's house. The rich man would not aid or feed Lazarus. For that the rich man would be sent to "Hades" to be tormented and tortured ("... for I am in agony in these flames") for eternity, while Lazarus would spend his time next to Abraham being eternally comforted. The passage goes on to message that there will be no measure for repentance by the rich man and no means of direct contact with his living brothers to warn them of the consequences of a lack of charity.

This is not a world that I know or believe in. And I do not believe that God or Jesus would act with such harsh malice. There are many more lessons in the Bible of forgiveness and love that counter this supposed harsh treatment of the rich man. In today's world, while there is much evil, there is abundant generosity and caring for the less fortunate. Our work of generosity and caring is an unending effort that will require all of us to be vigilant and support current programs as well as create new programs to assist the less fortunate. Let us also make it a personal responsibility.

Bill Currin

March 2, 2018 ~ Friday in 2nd week of Lent

Grant, O Lord, that as your Son Jesus Christ prayed for his enemies on the cross, so we may have grace to forgive those who wrongfully or scornfully use us, that we ourselves may be able to receive your forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Genesis 37:3–4,12–28
Psalm 105:16–22 / Gospel: Matthew 21:33–43

I have always taken pride in seeing my perspective as being the same as the Bible writer's perspective. I wonder, however, how I have rejected the favored of God and his message out of jealousy or ignorance? When have I ignored God's messengers while protecting my own privilege?

How could Joseph have been so magnanimous to his brothers? He saved their lives and protected their legacy despite the unimaginable hurt they did to him. How could he turn from the hate and care so deeply for the needs of his brothers regardless of their evilness to him?

Further, how could Christ be willing to pay the ultimate price for us when he sees how we have done wrong and will continue to do wrong?

Oh God, help me to see past my own avarice and my own arrogance. Help me to recognize your "Dreamers" and your cornerstones. Help me not to waste time counting up the evils of my brothers and sisters. Help me to see how I might be useful in preserving your offspring and help your message to prosper.

Ed Wiles

March 3, 2018 ~ Saturday in 2nd week of Lent

Grant, most merciful Lord, to your faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve you with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Micah 7:14–15,18–20
Psalm 103:1–12 / The Gospel: Luke 15:11–32

My God is a Great God

I know we are given three readings on which to write. Micah extols the virtues of God and reminds us (again) of how He cares for us. The Prodigal Son story (by practical example) tells again how much the Father loves us. But I just forget!! I get so taken up with the lesser things of the world, I forget to rejoice in the GREATness of God. So here it is. The psalmist tells (reminds) us: He heals our infirmities (right now He is healing my new hip); He satisfies us with good things (I have so many good things, it's embarrassing); He makes His ways known to us (He speaks through my Bible study, fellowship, and worship); He is full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger, and of great kindness (I must remember to thank Him more often); His mercy is great to those who fear Him (the God of love and creation takes my hand through all my days).

As I finished the above I am asking myself what does this walk with God really mean? What I do know for sure is that the God of the universe, the God who created me, is always close - even when I don't know it or feel it.

