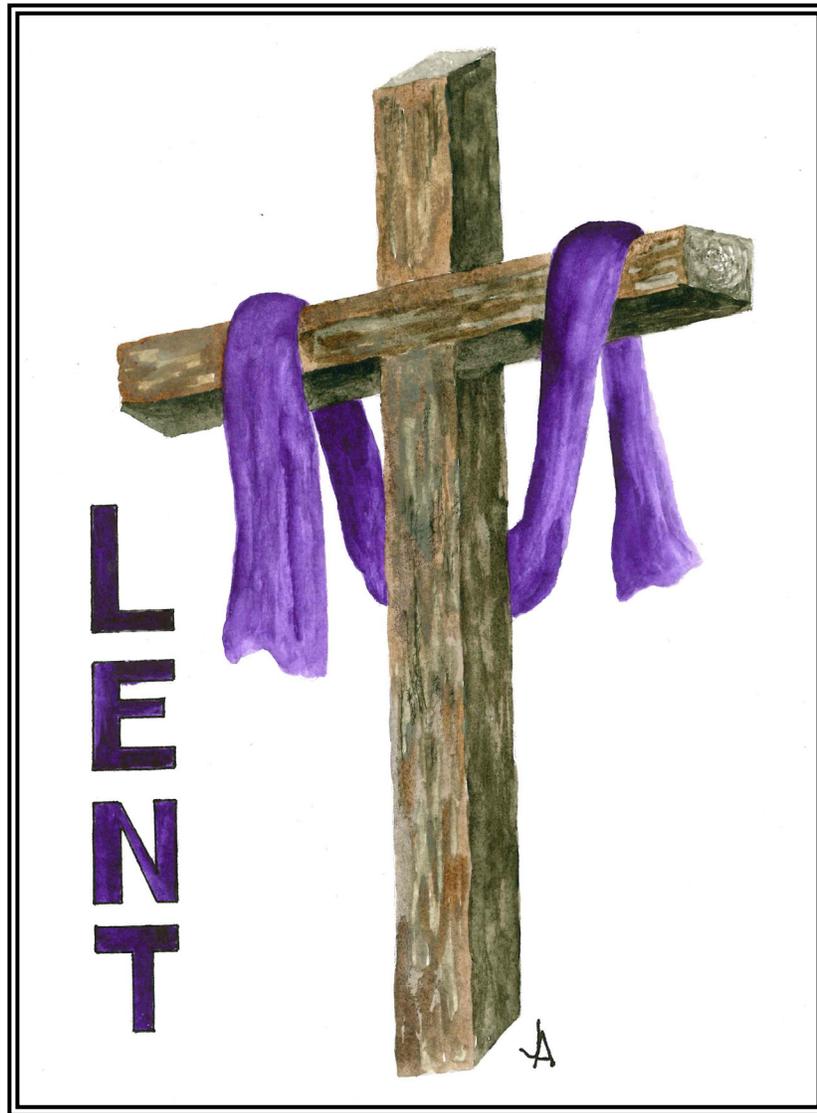


# DAY BY DAY



original artwork by: Jim Arnold

*a Lenten Devotional  
written by Members of Our Community*



*"O most merciful Redeemer, friend and brother,  
May I know Thee more clearly,  
Love Thee more dearly,  
Follow Thee more nearly,  
Day by day."  
-Richard of Chichester*

## Welcome to Lent....

A few days ago, I woke up and slowly got out of bed. My hip was sore! It's bothered me since a fall I took a couple years ago. Harrumph!

However, just last month I finally learned it wasn't so much the fall as the angle at which I was holding my foot, that was torquing my hip and often my back and my leg.

It can still hurt, but now I know to pay attention, and when I keep my foot pointed straight ahead, I experience immediate relief, as my back, hip and leg all fall into alignment.

Lent is like that! We can't get rid of sin and brokenness always and forever, so we focus on aligning ourselves with God through prayer, acts of love and self-denial (fasting) for the sake of our neighbors.

The result? Our lives and relationships fall into place. We breathe easier, move with less pain and with greater strength.

This Lent, along with mid-week Lenten worship, The Journey, and Holy Week services,  
we all have another aide:

this new collection of devotions written by Our Redeemer's community. I hope it will help us all experience the freedom and wholeness of aligning ourselves with God, day by day.

On this journey with you, day by day,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katherine H. Hawk". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pastor Kathy

## DAY 1: ASH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2018

<sup>1</sup> Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.  
<sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin.  
<sup>3</sup> For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.  
<sup>4</sup> Against you, you alone, have I sinned,  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you are justified in your sentence  
and blameless when you pass judgment.  
<sup>5</sup> Indeed, I was born guilty,  
a sinner when my mother conceived me.  
<sup>6</sup> You desire truth in the inward being;  
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.  
<sup>7</sup> Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

-Psalm 51: 1-7



This Psalm is very familiar from my childhood, confirmation class, and hymns. Especially verse 10—“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.” (Revised Standard Version of the Bible)

My thoughts go to three words right away: CLEAN. HEART. CREATE.

What is CLEAN? This concept seems pretty important. “Wash (two times), cleanse, purge, and clean (two times)” occur 6 times in these 17 verses. When I think of really clean, I think of my Grandma Olsen, who lived in Watertown, South Dakota. When visiting my grandparents, I was exposed to clean in a very serious way. My grandmother scrubbed her kitchen floor on her hands and knees. I remember smelling an aroma for the first time, and asking, “What is that smell?” It was ammonia. She said I could not get close to the bottle or the bucket because it was too strong for little girls. In her basement was the laundry area. I loved to watch her do laundry. She had a washing machine with a wringer. After the clothes were washed, they went through a series of rolling, squeezing tubes. Then back into more clean water for another rinse. If the rinse water was not clear, the clothes were rinsed again, and went through the wringer again. It took a long time, but it was fun to watch!

What about my HEART, my inner most feelings and existence—how thoroughly does God clean? Are all of the sins and hurts and feelings of guilt washed away? Is the rinse water completely clear?

Three times “heart” is used in this Psalm: “Behold you desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.” (verse 6) “The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” (verse 17) Also verse 10, as mentioned earlier. I want to present my true self to God. No hiding. God wants what is broken in me. Then God will replace what has failed or is dirty or damaged for something “new and right.” Let me get this straight: I bring my worst bits. Then God turns them into deliverance (verse 14) and joy (verse 12) and praise (verse 15).

I like to do crafts and arty sorts of things. What can I CREATE in Lent to compliment God’s ideas in this Psalm? I will cut a large paper heart. Each day of Lent I will try to think of something to write or draw or tape onto the

heart. Maybe at the end of the day I will erase it or remove it. Maybe it will stay on my heart all of the season of Lent. I might post the heart on a wall in my room. Or I might fold it and keep it in a drawer for just me. From Psalm 51 I might choose the words, "Have mercy on me, O God." You may find other words from this Psalm. Or you may want to write a wish for the day, "Happy Valentine's Day!"

-Stephanie Running

## Day 2: Thursday, February 15, 2018

<sup>3</sup> We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

<sup>5</sup> This is the message we have heard from God and proclaim to you, that God is light and in God there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup> If we say that we have fellowship with God while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; <sup>7</sup> but if we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus the Son cleanses us from all sin. <sup>8</sup> If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and God's word is not in us.

-1 John 1:3-10



Perhaps nothing forces us to confront our brokenness quite like when we know we have done something wrong. It is said that confession is good for the soul, and an integral part of our identity as Lutherans is that we start each worship service with public, corporate confession.

It is as if we know instinctively that we need to hear the reassuring words from our pastors that God does indeed forgive our sins – those things that “we have done and left undone,” the promises we have not kept, the pain we have caused, the dreams we have shattered, the hearts we have broken, the needs we have overlooked – whether our own or of others.

Our holy scriptures provide us with words of assurance that “while we were yet sinners, God loved us.” We are told that even though “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” we are made new by God’s forgiving grace.

-Stephanie Dykes

## Day 3: Friday, February 16, 2018

<sup>1</sup> In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of God's appearing and God's kingdom, I solemnly urge you: <sup>2</sup> proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. <sup>3</sup> For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. <sup>5</sup> As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

-2 Timothy 4: 1-5



This section of the second letter of Paul to his dear friend Timothy has this section which impressed me: *“proclaim the Message with intensity; keep on your watch. Challenge, warn and urge your people. Don’t ever quit. Just keep it simple, You’re going to find that there will be times when people will have no stomach for solid teaching, but will fill up on spiritual junk food-catchy opinions that tickle their fancy. They’ll turn their backs on truth and chase mirages. But YOU, keep your eye on what you’re doing”.*

This sobering reminder to Timothy from Paul, tells him to share his faith, but keep it simple. This reminds me of my participation in a church, (not Lutheran), whose pastor was a fine model of sharing the gospel. He looked at the congregation one day and said, “folks, this is not hard, we preach and teach and write but the simple truth is that for all our trying to figure out how to tell the story of Jesus, we’ve sometimes made it too complex. It’s all about LOVE. That’s the most simple truth you can talk about and show by your actions in the world. It isn’t dense or thick with words. And as Lutherans we’d perhaps say, it’s all about GRACE. So actually if we could share love and grace.....we’ve pretty much said it all!