Larry King

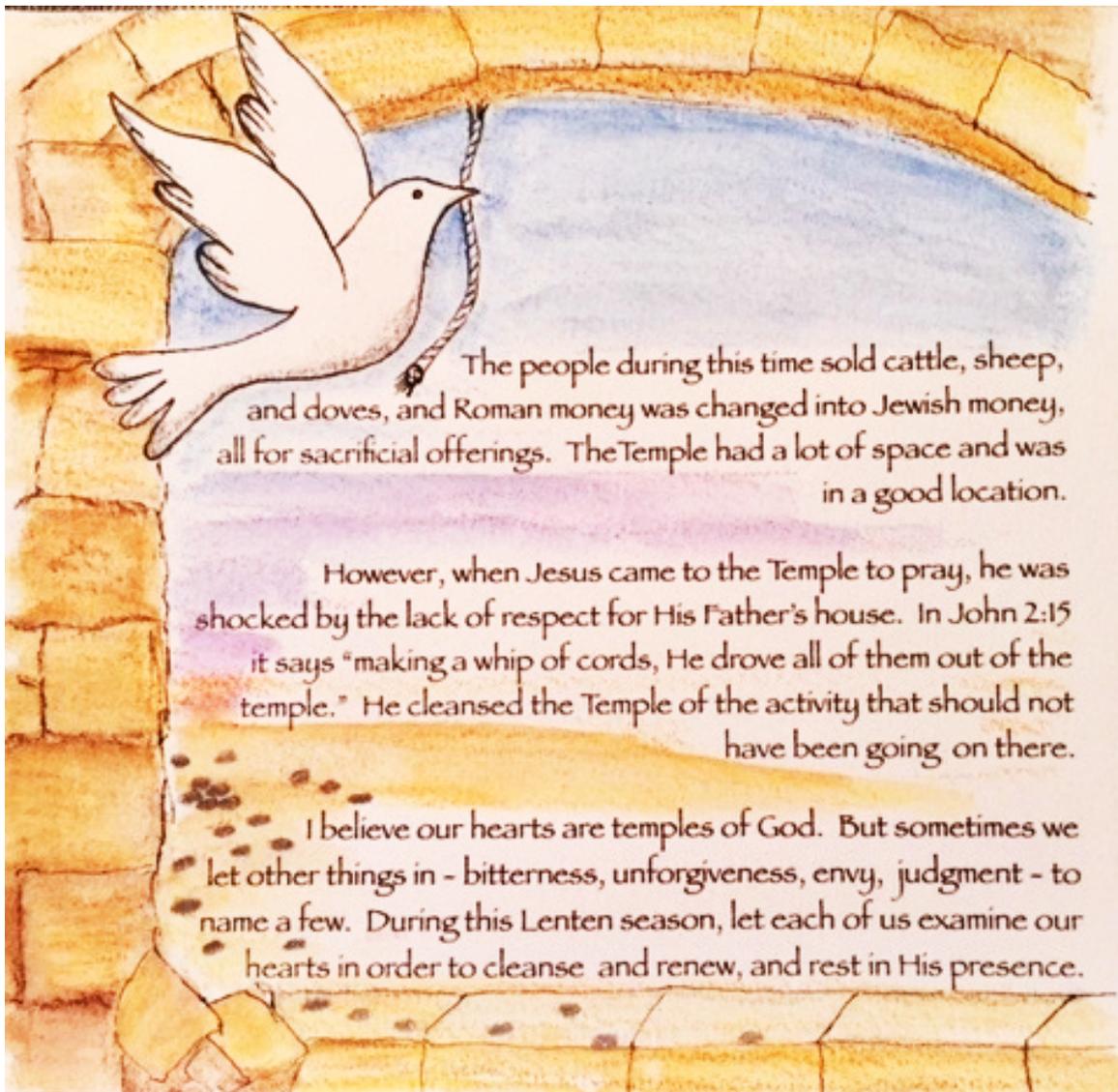
March 4, 2018 ~ Third Sunday in Lent

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Exodus 20:1-17

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Psalm 19 / Gospel: John 2:13-22



Jane Harrison

March 5, 2018 ~ Monday in 3rd week of Lent

O God, who from the family of your servant David raised up Joseph to be the guardian of your incarnate Son and the spouse of his virgin mother: Give us grace to imitate his uprightness of life and his obedience to your commands; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: 2 Kings 5:1–15b
Psalm 42:1–7 / The Gospel: Luke 4:23-30

What causes one to be skeptical even when information has been shared? Could it be that our experiences influence our ideas, which can sometimes hinder our ability to believe or have an open mind to accept change or differences?

Though these stories are of long ago, our culture today still struggles with the same skepticism. The presence of impatience, distrust, and lack of faith existed then and now. Why aren't our churches filled with those who have faith as well as those seeking Faith? I once heard a metaphor: you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink. This seems to be at the very heart of these two stories. We humans want things now, but yesterday would have been better. It was the misunderstandings in both stories which prolonged their resolution.

In short, it is essential that we follow God's word....for He is the living word ...the food in our lives.

Roxanne Grattan

March 6, 2018 ~ Tuesday in 3rd week of Lent

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear us; and grant that we, to whom you have given a fervent desire to pray, may, by your mighty aid, be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Song of the Three Young Men 2–4,11–20a

Psalm 25:3–10 / Gospel: Matthew 18:21–35

I am not an accountant but I know just enough about bookkeeping to keep our family's income and expense records using Quicken. The balance sheet implies that the assets must equal the liabilities. Add up the amounts in the credit column and the debit column and both sums should be equal, right? In Matthew 18:21-35, Peter asks Jesus an accounting question. How many times should a member of the church forgive another who has sinned against him? Jesus' answer is not seven times but seventy-seven times. We are to be extremely generous with forgiveness. So far, so good.

But Jesus expands his response by describing the Kingdom of Heaven with the parable of the unmerciful servant. The servant is forgiven a huge debt by his master, but then that same servant turns around and has a fellow servant thrown into jail for failure to pay a relatively small debt owed to him. The master then "handed him over to be tortured." This brings me up short. I thought that God's forgiveness was infinite? But, what if I am the master in the parable? Then the parable is about me and my fellow human beings and how we treat each other.

When have you received or given forgiveness?

Janet Daniels

March 7, 2018 ~ Wednesday in 3rd week of Lent

Give ear to our prayers, O Lord, and direct the way of your servants in safety under your protection, that, amid all the changes of our earthly pilgrimage, we may be guarded by your mighty aid; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 4:1–2,5–9
Psalm 78:1–6 / The Gospel: Matthew 5:17–19

Did Jesus reject Jewish law?

Matthew's Jesus seems to challenge traditions about fasting (Matthew 9:14-17), about ritual washing and perhaps about clean and unclean foods (15:17-20), about working on the sabbath, for instance, plucking grain and healing (12:11-12), and about paying the Temple tax (17:24-27).

On the other hand, he said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill” (5:17).

Jesus says later in this Gospel that the golden rule (7:12) and the two greatest commandments (22:36-40) are what all the law and the prophets come down to: we must treat others as we want to be treated, care for them as much as we care for ourselves, and love God with every intention, every pulse, every moment.

This is the law and the prophets.

Don Collins Reed

March 8, 2018 ~ Thursday in 3rd week of Lent

Keep watch over your Church, O Lord, with your unfailing love; and, since it is grounded in human weakness and cannot maintain itself without your aid, protect it from all danger, and keep it in the way of salvation; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Jeremiah 7:23–28
Psalm 95:6–11 / Gospel: Luke 11:14–23

Obey and Listen

It's funny when I take on these Lenten writings. Sometimes I see a theme in the writings, other times I am struck by a series of messages. For today, a couple of things hit me in these passages, reminding me AGAIN that God speaks in the Old Testament as well as the New. First was God telling the Israelites (and me): Obey my voice - and I will be your God. And then He tells them (me) to "walk only in the way I command you so that it may be well with you." In simple terms, and real ones, if we walk in His way and do what He tells us, He will reward us; it will be well with us.

God tells us again and again what He wants us to do - and warns of the consequences of NOT doing His bidding. How much clearer can you get? Then the psalm tells us to bow and kneel before our God - and listen! Obey, follow His guidance, and listen. What could be clearer as a direction to those who love and follow Him?

He sends prophets, apostles, "warners," and His only Son - and still we don't get it! In this Lent I will strive and pray to obey, follow His guidance, and listen.

Larry King

March 9, 2018 ~ Friday in 3rd week of Lent

Grant us, O Lord our Strength, a true love of your holy Name; so that, trusting in your grace, we may fear no earthly evil, nor fix our hearts on earthly goods, but may rejoice in your full salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Hosea 14:1–9
Psalm 81:8–14 / The Gospel: Mark 12:28–34

Have you ever been in a group discussion and experienced total silence after someone has made a statement? How long did the silence last? In my years as a mentor in EFM, there have been many times when there is no response to a statement made. The silence is deafening in today's Gospel passage. The powerful are angry and fearful of Jesus, who has just arrived in Jerusalem and caused a lot of commotion. They look for ways to trip him up on points in the law in order to kill him. Then, a scribe, observing Jesus' responses, asks which is the greatest of the commandments? Jesus replies with the first and second commandments, "Love the Lord and love your neighbor as yourself." The scribe agrees with him. Jesus tells the scribe he is not far from the Kingdom of Heaven. Silence follows. It is like all the air has been released from a balloon full of the arrogance of the powerful. I believe that truth is accompanied by silence. EFM mentors are encouraged to entertain silence because it can lead to a recognition of truth. The truth just hangs there while no one speaks. Eventually, someone does break the silence and the discussion moves on, but the truth remains.