-Sally Parker-Henderson

## Day 4: Saturday, February 17, 2018

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. <sup>3</sup> The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” <sup>4</sup> But he answered, “It is written,

‘One does not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup> saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

‘He will command his angels concerning you,’  
and ‘On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’”

<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; <sup>9</sup> and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

‘Worship the Lord your God,  
and serve only God.’”

<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

-Matthew 4:1-11



Can you bargain with God? Satan found Jesus at a vulnerable time, when he was hungry after his fast and offered Jesus one thing Jesus needed with great clarity at that moment. Satan hoped that Jesus’s need would be worth an extreme cost...ignoring a commandment so vital that when asked to summarize the law, Jesus called it out: love God with all your heart. When my father, an aspiring theologian, told me this story, he summed it up by saying, your arms are too short to box with God. God will win. You cannot bargain with God. My father shared the story as a warning that reeked of brimstone—when contemplating whether one can “get away with” shirking on our commitment to God, believe that God will always win.

The scripture has always seemed more loving to me. Jesus, taunted by a fallen angel (once beloved of God the father) to prove his Father’s love for Him, steels himself with his faith and demonstrates how we are

supposed to love our God with all our heart.

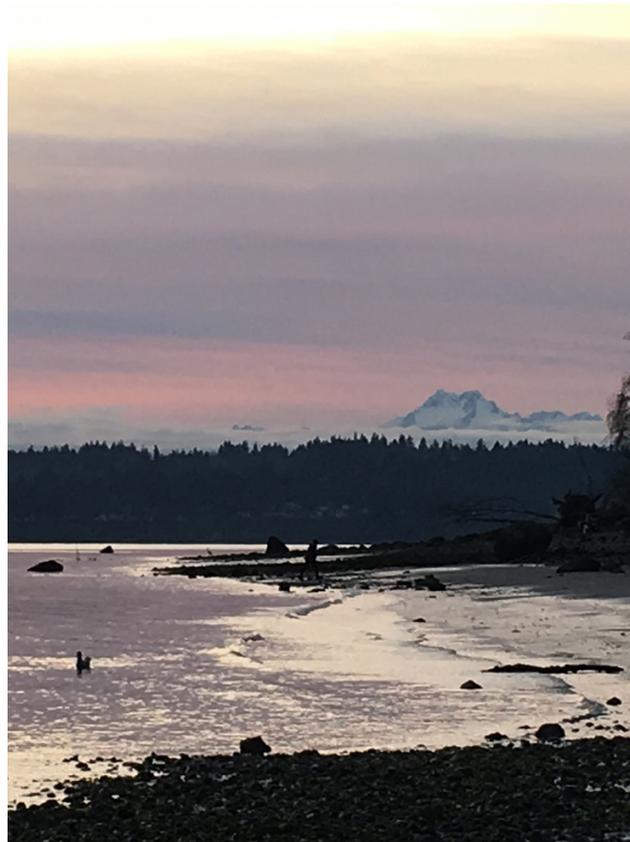
1. God sustains us. When there is a physical need in our lives, trust in the word of God, not just in whatever will fill the need. Jesus knew He could turn rocks into bread, with help from God the father. He didn't need to prove that anyone, and God doesn't need to prove that to us...loving God isn't having all our physical needs fulfilled on our schedule.
2. God protects us. Our world is challenging enough, and God comes through often enough. It isn't that our arms are too short to box with God...rather if we think of ourselves against the onslaught of the world, God has been busy blocking punches we didn't know about. If we looked carefully, we would see that. There is no need to pick a fight to see this in action.
3. God enriches us. When given the choice between all the riches of the world and a deep relationship with God, Jesus holds fast to the commandment he repeats for us to remember as the guiding principle upon which all other decisions can be made: love God. All that truly enriches us comes from a loving relationship with God.

Taking these three points, illustrated in this scripture, if we were looking to bargain with God, what more are we hoping to get from Him that what He already gives us without asking?

I hear myself making side deals with God all the time, the kind my father must have heard me making. God hears them too and quiets me by reminding me: He has a plan for me that I just don't know yet because His foresight is long and I am perhaps a bit impatient, and I need to trust Him. I need to trust He will sustain me, protect me and enrich me, because He loves me...not because I couldn't win in a boxing match against Him, but because God always wanted me to win. He sent Jesus as a living example how to love him correctly, and in Jesus's epic battle against evil, He reminds us how to exercise the faith and love for God at all times.

-Abby Anzalone

## First Sunday in Lent, February 18, 2018



## Day 5: Monday, February 19, 2018

<sup>1</sup> You were dead through the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. <sup>4</sup> But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which God loved us <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with God and seated us with God in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the ages to come God might show the immeasurable riches of God's grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not the result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are what God has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

-Ephesians 2:1-10



I wake up every morning and remind myself each day is a fresh start. At least I try to. It's so easy to get caught up in the guilt of that healthy dinner I *should* have made from scratch instead of ordering pizza, that phone call to my parents I *should* have made to tell them I love them, that pair of pants I *should* have fixed the hole in by now... I probably don't even fit in them anymore. My therapist told me I need to stop *should*-ing on myself and this verse reminds me of that.

Grace is such a beautiful thing. It acknowledges the humanity in the choices we make and allows us a clean slate to start over. It's alright I haven't done these things yet. I am granted the opportunity to do them over and over when the time is right. May we each greet the morn with renewed energy to do the things we want and need to do knowing God is still there loving us, even if we fall short.

-Jonath Ochs

## Day 6: Tuesday, February 20, 2018

<sup>8</sup> Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. <sup>9</sup> Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing. <sup>10</sup> For

*“Those who desire life  
and desire to see good days,  
let them keep their tongues from evil  
and their lips from speaking deceit;  
<sup>11</sup> let them turn away from evil and do good;  
let them seek peace and pursue it.  
<sup>12</sup> For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,  
and the Lord's ears are open to their prayer.  
But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”*

<sup>13</sup> Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, <sup>15</sup> but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; <sup>16</sup> yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil.

<sup>18a</sup> For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God.

-1 Peter 3:8-18a



I picked February 20th because it is my daughter Karen's birthday. Did I look at the Scripture text to go with this date? NO! When I did glance, quickly scanning the words, I saw a lot about watching your tongue, making rebuttals gentle and reverent. That jumped out at me. While my tongue is often passionate, it seldom speaks in kind tones. Now, while this text is much more than what my "guilty"? mind saw, I figured God had given me the message.

Now, I had expected to tell one of hundreds of Lenten stories, since Lent has been such an important part of my life since 5th grade, when my pastor father took me and my mom and sister traveling church to church in the rural parishes of Illinois. Each pastor had been given one of the last seven words of Jesus on the cross, and somehow timed it so we'd arrive on time at each church for my dad to preach his word; or, how at Crown Lutheran I facilitated our large youth group to present a skit, music, etc. each Wednesday night for the Lenten service.

Back to this Scripture text; the context is during the early days of Christianity, the Christians were being persecuted either by the Romans or by their Jewish neighbors or both. The text is formed by Psalm 34:12-16; I love it when the New Testament reminds us that the Hebrew Bible makes its way often into the Scriptures of the new, as seen below in poetry form. While it is difficult to understand persecution in our day, we can certainly hear evil tongues speaking, deceit all around us, not seeking peace, but rather looking for argument.

Such exhortations as to repay abuse with a blessing, to be ready to make a defense for what you believe is true but do it with gentleness and reverence. I am sure I do not do that. God's ultimate design is to conform us to the likeness of Jesus. Through adversity, God develops the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22, 23)—in us. I pray that during this Lenten season I become more aware of my sarcastic replies and rather have a tender heart and a humble mind to those with whom I vehemently disagree, so they may see Christ in me. I will need those prayers to do better!

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Finally, Jesus was crucified because he loved too much, loved the wrong people, etc. During this Lenten time, may we love too much.

-Carolyn Swanson

**Day 7: Wednesday, February 21, 2018**

<sup>11</sup> I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord;  
I will remember your wonders of old.

<sup>12</sup> I will meditate on all your work,  
and muse on your mighty deeds.

<sup>13</sup> Your way, O God, is holy.

What god is so great as our God?

<sup>14</sup> You are the God who works wonders;  
you have displayed your might among the peoples.

<sup>15</sup> With your strong arm you redeemed your people,  
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

<sup>16</sup> When the waters saw you, O God,

*when the waters saw you, they were afraid;  
the very deep trembled.  
17 The clouds poured out water;  
the skies thundered;  
your arrows flashed on every side.  
18 The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind;  
your lightnings lit up the world;  
the earth trembled and shook.  
19 Your way was through the sea,  
your path, through the mighty waters;  
yet your footprints were unseen.  
20 You led your people like a flock  
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.  
4 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
that I know very well.*

*-Psalm 77:11-20 & Psalm 139:14*



#### A communal reflection on the wondrous works of God.

There are a lot of wondrous works. Some that we thought of were the Olympic mountains, Carkeek Park, Yellowstone, sandy beaches, snow, and rain. One of the wondrous works that we all enjoyed was during Vacation Bible School last summer.

Steven R. led the recreational time during VBS. We had it every afternoon on the strip of grass beside the main entrance doors. One of our favorite activities involved retrieving melons out of an inflatable wading pool with our bare feet.

Here are some of our reflections of that time:

*"It was so fun to feel the water and laugh with each other."*

*"The sun felt so nice and it was just good to be silly and laugh together."*

*"I loved it when we tipped over the pool and the water rushed onto the grass. That was even more fun and I wanted to stay there forever."*

*"I felt so happy and relaxed."*

*"At the end, it was bittersweet. I wanted this time to last longer."*

*"The fun from the plastic wading pool was terrific."*

*"Maybe wondrous works aren't just beautiful mountains or Yellowstone park or beaches. Maybe God's wonderful works can be found in ordinary things too, like plastic wading pools."*

-Upper Elementary: Emily, Kyle, Gillian, Addie, Damon, and Matt

## **Day 8: Thursday, February 22, 2018**

*1 I love the Lord, because the Lord has heard  
my voice and my supplications.*

*2 Because the Lord inclined the Lord's ear to me,  
therefore I will call on the Lord as long as I live.*

*3 The snares of death encompassed me;*

*the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;  
I suffered distress and anguish.  
4 Then I called on the name of the Lord:  
"O Lord, I pray, save my life!"  
12 What shall I return to the Lord  
for all the Lord's bounty to me?  
13 I will lift up the cup of salvation  
and call on the name of the Lord,  
14 I will pay my vows to the Lord  
in the presence of all the Lord's people.  
-Psalm 116:1-4, 12-14*



Knowing God is everywhere I look, everywhere I am, was not always obvious to me. In fact, I was addicted and God seemed nowhere to be found. I prayed as hard as I could and as often as I could but no answers came. In retrospect, I realized I was praying for my own solutions(s), not God's. I was telling God what God should do. I was dictating the answers which I knew nothing about. I was clueless, but I insisted on telling God the solutions.

It was not until I gave up on my own solutions, and asked for God's help, that I realized God was there all along, just waiting or perhaps planning for the answer to my dilemma. Until I simply asked God to guide me, to reveal his will for me, that the answers came and were, in fact, quite obvious.

I am now addiction free, except the memories of the horrors of those days. God was always there. I just needed to realize God had the plans and the answers and I had none, except to look for and be ready to follow his will for me.

-Anonymous

## Day 9: Friday, February 23, 2018

*23 You who fear the Lord, praise the Lord!  
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify the Lord;  
stand in awe of the Lord all you offspring of Israel!  
24 For the Lord did not despise or abhor  
the affliction of the afflicted;  
the Lord did not hide the Lord's face from me,  
but heard when I cried to the Lord.  
25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation;  
my vows I will pay before those who fear the Lord.  
26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek the Lord shall praise the Lord.  
May your hearts live forever!  
27 All the ends of the earth shall remember  
and turn to the Lord;  
and all the families of the nations  
shall worship before the Lord.  
28 For dominion belongs to the Lord,  
and the Lord rules over the nations.*

<sup>29</sup> *To the Lord, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;  
before the Lord shall bow all who go down to the dust,  
and I shall live for the Lord.*  
<sup>30</sup> *Posterity will serve the Lord;  
future generations will be told about the Lord,*  
<sup>31</sup> *and proclaim the Lord's deliverance to a people yet unborn,  
saying that the Lord has done it.*

-Psalm 22:23-31



*"For God did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; God did not hide God's face from me, but heard when I cried to God."*

Seven years ago, I got really sick. Because of my medical condition, I struggled with depression and anxiety. Eventually, I had to withdraw from college and my parents moved me home with them. It was a difficult season in my life, one where I cried out to God constantly. Often that was in the form of music. So, I am sharing the lyrics from one of those songs.

"Let the Waters Rise" by Mikeschair

"Don't know where to begin  
Its like my world's caving in  
And I try but I can't control my fear  
Where do I go from here?"

Sometimes it's so hard to pray  
When You feel so far away  
But I am willing to go  
Where you want me to  
God, I trust You

There's a raging sea  
Right in front of me  
Wants to pull me in  
Bring me to my knees  
So let the waters rise  
If You want them to  
I will follow You  
I will follow You  
I will follow You"

-Katlin Dickinson-Laurence

## Day 10: Saturday, February 24, 2018

<sup>7</sup> *The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur.* <sup>8</sup> *And he said, "Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai."* <sup>9</sup> *The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her."* <sup>10</sup> *The angel of the Lord also said to her, "I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude."* <sup>11</sup> *And the angel of the Lord said to her,*

*"Now you have conceived and shall bear a son;  
you shall call him Ishmael,*

*for the Lord has given heed to your affliction.*

*<sup>12</sup> He shall be a wild ass of a man,  
with his hand against everyone,  
and everyone's hand against him;  
and he shall live at odds with all his kin."*

*<sup>13</sup> So she named the Lord who spoke to her, "You are El-roi"; for she said, "Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing God?" <sup>14</sup> Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.*

*<sup>15</sup> Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.*

*-Genesis 16:7-15*



"Call Me Ishmael." And so begins Melville's epic Moby Dick, introducing the voice of the young narrator in the man versus whale American classic novel. Like his Biblical counterpart, Ishmael is an outcast, his "desert" the high seas rather than the sands of the Beersheba. Both young men are destined to suffer greatly; one through the methodical destruction of his ship due to the actions of an obsessive Captain Ahab, the other nearly dying of thirst after being expelled from the home of his father Abraham. Drifters both, unmoored from the firm groundings of family and community, and living in a reality where God seems absent at best, and a malevolent force at worst.

When I was a young man, I went through a similar "wilderness" period. Away (voluntarily) from my own community and family, the faith I was raised in a distant memory, the world seemed a hostile place. The freedom I so desperately sought for so long finally achieved, I sadly realized the dear price to be paid for such independence. Away from God, without meaningful relationships with family or friends, I felt adrift, tossed about by large ocean waves, dying of thirst in desert, and menaced by whales of self-doubt and missed opportunities. But like our nautical friend Ishmael, through God's grace I managed to survive the wreckage and was rescued by friendly vessels. And through God's promise, I was able to live into the plan for my life and make my way out of the desert of despair like the Ishmael of Genesis.

This Lenten season, let's try to remind ourselves that God's love is bigger than the deserts and stormy seas that life throws at us. And let us look towards our loved ones and for friendly strangers during the tough times, rather folding further within ourselves.

-Don Boelter

## Second Sunday in Lent, February 25, 2018



## Day 11: Monday, February 26, 2018

<sup>1</sup> The Lord dealt with Sarah as the Lord had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as promised. <sup>2</sup> Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. <sup>3</sup> Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. <sup>4</sup> And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. <sup>5</sup> Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. <sup>6</sup> Now Sarah said, "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." <sup>7</sup> And she said, "Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

-Genesis 21:1-7



"Geriatric pregnancy." These are not words that a 39 year old expects to hear, but it's the truth. They write "ADVANCED MATERNAL AGE" on the top of your chart in huge letters. It's a bit humiliating. My son is a rainbow baby - a child that is born and lives and thrives after pregnancy loss. Not only that, he was completely unexpected. And believe me, he, like Isaac, has brought so much laughter into our lives, and into the lives of everyone he joyfully encounters.

When I read Sarah's story, the first thing I hear is the 100 years of agony before Isaac's birth. The shame, and the heartbreak that comes with infertility - even more so in Biblical times than now. The second thing I hear is that God is not without a sense of humor... and timing. I'm sure that Sarah had resigned herself long ago to not being a mother. And hopefully made some peace. But in our journey with God on the earth, we must not forget that there is always a huge surprise waiting for us, when we least expect it. I pray this Lent, that we find peace in the journey.

-Gretchen Mertes

## Day 12: Tuesday, February 27, 2018

<sup>1</sup> After these things God tested Abraham. God said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."<sup>2</sup> God said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you."<sup>3</sup> So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him.<sup>4</sup> On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away.<sup>5</sup> Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you."<sup>6</sup> Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.<sup>7</sup> Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"<sup>8</sup> Abraham said, "God will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

<sup>9</sup> When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.<sup>10</sup> Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son.<sup>11</sup> But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."<sup>12</sup> He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."<sup>13</sup> And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.<sup>14</sup> So Abraham called that place "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

<sup>15</sup> The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven,<sup>16</sup> and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son,<sup>17</sup> I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies,<sup>18</sup> and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."<sup>19</sup> So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham lived at Beer-sheba.