Janet Daniels

March 10, 2018 ~ Saturday in 3rd week of Lent

Pour your grace into our hearts, O Lord, that we who have known the incarnation of your Son Jesus Christ, announced by an angel to the Virgin Mary, may by his cross and passion be brought to the glory of his resurrection; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Hosea 6:1–6
Psalm 51:15–20 / Gospel: Luke 18:9–14

The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector is a familiar one. The proud Pharisee prays, “God, I thank you that I am not like other people...” The tax collector, in contrast, beats his breast, praying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”

But it is the first sentence that sounds an alarm for the culture wars of our time. “Jesus told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt.” All around us, we see and hear examples of fellow Americans who, encircled in a bubble of similar viewpoints, can never ever understand another’s opinions. Fueled by social media and inflammatory pundits, our social discourse has become increasingly divided and hostile. Workplace conversations, family gatherings, even marriages suffer when we “regard others with contempt.”

There’s a bit of the Pharisee in all of us. We “exalt ourselves” with assurances that only our social, political, or ...yes...religious views are correct. Perhaps, with God’s help, we can seek to find common ground with the tax collectors and others whom we “regard with contempt.” In God’s house there are many mansions....and I imagine they are not all identical.

Eileen Gaston

March 11, 2018 ~ Fourth Sunday in Lent

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Numbers 21:4-9

2nd Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22 / The Gospel: John 3:14-21

About 18 months ago Jane and I joined the Education for Ministry program that Janet Daniels leads here at Christ Church. It was there that I began to understand what might be behind the passage above about “people lov(ing) darkness rather than light.”

In the first week we read that “EFM encourages reflective learning that leads to insights and implications for living into the journey with God.” I thought, “Great! Learning, insight, journey with God – that’s why I joined EFM!” Then I read, “If honest, however, we will acknowledge that insights are not always desired on our part. Insight makes demands we may be unwilling or unable to meet.” And I thought, “Oh, yeah ... implications for living into the journey.”

I was reminded that when I began this journey almost 40 years ago, a wonderful Christian friend many years my senior offered me his books on faith. He said, “Keep them. The more I learn, the harder it gets.” It seems that our avoidance of painful insight is common enough that there is a term for it, “scotosis,” derived from the Greek word skotos, which means “darkness.”

But I am learning through EFM that for those who would face the darkness there is help in the community, communion, and friendship of the body of Christ.

Len Harrison

March 12, 2018 ~ Monday in 4th week of Lent

O Lord our God, in your holy Sacraments you have given us a foretaste of the good things of your kingdom: Direct us, we pray, in the way that leads to eternal life, that we may come to appear before you in that place of light where you dwell for ever with your saints; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Isaiah 65:17–25
Psalm 30:1–6,11–13 / Gospel: John 4:43–54

As we reach the mid-point of Lent, when I am likely to find the novelty of Lent wearing off, I am struck by Isaiah's words, "I am about to create a new heaven and a new earth." Isaiah was writing to the Israelites who had returned from exile in Babylon to start life over again in the Promised Land. But the land of milk and honey was now a wasteland. The people were discouraged. The temple was in ruins. Rebuilding was exhausting and frustrating. The novelty of life in their homeland was wearing off.

Isaiah issues a call and a promise, both to the Israelites and to us. The call is to watch for the new thing God is doing in our midst. The promise is that God is doing something new. For the Israelites, God's new creation was a restored Jerusalem. For Christians, God's new creation is resurrection.

Lent is not about just holding on for God's new creation at Easter, though. I hear Isaiah challenge us to keep a holy Lent by looking for the ways that God creates something new out of the fabric of our ordinary lives, every day. The novelty of beholding God's new creation will never wear off.