-Genesis 22:1-19



In this reading, we see God give Abraham an almost impossible task. Any parent would have their heart torn asunder by the command to sacrifice one of their children. Sadly though, at the time, Abraham would not have found this unusual. Many of the neighboring tribes practiced child sacrifice regularly. But here we see God make the command, but then pull it away at the last second. In this way, he shows that Israelites are not to sacrifice children as had become so common. Good came out of Abraham's willingness to give something up.

I refer to this reading often during Lent because it has become my custom to give something up. In a sense, I make a make a sacrifice. It's not always easy for me to see God's plan while I'm doing the practice, but it has always come clear in the end.

During one Lent, I gave up reading. That was puzzling because reading is generally considered a good thing. This worked though because giving something up at Lent isn't about getting rid of bad habits, it's about understanding our relationship to something important in our lives. By giving up reading I discovered that there were times when I found the desire to pull out a book almost irresistible. These were the times when something in the environment was making me uncomfortable. So I learned that reading to me fulfills the some of the same needs that drugs fulfill in other people. I'm still reading as much as ever but I know better what it does for me.

-Dave Eicke

<sup>12</sup> For thus says the Lord:  
Your hurt is incurable,  
your wound is grievous.

<sup>13</sup> There is no one to uphold your cause,  
no medicine for your wound,  
no healing for you.

<sup>14</sup> All your lovers have forgotten you;  
they care nothing for you;  
for I have dealt you the blow of an enemy,  
the punishment of a merciless foe,  
because your guilt is great,  
because your sins are so numerous.

<sup>15</sup> Why do you cry out over your hurt?  
Your pain is incurable.  
Because your guilt is great,  
because your sins are so numerous,  
I have done these things to you.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore all who devour you shall be devoured,  
and all your foes, every one of them, shall go into captivity;  
those who plunder you shall be plundered,  
and all who prey on you I will make a prey.

<sup>17</sup> For I will restore health to you,  
and your wounds I will heal,  
says the Lord,  
because they have called you an outcast:  
"It is Zion; no one cares for her!"

<sup>18</sup> Thus says the Lord:  
I am going to restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob,  
and have compassion on his dwellings;  
the city shall be rebuilt upon its mound,  
and the citadel set on its rightful site.

<sup>19</sup> Out of them shall come thanksgiving,  
and the sound of merrymakers.  
I will make them many, and they shall not be few;  
I will make them honored, and they shall not be disdained.

<sup>20</sup> Their children shall be as of old,  
their congregation shall be established before me;  
and I will punish all who oppress them.

<sup>21</sup> Their prince shall be one of their own,  
their ruler shall come from their midst;  
I will bring him near, and he shall approach me,  
for who would otherwise dare to approach me?  
says the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> And you shall be my people,  
and I will be your God.

-Jeremiah 30: 12-22



*"For I will restore you to health and I will heal your wounds ..."*

We come before God often thinking, perhaps, that we need to be perfect. So we shower, and make sure our makeup is "just so," and sometimes we put on that new outfit with matching shoes we purchased online.

But sometimes we stay away from God because we think "how could God love someone as broken and flawed as me?" We may think, "How can I stand in the house of God, with all my imperfections, among all of these seemingly perfect people?"

The truth is that we are all broken. We have all been wounded by life. It's just that some of us hide the scars better than others. Or perhaps our wounds are invisible to most people, but we know they are there. We carry these burdens on our hearts, in our bleeding souls.

But God, in God's goodness, comes to us and offers us healing and rest. God offers us healing in the company of God's other wounded children. God offers us healing in the warmth and embrace of other pilgrims who have been hurt in this life. God restores us in the simple gifts of bread and wine. God restores us through the sacrificial love of Jesus.

We are all wounded. We all yearn for health and healing, love and wholeness. And we find hope in the gracious God who calls us beloved.

-Stephanie Dykes

## Day 14: Thursday, March 1, 2018

<sup>1</sup> *The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork.*

<sup>2</sup> *Day to day pours forth speech,  
and night to night declares knowledge.*

<sup>3</sup> *There is no speech, nor are there words;  
their voice is not heard;*

<sup>4</sup> *yet their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.*

*In the heavens God has set a tent for the sun,  
<sup>5</sup> which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,  
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.*

<sup>6</sup> *Its rising is from the end of the heavens,  
and its circuit to the end of them;  
and nothing is hid from its heat.*

<sup>7</sup> *The law of the Lord is perfect,  
reviving the soul;  
the decrees of the Lord are sure,  
making wise the simple;*

<sup>8</sup> *the precepts of the Lord are right,  
rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the Lord is clear,  
enlightening the eyes;*

<sup>9</sup> *the fear of the Lord is pure,  
enduring forever;  
the ordinances of the Lord are true  
and righteous altogether.*

*<sup>10</sup> More to be desired are they than gold,  
even much fine gold;  
sweeter also than honey,  
and drippings of the honeycomb.*

*<sup>11</sup> Moreover by them is your servant warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.*

*<sup>12</sup> But who can detect their errors?  
Clear me from hidden faults.*

*<sup>13</sup> Keep back your servant also from the insolent;  
do not let them have dominion over me.  
Then I shall be blameless,  
and innocent of great transgression.*

*<sup>14</sup> Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable to you,  
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.*

*-Psalm 19*



When I was five years old and about to enter kindergarten, my dad gave me instructions on how to cross streets. Dad was very serious, look to the left, then the right, followed by a look to the left. I followed his street crossing instructions until I was a teenager.

My friend and I walked to Ballard, looked around, and then headed home. We walked east to 15th northwest and then north to 75th. When we reached the intersection the light was green, but starting to turn amber. My friend suggested a quick run across the street. When we reached the middle of the street our light was red, and cars were whizzing by us. We stood frozen in the middle of the street. Finally, a car stopped, and then another. When I arrived home my mom said your father is very upset with you. I went to find him, and ask what was wrong. He said he was driving up 15th, and abruptly stopped for me and my friend in the middle of the street. I said I was sorry and would not do that again. I realized then my dad's instructions were meant to keep me safe.

Psalm 19 is a Psalm of David. "The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul, the statutes of the Lord are trustworthy making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold, they are sweeter than honey than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned in keeping them there is great reward". Parents give us guidance to keep us safe. God gave us the scriptures so that we can receive incredible joy that comes from only God alone.

-Linda Carbone

## Day 15: Friday, March 2, 2018

<sup>9b</sup> When Moses had told the words of the people to the Lord, <sup>10</sup> the Lord said to Moses: "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes <sup>11</sup> and prepare for the third day, because on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. <sup>12</sup> You shall set limits for the people all around, saying, 'Be careful not to go up the mountain or to touch the edge of it. Any who touch the mountain shall be put to death. <sup>13</sup> No hand shall touch them, but they shall be stoned or shot with arrows; whether animal or human being, they shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they may go up on the mountain." <sup>14</sup> So Moses went down from the mountain to the people. He consecrated the people, and they washed their clothes. <sup>15</sup> And he said to the people, "Prepare for the third day; do not go near a woman."

-Exodus 19:9b-15



There was a stretch in my teen-aged waste-land years when I did all I could to be holy. I went to Bible studies, read it daily and took it literally. I prayed about everything. I stopped wearing make-up. I even stopped rebelling against my mom. I followed what I believed were God's rules and commandments.

Why? Because I wanted real faith, faith like the people in the Bible had.

But following Jesus, we discover an entirely different kind of holiness than in this passage from Exodus, and in my adolescent faith. Instead of trying to be as clean and pure as possible, we get our hands and our lives dirty serving others as Jesus did. Instead of staying away from what is holy, like Mt. Sinai charged with the threatening power of God, we reach out and touch the image of God in every person we meet. Instead of abstaining from sex, we try to bring God's love wherever we go and whatever we do.

It's not that one way is easier than the other. They are both really hard. But one is the way of Jesus, who IS the way and the truth and the life. And when we seek to live in Jesus' way, he walks right beside us, blessing and guiding us and the people in our lives in ways we could never have predicted or imagined.

-Kathy Hawks

## Day 16: Saturday, March 3, 2018

<sup>1</sup> The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork.

<sup>2</sup> Day to day pours forth speech,  
and night to night declares knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> There is no speech, nor are there words;  
their voice is not heard;

<sup>4</sup> yet their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens God has set a tent for the sun,  
<sup>5</sup> which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,  
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.

<sup>6</sup> Its rising is from the end of the heavens,  
and its circuit to the end of them;  
and nothing is hid from its heat.

<sup>7</sup> The law of the Lord is perfect,  
reviving the soul;

*the decrees of the Lord are sure,  
making wise the simple;  
8 the precepts of the Lord are right,  
rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the Lord is clear,  
enlightening the eyes;  
9 the fear of the Lord is pure,  
enduring forever;  
the ordinances of the Lord are true  
and righteous altogether.  
10 More to be desired are they than gold,  
even much fine gold;  
sweeter also than honey,  
and drippings of the honeycomb.  
11 Moreover by them is your servant warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.  
12 But who can detect their errors?  
Clear me from hidden faults.  
13 Keep back your servant also from the insolent;  
do not let them have dominion over me.  
Then I shall be blameless,  
and innocent of great transgression.  
14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable to you,  
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.*

*-Psalm 19*



The first 6 verses about the Glory of God and his creation remind me of my younger days when we were living in the mountains in Colorado and we were not able to go to church. We would go on walks with my mother and she would explain to us what we were seeing as creations of God... the flowers, rocks, trees, animals... and how God had created them and how we should protect them! This gave me a greater appreciation of things around us and for life of all kinds.

Starting in verse 7 the verses talk through how the law is sweeter than honey and more fine than gold. The rules as laid down by God are to be followed. My father's employment during the depression was very unsure, but God always provided and took care of our large family of 10! Through the creations of fruit and vegetables God provided through seeds we were able to grow and survive. It has led me to better understand why it's necessary to live my life to the fullest and provide for my own family.

-Harold Alley

## Third Sunday in Lent, March 4, 2018



## Day 17: Monday, March 5, 2018

<sup>16</sup> Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? <sup>17</sup> If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

<sup>18</sup> Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. <sup>19</sup> For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written,

*"The Lord catches the wise in their craftiness,"*

<sup>20</sup> and again,

*"The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise,  
that they are futile."*

<sup>21</sup> So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, <sup>22</sup> whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all belong to you, <sup>23</sup> and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

-1 Corinthians 3:16-23



For me, letting go of some things during Lent, means freeing up space within my mind, heart and soul.

Too often our minds are "too full" in today's hectic world.

By giving up some of my overabundance of thoughts and things, I can allow more room for God to enter fully and to guide me with more focus and be centered in my faith.

-Lynn Simonsen

## Day 18: Tuesday, March 6, 2018

<sup>1</sup> Hezekiah began to reign when he was twenty-five years old; he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. <sup>2</sup> He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, just as his ancestor David had done.

<sup>3</sup> In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them. <sup>4</sup> He brought in the priests and the Levites and assembled them in the square on the east. <sup>5</sup> He said to them, "Listen to me, Levites! Sanctify yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord, the God of your ancestors, and carry out the filth from the holy place. <sup>6</sup> For our ancestors have been unfaithful and have done what was evil in the sight of the Lord our God; they have forsaken God, and have turned away their faces from the dwelling of the Lord, and turned their backs. <sup>7</sup> They also shut the doors of the vestibule and put out the lamps, and have not offered incense or made burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel. <sup>8</sup> Therefore the wrath of the Lord came upon Judah and Jerusalem, and the Lord has made them an object of horror, of astonishment, and of hissing, as you see with your own eyes. <sup>9</sup> Our fathers have fallen by the sword and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. <sup>10</sup> Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord, the God of Israel, so that God's fierce anger may turn away from us. <sup>11</sup> My sons, do not now be negligent, for the Lord has chosen you to stand in the Lord's presence to minister to the Lord, and to be his ministers and make offerings to the Lord."

<sup>16</sup> The priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it, and they brought out all the unclean things that they found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord; and the Levites took them and carried them out to the Wadi Kidron. <sup>17</sup> They began to sanctify on the first day of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the vestibule of the Lord; then for eight days they sanctified the house of the Lord, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished. <sup>18</sup> Then they went inside to King Hezekiah and said, "We have cleansed all the house of the Lord, the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the table for the rows of bread and all its utensils. <sup>19</sup> All the utensils that King Ahaz repudiated during his reign when he was faithless, we have made ready and sanctified; see, they are in front of the altar of the Lord."

-2 Chronicles 29:1-11, 16-19



I threw open the door and anxiously looked around. Everything was exactly how I remembered it. The table and chairs my grandpa painted a dark teal were in the corner, the hollandaise colored couch felt the same with a smooth yet slightly sticky texture and the smell of the cabin immediately reminded me of my childhood. It had been 15 years since I had been in that space, but it instantly felt like home again.

I imagine King Hezekiah of Judah had a similar experience when he commanded the temple doors to be opened for the first time in 16 years. Did he remember how the temple felt like holy ground as a child? Did his eyes linger over the lampstands that used to be lit? Did the temple have the faint smell of burned incense still?

What are areas of your life that are sealed off from God? Why is it that way? 2 Chronicles 29:1-11 and 16-19 show that it is never too late to open the doors and come home because "the Lord has chosen you to stand in his presence to serve him."

Prayer: *God, reveal to me areas I have sealed off to your forgiveness. Strengthen me as I deliberately seek to worship you, just as Hezekiah did. Amen.*

-Shelbe Kukoski

<sup>1</sup> How lovely is your dwelling place,  
O Lord of hosts!

<sup>2</sup> My soul longs, indeed it faints  
for the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and my flesh sing for joy  
to the living God.

<sup>3</sup> Even the sparrow finds a home,  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
where she may lay her young,  
at your altars, O Lord of hosts,  
my King and my God.

<sup>4</sup> Happy are those who live in your house,  
ever singing your praise.

<sup>5</sup> Happy are those whose strength is in you,  
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

<sup>6</sup> As they go through the valley of Baca  
they make it a place of springs;  
the early rain also covers it with pools.

<sup>7</sup> They go from strength to strength;  
the God of gods will be seen in Zion.

<sup>8</sup> O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer;  
give ear, O God of Jacob!

<sup>9</sup> Behold our shield, O God;  
look on the face of your anointed.

<sup>10</sup> For a day in your courts is better  
than a thousand elsewhere.

*I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God  
than live in the tents of wickedness.*

<sup>11</sup> For the Lord God is a sun and shield;  
the Lord God bestows favor and honor.  
No good thing does the Lord withhold  
from those who walk uprightly.

<sup>12</sup> O Lord of hosts,  
happy is everyone who trusts in you.

-Psalm 84



Psalm 84: Looking at two different versions. The old version and The Message.

*"What a beautiful home, God-of-the-Angel-Armies! I've always longed to live in a place like this, Always dreamed of a room in your house, where I could sing for joy to God-alive! (84:1-2)*

*"One day spent in your house, this beautiful place of worship, beats thousands spent on Greek island beaches. I'd rather scrub floors in the house of my God than be honored as a guest in the palace of sin. All sunshine and sovereign is God, generous in gifts and glory. He doesn't scrimp with his traveling companions. Its smooth sailing all the way with God-of-the-Angel-Armies. (84:10-12)*

This touched me as it speaks to me in finding my home with God at Our Redeemer's. As we prepare to start this Lent season we look to refresh our hearts and our minds with our life with God. A life with God is better even if we are cleaning house vs. a life in a palace of sin. We are here to help serve God and in return we are given his love and grace. I keep going back to a dinner prayer I have said for a very long time: "Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to us be blessed."

-Amy Dahlgren

## Day 20: Thursday, March 8, 2018

*<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> just as God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before God in love. <sup>5</sup> God destined us for adoption as God's children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of God's will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of God's glorious grace that is freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.*

-Ephesians 1:3-6



*(Excerpt) Bless be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before God in love.*

This is not an easy scripture for me to "get" on first reading, or the second for that matter! I think the apostle Paul calls on us to be as universal in love to others as we are universally loved by Christ. No differentiation on ethnicity, gender, wealth, creed or all the other imagined "differences" we can use to justify separating us from them and not love them as we are loved by Christ. This is not an easy task for anyone...I for one have a tendency to use my eyes before I use my heart when facing those I need to embrace in God's love. I'll keep trying to do better...how about you?

-Jim Arnold

## Day 21: Friday, March 9, 2018

*<sup>7</sup> Through God's blood we have redemption and the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup> lavished upon us. With all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> God has made known to us the mystery of God's will, according to God's good pleasure set forth in Christ, <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth. <sup>11</sup> In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of God who accomplishes all things according to God's counsel and will, <sup>12</sup> so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of God's glory. <sup>13</sup> In Christ you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in Christ, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; <sup>14</sup> this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of God's glory.*

-Ephesians 1:7-14



## A Prayer of Resistance

We are the people of God.  
What God has joined cannot be cut;  
Who has died once, cannot be killed;  
And flesh on fire cannot be burned.  
We are the people of God.  
What God has given cannot be stolen;  
Whom God has called cannot be sent back;  
What God preserves cannot be thrown out.  
We are the people of God.  
No one is cursed whom God has blessed.  
-Harold Laurence

## Day 22: Saturday, March 10, 2018

<sup>1</sup> Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." <sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. <sup>6</sup> What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' <sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." <sup>9</sup> Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

<sup>11</sup> "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup> If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

-John 3:1-13



### Our thoughts on Lent and faith:

"What is Lent? Is Lent a happy or sad time?"

"Lent is about time, life, and giving."

"What is its purpose and meaning?"

"Lent prepares you for other things ahead in your life."

"Why is it 40 days long?"