The Rev. Charlotte Collins Reed

March 13, 2018 ~ Tuesday in 4th week of Lent

O God, with you is the well of life, and in your light we see light: Quench our thirst with living water, and flood our darkened minds with heavenly light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Ezekiel 47:1–9, 12
Psalm 46:1-8 / The Gospel: John 5:1-18

The collect and psalm draw us to the living God. It is easy to put God out far away, or think of Him as remote; to lose track of how He indeed cares for the very hairs on our head. I am continually amazed that the God who created the universe cares for each of us as if we are His only one to care for. Can this really be true? Jesus says it is. Then Ezekiel and John reinforce it. God steps into the lives of His children, His friends. This is not a God of cloud and mist, but a living, loving presence. We are dealing here NOT with some far off “grandfather-like” being who looks benignly on our goings and comings, and hopes we will be happy. We are dealing with a life-changing Creator who I think created us so He could love us. What an incredible thought: that the God who created the universe not only cares for each of us, but wants us to draw close to Him, to snuggle up to Him and call Him daddy. We are to come to Him as little children.

Larry King

March 14, 2018 ~ Wednesday in 4th week of Lent

O Lord our God, you sustained your ancient people in the wilderness with bread from heaven: Feed now your pilgrim flock with the food that endures to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Isaiah 49:8–15
Psalm 145:8–19 / Gospel: John 5:19-29

I like to imagine spending a day with Jesus. We would walk along a dusty road in Galilee. Others would hear our laughter and join us. He tells wonderful stories. We stop at Martha's house for lunch and hear the latest news from Mary. Peter and Andrew take us out on the lake. Jesus trails his hand in the cool water. Lovely. Then Peter, who has never learned to just enjoy the moment, has to bring up Judgment Day. What? The mood changes, and I am brought up short.

Now I am afraid. Because I do have doubts, insecurities, and questions. I have done wrong and failed to do right. And then I remember all that I know about my friend. Jesus did not ask the 5,000 about their beliefs before feeding them. He did not walk away from the woman at the well because of her many marriages. Jesus never shunned tax collectors, prostitutes, soldiers.

Jesus, who is to be our judge, is one of us. He loves us and understands our struggles. "The Son gives life to whomever He wishes." I believe He wishes, with all his heart, to give life to you and me.

Pam Zuhl

March 15, 2018 ~ Thursday in 4th week of Lent

Almighty and most merciful God, drive from us all weakness of body, mind, and spirit; that, being restored to wholeness, we may with free hearts become what you intend us to be and accomplish what you want us to do; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Exodus 32:7–14

Psalm 106:6–7, 19–23 / The Gospel: John 5:30–47

Throughout our Judeo-Christian history we are reminded time and time again that true faith is a fragile enterprise, hard to maintain over time. It often falls prey to other voices - louder, more insistent voices - perhaps the “come on” of fame and fortune. The question today is what is it that we hold most dear? What is it that we value above all else? In other words, What or Who do we worship? The people of Exodus had come through great trials: God led them, through Moses, out of slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land. Alas, after some time, when Moses was out of sight on Mt. Horeb, they doubted his return and the reality of the one and only Creator God he preached. They reverted to old ways and made for themselves a golden calf to worship, a visible image rather than the invisible and therefore nebulous Yahweh. God’s anger at this turning away from the righteous path burned hot, and only through the brilliant advocacy of Moses were the people saved from destruction for their sin. He stood in the breach for them, and God changed his mind. More potently still for us, it is Jesus who has stood in the breach between our sin and God’s love by his sacrifice on the cross. Yet, as in John’s time, Jesus might say to us today, “...I know you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me...How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God?” Remembering God’s compassion and forgiveness, let us fervently pray once again, as in the collect: Almighty and most merciful God, drive from us all weakness of body, mind, and spirit."

Deacon Gretchen Green

March 16, 2018 ~ Friday in 4th week of Lent

O God, you have given us the Good News of your abounding love in your Son Jesus Christ: So fill our hearts with thankfulness that we may rejoice to proclaim the good tidings we have received; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Wisdom 2:1a, 12–24
Psalm 34:15–22 / Gospel: John 7:1–2, 10, 25–30

Where Is Waldo?

Or, where is the book of Wisdom? I feel so smug because I have my Bible from Education for Ministry, and it contains the Apocrypha. Well, yes, I had to look in the table of contents for its exact location. The chapter is marked up so I have been here before. The verses highlighted I still highlight today, and I remember why. The Wisdom reading starts out, “They reasoned unsoundly, saying to themselves, ‘Short and sorrowful is our life.’” Wisdom says, “Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions.” The psalm, from my preferred version in *The Message* (the Bible in Contemporary Language), says, “God keeps his eye on his friends, his ears pick up every moan and groan.” (15) “The wicked commit slow suicide; they waste their lives hating the good.” (21)

Oh, but the Gospel tells us it ends so gloriously when Jesus rises from the dead and we also will be with him in heaven one day. We, keeping close to Jesus and the scriptures, can reason soundly!