"It is a time to promise something to yourself."

"What is the historical context of Lent?"

"Church is a safe place."

"How is Lent different from the rest of the year?"

"Lent is a time to center yourself on God and Jesus."

*"What do people give up for Lent? Why do they give it up?"*

*"It is easier to have bigger faith in church because everyone is together to pray and worship."*

-The Confirmation Class

## Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 11, 2018



## Day 23: Monday, March 12, 2018

*<sup>22</sup> Then Moses ordered Israel to set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. <sup>23</sup> When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter. That is why it was called Marah. <sup>24</sup> And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" <sup>25</sup> He cried out to the Lord; and the Lord showed him a piece of wood; he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.*

*There the Lord made for them a statute and an ordinance and there God put them to the test. <sup>26</sup> God said, "If you will listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in God's sight, and give heed to God's commandments and keep all God's statutes, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord who heals you."*

*<sup>27</sup> Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; and they camped there by the water.*

*-Exodus 15:22-27*



While living in Cairo, Egypt, I worked towards my Scuba Diving certification. In order to get our practice dives in, we would drive out on the weekends to dive the Red Sea off of the Sinai Peninsula. We would drive through

the exact desert described in Exodus, which is every bit of the desert you might imagine. A bright clear sky above, with red/brown/cream swirled rocks, soil, and sand below. While searingly dry, it is surprisingly cold and windy, especially up on the mountains such as Mt. Sinai. According to Google, the Wilderness of Shur is thought to be the Northwest region of the Sinai peninsula. I try and imagine this area and most of my memories are of driving out to the Red Sea at night in a packed carpool, with the windows down, modern Arabic pop blaring and icy cold dry wind whipping in through the windows. (I also remember when my then fiance, Justin, came out to visit and we went out to see Mt. Sinai and our bus broke down and we had to hitchhike back to Cairo, but that's another story.)

All this to say, this region of the Sinai is very unforgiving. The wind almost feels like it's sucking the water from your skin, eyes, and mouth. To think of an entire people, families, old and young, wandering through this land - I am amazed they survived. I am not surprised they had to go days at a time without fresh water. And I can imagine I would be more than 'complaining' if we were to go three days without refilling our water stores, only to find water that is undrinkable.

To me, in this story, I imagine God is challenging Moses and the Israelites to open themselves up to possibilities. The desert is harsh and unforgiving, and it is also teeming with life, you just have to look harder to find it. They have found water in the desert! But it is bitter. God provides a healing solution and the water is made drinkable, which restores them enough to continue trudging on. Finally, they make camp and recuperate at an oasis with springs of water (plentiful hydration!) and palm trees (shade!). When it seems like all is lost - a healing respite is provided.

-Cara Kiggins

## Day 24: Tuesday, March 13, 2018

<sup>1</sup> O give thanks to the Lord, for the Lord is good;  
for the Lord's steadfast love endures forever.

<sup>2</sup> Let the redeemed of the Lord say so,  
those the Lord redeemed from trouble

<sup>3</sup> and gathered in from the lands,  
from the east and from the west,  
from the north and from the south.

<sup>4</sup> Some wandered in desert wastes,  
finding no way to an inhabited town;

<sup>5</sup> hungry and thirsty,  
their soul fainted within them.

<sup>6</sup> Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,  
and the Lord delivered them from their distress;

<sup>7</sup> The Lord led them by a straight way,  
until they reached an inhabited town.

<sup>8</sup> Let them thank the Lord for the Lord's steadfast love,  
for the Lord's wonderful works to humankind.

<sup>9</sup> For the Lord satisfies the thirsty,  
and the hungry the Lord fills with good things.

<sup>10</sup> Some sat in darkness and in gloom,  
prisoners in misery and in irons,

<sup>11</sup> for they had rebelled against the words of God,  
and spurned the counsel of the Most High.

<sup>12</sup> Their hearts were bowed down with hard labor;  
they fell down, with no one to help.

*13 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,  
and the Lord saved them from their distress;  
14 The Lord brought them out of darkness and gloom,  
and broke their bonds asunder.  
15 Let them thank the Lord for the Lord's steadfast love,  
for the Lord's wonderful works to humankind.  
16 For the Lord shatters the doors of bronze,  
and cuts in two the bars of iron.*

*-Psalm 107:1-16*



These verses remind me of how God delivered me out of a state of intense anxiety and "deep gloom" the year after I graduated from college, a little more than 10 years ago. After graduating from college in New York City, I moved back in with my parents in New Jersey. I was trying to figure out what to do with the next stage of my life. During this time of change and uncertainty, my chemical/emotional tendency toward anxiety gave way to being full-on consumed by it. Getting up in the morning and getting to the Junior HS where I was teaching was so, so hard. But I made it through; there were tears, hugs, listening to "Fix You" by Coldplay (ha), and most importantly - prayers and God. While I had trouble connecting with much but my anxiety for months, I never felt alone. I felt God at my core. He delivered me from the "desert wasteland" (note: not meant to be a metaphor for New Jersey!). God is good. His faithful love lasts forever.

-Lindsay Rindler

## Day 25: Wednesday, March 14, 2018

*18 Violence shall no more be heard in your land,  
devastation or destruction within your borders;  
you shall call your walls Salvation,  
and your gates Praise.*

*19 The sun shall no longer be  
your light by day,  
nor for brightness shall the moon  
give light to you by night;  
but the Lord will be your everlasting light,  
and your God will be your glory.*

*20 Your sun shall no more go down,  
or your moon withdraw itself;  
for the Lord will be your everlasting light,  
and your days of mourning shall be ended.*

*-Isaiah 60:18-20*



Walking on top of the sand dunes in North Turo Beach in the summer of my fourteenth year, I was waiting for my life to begin. So many thoughts invaded my peace, I was hovering between childhood and whatever came next. What direction should I go, when will things become more clear? When can I relax?

I looked out over the beach to the silvery waves and whitecaps and suddenly I saw every single crystal of sand glistening like tiny mirrors reflecting the beauty around me. I felt a peace come over me. I realized I must have been praying. Young children on the beach with their faces filled with wonder, the magical landscape, the

air, the smells – everything seemed draped in a celestial presence.

That was the day I knew God's presence in a visceral way, I understood that the divine is always around us and that as we wait we pray and hope even if sometimes it is not entirely conscious. For me, that was the day I awoke to God's redemptive and embracing love. I was changed and remain forever grateful.

-Ellen Arlington

## Day 26: Thursday, March 15, 2018

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, while the promise of entering God's rest is still open, let us take care that none of you should seem to have failed to reach it. <sup>2</sup> For indeed the good news came to us just as to them; but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. <sup>3</sup> For we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,

*"As in my anger I swore,  
'They shall not enter my rest,'"*

though God's works were finished at the foundation of the world. <sup>4</sup> For in one place it speaks about the seventh day as follows, "And God rested on the seventh day from all God's works." <sup>5</sup> And again in this place it says, "They shall not enter my rest." <sup>6</sup> Since therefore it remains open for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> again God sets a certain day—"today"—saying through David much later, in the words already quoted,

*"Today, if you hear God's voice,  
do not harden your hearts."*

<sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later about another day. <sup>9</sup> So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; <sup>10</sup> for those who enter God's rest also cease from their labors as God did from God's. <sup>11</sup> Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs.

<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. <sup>13</sup> And before God no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.

-Hebrews 4: 1-13



This text portion speaks loud and clear to me this Lenten season. I am by nature a worrier and have been since childhood. Now, many years from my youth, I still worry far more than I should. My faith dilemma with so much worrying is that I pray and pray and then pray some more, going over and over my same worries to Great Spirit. I don't let go of them which is the gift God gives me, through faith. I just keep praying the same old mantras of worry. How unfaithful is that! So my Lenten journey this year will be to work on that issue of mine. In prayer, I need to completely give away my worries to God, knowing that through faith, Great Spirit will take these from me and give me peace and rest. Here goes!

-Sally Parker-Henderson

## Day 27: Friday, March 16, 2018

<sup>14</sup> Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

<sup>1</sup> Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. <sup>2</sup> High priests are able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since they themselves are subject to weakness; <sup>3</sup> and because of this they must offer sacrifice for their own sins as well as for those of the people. <sup>4</sup> And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

-Hebrews 4:14 - 5:4



One of the pivotal realizations, gained through life experiences, was when the humanity of Christ became real to me. I grew up believing in the sovereignty of Christ, but embracing Christ's humanity is what has made my faith a real, living, relevant part of my life.

Christ was tempted, and did not sin. But he did suffer. He endured humiliation, betrayal, physical pain, witnessed people he loved in pain, and ultimately, death on the cross. This humanizes our Lord for me. He knows temptation, he knows to his soul, deep pain and suffering ~ He experienced it ~ therefore He knows me, my temptations and my pain.

The humanity of our Lord is overwhelming to me. He is beside me (as I heard during communion years ago) experiencing my life with me - the joys, the pain, the sorrows. That belief has brought me comfort in the midst of divorce, broken dreams and deaths of loved ones. At times I may not be able to feel that He is with me, but the knowledge that He is there, is still there. And that sustains me.