Sue Addison King

March 17, 2018 ~ Saturday in 4th week of Lent

Mercifully hear our prayers, O Lord, and spare all those who confess their sins to you; that those whose consciences are accused by sin may by your merciful pardon be absolved; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Jeremiah 11:18–20
Psalm 7:6–11 / The Gospel: John 7:37–52

In the Gospel reading for today, some people hear Jesus and think he is the prophet, others believe he is the Messiah, and still others believe that Jesus cannot be the Messiah because the Messiah is to come from Bethlehem, not Galilee. (In John's Gospel, there is no birth story, so no story about Bethlehem.)

Is Jesus the Messiah or not?

One thing is clear - the criteria for the Messiah has nothing to do with where the person is from. The Galilee vs. Bethlehem debate gets the questioners nowhere. Perhaps the better clue is, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water." Who is Jesus? Jesus is the source of living water. In John's Gospel, the proof that Jesus is the Messiah is in the signs that he is able to do: turning water into wine, healing the sick, feeding the 5,000, walking on water, and raising Lazarus from the dead. The proof that Jesus is the source of living water will come at the end of the story when life triumphs over death.

How does the world know that Jesus is the Messiah? Perhaps the proof is in the works of his followers, who live out the belief that love is stronger than hate, and life triumphs over death.

The Rev. Charlotte Collins Reed

March 18, 2018 ~ Fifth Sunday in Lent

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

2nd Reading: Hebrews 5:5-10

Psalm 51:1-13 or 119:9-16 / Gospel: John 12:20-33

The Old Testament lessons today have a theme of filling one's heart with the Lord, thereby cleansing the heart of sin. The words lend themselves to song quite readily. I recall singing the end of Psalm 51 in the church of my youth as a lyrical piece of communion.

With inspiration from Jeremiah, the Psalms, and John, these words may be sung to the tune of Simple Gifts (Brackett), also known as A Shaker Melody (Copeland, Appalachian Spring), which starts, "Tis a gift to be simple[...]."

Fill my heart with joy, fill my heart, O my Lord.
Fill my heart and drive the wickedness away.
With a clean heart, I am renewed and sustained
With Your law and Your promise we all shall know you.

Bless-ed are You, O Lord.
With a booming voice from the heavens above,
Shall glorify again, and again.
Only through Your death will Love live on.

Marcie Harvey

March 19, 2018 ~ Monday in 5th week of Lent

O God, who from the family of your servant David raised up Joseph to be the guardian of your incarnate Son and the spouse of his virgin mother: Give us grace to imitate his uprightness of life and his obedience to your commands; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: 2 Samuel 7:4, 8-16

2nd Reading: Romans 4:13-18

Psalm 89:1-29 / The Gospel: Luke 2:41-52

Two parents just left a very large group religious event, and, as they are following the crowds out and back to their home, they realize their son is not with them. All they can think of is to reach out to friends and family. When that doesn't work they retrace their steps and hope that he is somewhere along the way. I cannot imagine the stress and fear in their hearts. When they do find him, he doesn't embrace them and thank them for finding him; instead, he chastises them for even looking for him. He complains to them for being worried.

I wonder what this instance meant for Joseph, how he felt to hear the boy he saw as his child claim another place to be his father's home? Even more than that, he has just been worried sick with fear about this boy of his who was missing. How could that feel, to have his worry and fear and love for this child dismissed so clearly by the child Jesus?

Allie Heeter

March 20, 2018 ~ Tuesday in 5th week of Lent

Almighty God, through the incarnate Word you have caused us to be born anew of an imperishable and eternal seed: Look with compassion upon those who are being prepared for Holy Baptism, and grant that they may be built as living stones into a spiritual temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Numbers 21:4–9
Psalm 102:15–22 / Gospel: John 8:21–30

The sun beat down on us in the desert. Sweat evaporated in parching winds, streaking our skin and clothes with salt. I rubbed dust and sand from my eyes, and the soles of my feet were cracked. We were thirsty and hungry, with only that miserable manna to eat. Our complaints were valid, surely. Why had God brought us out to die this way? We were better off in Egypt under the lord Pharaoh. Poisonous serpents unwound, out from crevasses and desert holes. They looked like the cobra Pharaoh wore as a symbol of his royal power. Many fell and died within minutes. God told Moses to make a bronze cobra and mount it on a pole. He lifted it, flashing, fiery in the scorching sun. Moses called to us. If we would look at the seraph, we could live. We had only to turn and look.