I can't accept and embrace Christ's humanity without also accepting, embracing and experiencing his mercy and grace as real, living, and overwhelming. When I have thought or felt that I cannot put one foot in front of the other, when temptations and pain become overwhelming, Christ is there to hold me, to allow me to lean into Him, to pick me up and carry me until I can function again. He's been there and knows in his soul what I am experiencing.

Always there, experiencing my life with me; within me, helping me become the best I can be (same communion service). Always there with mercy and grace, compassion and forgiveness. Humbling. Real. Profound.

-Julie Vannoy

- 1 *Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.*
- 2 *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin.*
- 3 *For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.*
- 4 *Against you, you alone, have I sinned,  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you are justified in your sentence  
and blameless when you pass judgment.*
- 5 *Indeed, I was born guilty,  
a sinner when my mother conceived me.*
- 6 *You desire truth in the inward being;  
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.*
- 7 *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*
- 8 *Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.*
- 9 *Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.*
- 10 *Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.*
- 11 *Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.*
- 12 *Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.*

-Psalms 51:1-12



This passage is a familiar one for me. I feel like I have sung this passage many times in worship at Our Redeemer's. I believe this passage is asking for forgiveness ("a clean heart"). I did some research about this familiar passage. I learned that David is appealing for God's loving kindness and his compassion to blot out his transgressions -- which were extreme to me -- David committed adultery and murder.

This passage reminds me over and over that God loves us no matter what we do and God will forgive my sins. We confess our sins on a regular basis at Our Redeemer's and I am confident that God forgives me all my sins (God's grace).

I also believe this passage is about the Holy Spirit. I believe God is working on me continually through his Holy Spirit which dwells within me. He is always with me, guiding me day by day, which is awesome and comforting to me as well. I need to remain open to receiving God's Holy Spirit in my life. Sometimes I forget that He is with me and I am child of God. I get impatient and try to do things on my own -- I want results! However, I believe it is important to keep my heart humble and open to God's plan and purpose for my life. Thanks be to God!

-Nancy Oldenkamp



Day 29: Monday, March 19, 2018

<sup>4</sup> Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. <sup>5</sup> Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, <sup>6</sup> who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

<sup>7</sup> Now if the ministry of death, chiseled in letters on stone tablets, came in glory so that the people of Israel could not gaze at Moses' face because of the glory of his face, a glory now set aside, <sup>8</sup> how much more will the ministry of the Spirit come in glory? <sup>9</sup> For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, much more does the ministry of justification abound in glory! <sup>10</sup> Indeed, what once had glory has lost its glory because of the greater glory; <sup>11</sup> for if what was set aside came through glory, much more has the permanent come in glory!

-2 Corinthians 3: 4-11



2 Corinthians 3: 4-6 spoke to me. "Such confidence is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. The Spirit gives life."

"You yourselves are a letter from Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.....written on tablets of human hearts."

I have struggled with lack of confidence for much of my life. However, the more I read in my devotions that God is our strength and that it is not weakness to be dependent upon God, I am more accepting. After all, God is our creator, our strength, our constant companion. I may not have confidence in my own competence, but I do have confidence in the Holy Spirit and I do have confidence in God's love. And reading this particular

passage over and over again, I am encouraged that God has made us competent with his Holy Spirit and that his Holy Spirit gives us life. I am confident that we can be competent ministers of His love (to one another, to others, to all) through the power of the Holy Spirit.

-Lorna Joy Williams

## Day 30: Tuesday, March 20, 2018

<sup>14</sup> But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. <sup>15</sup> Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. <sup>16</sup> No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup> 'In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.

<sup>18</sup> Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.

<sup>19</sup> And I will show portents in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

<sup>20</sup> The sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

<sup>21</sup> Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

<sup>22</sup> "You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— <sup>23</sup> this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. <sup>24</sup> But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.

-Acts 2:14-24



Do we see and hear the Holy Spirit when it surrounds us? Paul said God poured out the Holy Spirit on men and woman. Will we listen to the Spirit in the voices of strangers, friends and family? As I read this passage I recall a number of times when these "God sightings" were so clear and refreshing; the words and caring of others reflected the light of God. I also wonder how many times my eyes and ears were tuned out and I missed the ever present love and comfort surrounding me, that I might have experienced, if I were more willing and present myself. This is a question worth asking.

-Ellen Arlington

## Day 31: Wednesday, March 21, 2018

<sup>34</sup> The crowd answered him, "We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" <sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. <sup>36</sup> While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you

*may become children of light.”*

*After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them. <sup>37</sup> Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him. <sup>38</sup> This was to fulfill the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah:*

*“Lord, who has believed our message,  
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”*

*<sup>39</sup> And so they could not believe, because Isaiah also said,*

*<sup>40</sup> “God has blinded their eyes  
and hardened their heart,  
so that they might not look with their eyes,  
and understand with their heart and turn—  
and I would heal them.”*

*<sup>41</sup> Isaiah said this because he saw the glory of the Messiah and spoke about the Messiah. <sup>42</sup> Nevertheless many, even of the authorities, believed in Jesus. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; <sup>43</sup> for they loved human glory more than the glory that comes from God.*

*<sup>44</sup> Then Jesus cried aloud: “Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in God who sent me. <sup>45</sup> And whoever sees me sees God who sent me. <sup>46</sup> I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness. <sup>47</sup> I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. <sup>48</sup> The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge, <sup>49</sup> for I have not spoken on my own, but God who sent me has indeed given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. <sup>50</sup> And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as God has told me.”*

*-John 12:34-50*



I have come as a light to shine in this dark world so that all who trust in me will no longer remain in the dark (John 12:46-47). I chose this passage from John because it spoke to me of the dark times we are all experiencing in so many different ways at this time. There is personal darkness, events that happen in our personal lives that we struggle to make sense of. We ask “why me”? We search to try and understand and find reason for things that happen. We ask what did I do to have this happen to me? How can this be a part of God’s plan?

Then there is the darkness that seems to have enveloped the world around us: Wars, poverty, illness, dishonesty, homelessness... crimes that seem to have no limit on how evil they are.

The answer I struggle to understand, but believe is what God is asking of us to accept, is to know it is always God’s plan and not our own. We must demonstrate the strength of our faith and know in our hearts that God asks us to be faithful to his works so that we are not mired in darkness but in the gift of everlasting life in the light.

-Jim Arnold

## Day 32: Thursday, March 22, 2018

<sup>1</sup> If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

<sup>6</sup> who, though being in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,  
<sup>7</sup> but emptied Christ's self,  
taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.  
And being found in human form,  
<sup>8</sup> Christ humbled Christ's self  
and became obedient to the point of death—  
even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God also highly exalted Jesus  
and gave Jesus the name  
that is above every name,  
<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
<sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

-Philippians 2:1-11



Reflection on verse 2: *Make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.*

The ah-ha moment came when I went to a Billy Graham Crusade at the Coliseum at the Seattle Center when I was sixteen years old. I knew at that moment that I was loved and Jesus had a plan for me.

My sense of escape was playing practical jokes at work. By displaying chocolate covered ants and bees as a snack before lunch. I know God has a sense of humor and would agree with me.

-Sandy Box

## Day 33: Friday, March 23, 2018

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup> for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for God's good pleasure.

<sup>14</sup> Do all things without murmuring and arguing, <sup>15</sup> so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world.

<sup>16</sup> It is by your holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. <sup>17</sup> But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith,

*I am glad and rejoice with all of you—<sup>18</sup> and in the same way you also must be glad and rejoice with me.*

*-Philippians 2:12-18*



In reflection of Philippians 2:12 It leads me to think about my Mondays at Our Redeemer's Lutheran church. I really enjoy Mondays at Our Redeemer's. It is a wonderful place to spend several hours healing from a rough Godless America. First, I am accompanied by a healthy women led quilting and sewing space, which is very encouraging, life giving, and an empowering part of my weekend to create small projects and quilts for Lutheran relief and personal projects, plus I am able to talk about my weeks challenges and what to look forward to as an aging Lutheran adult. Additionally, on this journey of being a new Lutheran, I am able to access the church to read more Lutheran literature, pray, and grow stronger in my faith . I leave Mondays feeling happier every week to go into a very stressful work environment and trying to fulfill some of my life goals. Thank you Our Redeemer Community members for providing a great space on Mondays for me.

-Victoria Gibson

### Day 34: Saturday, March 24, 2018

<sup>10</sup> Thus says the Lord: In this place of which you say, "It is a waste without human beings or animals," in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without inhabitants, human or animal, there shall once more be heard <sup>11</sup> the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank offerings to the house of the Lord:

*"Give thanks to the Lord of hosts,  
for the Lord is good,  
for the Lord's steadfast love endures forever!"*

*For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says the Lord.*

<sup>12</sup> Thus says the Lord of hosts: In this place that is waste, without human beings or animals, and in all its towns there shall again be pasture for shepherds resting their flocks. <sup>13</sup> In the towns of the hill country, of the Shephelah, and of the Negeb, in the land of Benjamin, the places around Jerusalem, and in the towns of Judah, flocks shall again pass under the hands of the one who counts them, says the Lord.