Don Collins Reed

March 21, 2018 ~ Wednesday in 5th week of Lent

Almighty God our heavenly Father, renew in us the gifts of your mercy; increase our faith, strengthen our hope, enlighten our understanding, widen our charity, and make us ready to serve you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Daniel 3:14–20,24–28
Canticle 13 / The Gospel: John 8:31–42

Meaningfulness is our most pressing human need. Survival motivates us but meaningfulness is the deep driving force. We seek purpose and meaning above all in our lives. Death is worrisome, but that process is not nearly as frightening as living a life that has been pointless. Oblivion is the fear at the depth of all human fears.

The trio in Daniel had no promise of eternal life as we do in Christ today, and yet they were willing to be extinguished before giving up integrity and the God who gave meaning to their lives.

The people who threatened Jesus were afraid of losing their own legacy. It wasn't for Abraham that they were acting; they acted out of a fear that Jesus would overturn their world and destroy their own legacy (their power over others)

What are we afraid of? Legacy serves the living. Meaningfulness may be reflected in the others we touch and leave behind. When we face our ultimate destiny, will we find deep meaning in God's presence? Have we embraced God enough to be satisfied in his presence? God's presence is the important promise God gives through our Christ.

Ed Wiles

March 22, 2018 ~ Thursday in 5th week of Lent

O God, you have called us to be your children, and have promised that those who suffer with Christ will be heirs with him of your glory: Arm us with such trust in him that we may ask no rest from his demands and have no fear in his service; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Genesis 17:1–8
Psalm 105:4–11 / Gospel: John 8:51–59

Today's reading from Genesis tells the story of the beginning of God's covenant with Abraham. God promises to make Abraham the ancestor of a multitude of nations, and He will be their God. God's promise is fulfilled in the scripture through the growth of the Nation of Israel, but I think, in a spiritual sense, all of us in the Judaeo-Christian faith today are further evidence of God keeping his promise to Abraham. Throughout the Old Testament, God makes covenants with man, through individuals such as Noah, Abraham, or Moses, and in each case God keeps the promises He made. For me, this encourages my faith that God will keep the promise He made to me through the New Covenant of Jesus Christ.

Jeanne McKinny

March 23, 2018 ~ Friday in 5th week of Lent

O Lord, you relieve our necessity out of the abundance of your great riches: Grant that we may accept with joy the salvation you bestow, and manifest it to all the world by the quality of our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Jeremiah 20:7–13
Psalm 18:1–7 / The Gospel: John 10:31–42

Once again, Jesus is in the hot seat, being questioned harshly and accused of blasphemy. He calmly confirms that, indeed, “I am God’s Son.” But then he continues...to paraphrase...”Don’t take my word for it. Look at what I do, not just what I say.”

His words are: “If I do (the works of my Father), even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”

How does this translate to Hudson, Ohio in 2018? No matter what we say on Sunday mornings or in ministry meetings or at forums, if we do not DO the works of the Father, we are not being faithful to the Son. As the cliché goes, actions speak louder than words. The hymn based on John 3:5 says, “They will know we are Christians by our love.” That love is the spark that fuels the engine of our good works, so that others “may know and understand that the Father is in US and WE are in the Father.”

Eileen Gaston

March 24, 2018 ~ Saturday in 5th week of Lent

O Lord, in your goodness you bestow abundant graces on your elect: Look with favor, we entreat you, upon those who in these Lenten days are being prepared for Holy Baptism, and grant them the help of your protection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Ezekiel 37:21–28
Psalm 85:1–7 / Gospel: John 11:45–53

The Old Testament reading for this day expresses God's desire to gather and unite His people who have scattered to other lands and fallen into transgressions and detestable things. This is the loving God who will cleanse His people, and create a sanctuary for them forever with a chosen king. As long as His ordinances are followed, these people will live together in unity and peace under one shepherd, which could foreshadow Jesus Christ as that Good Shepherd.

The psalm for this day reminds me of that loving and forgiving God as well as the wrathful God. His people are looking for reinforcement to have a real relationship with God to rejoice and acquire salvation.

To me, the Gospel ties some of the threads from these readings together. When the high priests make the pact to kill Jesus, with the belief that it was better for one man to die than to destroy the whole nation, little did they know that this one man was the Shepherd who, through His death and resurrection, would gather and unite the people of the nation, forgive them, and lead them to their salvation.

Jim Lang

March 25, 2018 ~ Palm Sunday

Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Isaiah 50:4-9a

2nd Reading: Philippians 2:5-11

Psalm 31:9-16 / The Gospel: Mark 14:1-15:47 or Mark 15:1-39, [40-47]



Ella Harvey

March 26, 2018 ~ Monday in Holy Week

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Isaiah 42:1-9

2nd Reading: Hebrews 9:11-15

Psalms 36:5-11 / Gospel: John 12:1-11

John 12:1-11
The message of the story for us is, you should take time out of your day and life to praise God. Just like Mary did by taking something very expensive and anointing Jesus' feet to praise God.
- Anna Barger



Anna Barger

March 27, 2018 ~ Tuesday in Holy Week

O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life: Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ, that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Isaiah 49:1-7

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Psalm 71:1-14 / The Gospel: John 12:20-36



Freya Eileraas

March 28, 2018 ~ Wednesday in Holy Week

Lord God, whose blessed Son our Savior gave his body to be whipped and his face to be spit upon: Give us grace to accept joyfully the sufferings of the present time, confident of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Isaiah 50:4-9a

2nd Reading: Hebrews 12:1-3

Psalm 70 / Gospel: John 13:21-32



Kay Eileraas

March 29, 2018 ~ Maundy Thursday

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Exodus 12:1-14

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Psalm 116:1, 10-17 / The Gospel: John 13:1-17, 31b-35



Maria Metoki

March 30, 2018 ~ Good Friday

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Isaiah 52:13-53:12

2nd Reading: Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

Psalm 22 / Gospel: John 18:1-19:42

With the Good Friday readings, we relive the betrayal of Jesus and his crucifixion. With the sadness that saying "Crucify Him" brings, it makes me wonder, how can this day be "Good?" I can only conclude that he died for the "good" of humankind and as a reminder for us to be "good" people. The song, "The Lord of the Dance" by Sydney Carter, that I learned at youth retreats as a teen comes back to me on this most grievous day of Holy Week. Set to the Shaker tune, "Simple Gifts," the verses take you through Jesus' life from birth to death. Verses 3 and 4 represent his death, but I think "the dance" in this line, "But I am the dance, and I still go on," is symbolic of life.

Refrain: Dance, then, wherever you may be, I am the Lord of the dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be, And I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.

³ I danced on the Sabbath, and I cured the lame: The holy people said it was a shame. They whipped and they stripped and they hung me high, and they left me there on a cross to die. *Refrain*

⁴ I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black; It's hard to dance with the devil on your back. They buried my body and they thought I'd gone; But I am the dance, and I still go on. *Refrain*

I believe the refrain implies that Jesus is not gone but will be with us wherever we are. If we but follow him, he will lead us in a life of goodness. This song is one of my most favored and I wanted to sing it for you, but I found a beautiful recording. Go to the website viewpure.com/YV15StV6TK0 to listen.

Heather Swift

March 31, 2018 ~ Holy Saturday

O God, Creator of heaven and earth: Grant that, as the crucified body of your dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so we may await with him the coming of the third day, and rise with him to newness of life; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Job 14:1-14 or Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24

2nd Reading: 1 Peter 4:1-8

Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16 / The Gospel: Matthew 27:57-66 or John 19:38-42



Judy Murray

April 1, 2018 ~ Easter Sunday

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

1st Reading: Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 25:6-9

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 or Acts 10:34-43

Psalm 118:1-2,14-24 / Gospel: John 20:1-18 or Mark 16:1-8

Titch Foster
Age 6



Titch Foster

Thoughts and Prayers:

*“Create in me a new heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
Give me the joy of your saving help again
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.”*



21 Aurora Street
Hudson, OH 44236
330-650-4359

www.christchurchudson.org