<sup>14</sup> The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>15</sup> In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David who shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>16</sup> In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

*-Jeremiah 33:10-16*



When reading this passage I am struck by the imagery of places of desolation. Places that were once thriving with life and now are deserts. But there is a promise; God's promise to us that there will be life again. Not just any life, but a life filled with justice and righteousness.

Do we find ourselves in desert places, dried up with nothing left to give? There is renewal that comes from God. Just when we think we can't make it through another mind numbing meeting, another temper tantrum from our child or an oversight by our spouse, we can take a long slow breath and know that God is there. Like the rain falling on the desert, God creates life from what seemed to be death. It is his promise to us. The seeds of justice and righteousness will prevail and grow into the kingdom of God for us.

-Pamela Altman



<sup>1</sup> Here is my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;  
I have put my spirit upon you;  
that you will bring forth justice to the nations.

<sup>2</sup> You will not cry or lift up your voice,  
or make it heard in the street;

<sup>3</sup> a bruised reed you will not break,  
and a dimly burning wick you will not quench;  
you will faithfully bring forth justice.

<sup>4</sup> You will not grow faint or be crushed  
until you have established justice in the earth;  
and the coastlands wait for your teaching.

<sup>5</sup> Thus says God, the Lord,  
who created the heavens and stretched them out,  
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,  
who gives breath to the people upon it  
and spirit to those who walk in it:

<sup>6</sup> 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,

<sup>7</sup> to open the eyes that are blind,  
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,  
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

<sup>8</sup> I am the Lord, that is my name;  
my glory I give to no other,  
nor my praise to idols.

<sup>9</sup> See, the former things have come to pass,  
and new things I now declare;  
before they spring forth,  
I tell you of them.

-Isaiah 42: 1-9



We live in a world that faces daunting problems: antibiotic – resistant superbugs, nuclear annihilation, over – population, rising sea levels, xenophobia, mass extinction, and climate change, to name a few. In our daily lives we encounter problems, challenges, and crises on a more personal level: broken relationships, addiction, depression and job insecurity, to name a few.

It can be very easy to close ourselves off from the problems of the world. It can be tempting to fall into the trap of thinking, “what can I possibly do? I’m just one person. How can I hope to make a difference?”

God does not let us off the hook that easy. God calls us to be a light to the nations. God calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Each of us in our own way is called to make a difference in the world God created.

We can make sandwiches to feed a homeless person we may never meet. We can participate in the annual Earthcare Retreat, knowing that we are setting an example of care for God’s creation. We can talk about our faith and our church with our friends. We can offer a gentle word to someone who is feeling down. We can say “salaam alaikum” to the woman wearing a hijab we encounter at the mall. We can warmly greet the visitors in search of church home.

We are the body of Christ, and we are called to be instruments of God’s peace, in the big things as well as the many small things and quiet moments that make up our lives.

-Stephanie Dykes

## Day 36: Tuesday, March 27, 2018

<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

<sup>20</sup> Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.

<sup>26</sup> Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup> God chose what is low and despised in the world,

*things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are,<sup>29</sup> so that no one might boast in the presence of God.  
<sup>30</sup> God is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption,<sup>31</sup> in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."*

-1 Corinthians 1:18-31



Albert Einstein reportedly said, "Common sense is the collection of prejudices acquired by the age of eighteen."

This verse spoke to me about the "scripting" that each of us learns and absorbs in our lives, and about how God's message offers a better way to move through the world. The scripting that we recite in our heads is often corrosive to ourselves and the world, yet we tend to frame it as "conventional wisdom" or "common sense." External scripting underlies ideas of our own value, success, and appearance. It informs how we value, or devalue, other living beings. The scripting that percolates into our consciousness from our earliest years formulates our prejudices and our fears.

Everyone has internal messaging, but sometimes it is easier to identify when it is articulated by someone else. When a loved one says she hates her body, when an acquaintance or public figure makes scornful statements about a whole group of people, when we make a purchase that we know harms the environment, but we rationalize it because the problem is too big to deal with— this is the outcome of following self-defeating "wisdom" handed down by the powerful.

With stillness and reflection, we can try to discern what the scripting of "conventional wisdom" or "common sense" is directing us to do and believe. We can whisper back, "why do I believe you?" Perhaps we can even reject the conventional wisdom that makes us abuse ourselves, others, and the earth.

Released (or even temporarily sheltered) from messages that put us in service to image, inequality, and consumerism, I think we will see God's intention more clearly. God might ask us to change our actions and relationships in ways that make us appear foolish, since we are acting against the scripts that are in control of our peers and our leaders. It might ask us to embrace people and actions that are out of step with what we know is expected of us. The words in verse 30, "righteousness and sanctification and redemption," sound strange to our ears. I think following God's wisdom, intentionally, would feel strange to our hands and feet and wallets.

This is hard work. I see this as a practice that will take my whole life, and the job of refocusing to God's message will never be finished.

-Latife Neu

## Day 37: Wednesday, March 28, 2018

*<sup>1</sup> 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, <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before Jesus endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken Jesus' seat at the right hand of the throne of God.*

*<sup>3</sup> Consider Jesus who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart.*

-Hebrews 12:1-3



Life throws us challenges of all varieties. I'm currently juggling entering my second year of the tenure process at a new school, teaching all classes that I've never taught before, co-teaching with a new partner, adding

committee work to my schedule, teaching a night class, and it's my second quarter teaching as a new mom. I've made some mistakes about communicating with students and with coworkers that caused others undue stress. I vacillate between feeling zero guilt about choosing to leave my daughter at daycare so that I can pursue a full-time career that I believe does good things for the community, and loads of guilt for not spending as much time with her and my husband as I would like. I'm stressed a lot of the time about my work load and balancing it all, but I'm also blessed to have this job. When things are going well at work, I feel I'm living out what I think it means to be a follower of Christ. And of course, I am super blessed to have my daughter and husband and so many other good things in my life!

This is the race I must run. Many of my students are running much crazier races than I am. We each have a path ahead that we have to go with obstacles. Sometimes we ourselves are those obstacles like the sin mentioned in the bible verse. Lucky for us, we have Jesus who has run that way before us already. We are never alone in the challenges we face. There is joy ahead if only we can remember the grace that God grants us. Imperfect and sinners we may be, but no matter how far we fall short, we are also loved. That's right, beloved, we are LOVED. The last line of the verse says to me, remember that Jesus has already done all of the heaving lifting. Don't give up! Remember you are loved.

-Marie Brissette

## Day 38: Maundy Thursday, March 29, 2018

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper <sup>3</sup> Jesus, knowing that God had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, <sup>4</sup> got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" <sup>7</sup> Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." <sup>8</sup> Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." <sup>9</sup> Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" <sup>10</sup> 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." <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

<sup>12</sup> 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?" <sup>13</sup> You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am.

<sup>14</sup> So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup> Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. <sup>17</sup> If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

<sup>31b</sup> Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. <sup>32</sup> If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. <sup>33</sup> 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.' <sup>34</sup> I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

-John 13:1-17, 31b-35



"The Servant Song" by Richard Gillard

Will you let me be your servant  
Let me be as Christ to you  
Pray that I might have the grace  
To let me be your servant too

We are pilgrims on the journey  
We are travelers on the road  
We are here to help each other  
Walk the mile and bear the load

I will hold the Christ light for you  
In the night time of your fear  
I will hold my hand out to you  
Speak the the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping  
When you laugh, I'll laugh with you  
I will share your joy and sorrow  
Till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven  
We shall find such harmony  
Born to all we've known together  
Of Christ's love and agony

submitted by: Katlin Dickinson-Laurence

## Day 39: Good Friday, March 30, 2018

<sup>1</sup> *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?*

<sup>2</sup> *O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;  
and by night, but find no rest.*

<sup>3</sup> *Yet you are holy,  
enthroned on the praises of Israel.*

<sup>4</sup> *In you our ancestors trusted;  
they trusted, and you delivered them.*

<sup>5</sup> *To you they cried, and were saved;  
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.*

<sup>6</sup> *But I am a worm, and not human;  
scorned by others, and despised by the people.*

<sup>7</sup> *All who see me mock at me;  
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;*

<sup>8</sup> *"Commit your cause to the Lord; let the Lord deliver—  
let the Lord rescue the one in whom the Lord delights!"*

<sup>9</sup> *Yet it was you who took me from the womb;  
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.*

<sup>10</sup> *On you I was cast from my birth,  
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.*

<sup>11</sup> *Do not be far from me,  
for trouble is near*

*and there is no one to help.*

<sup>12</sup> *Many bulls encircle me,  
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;  
<sup>13</sup> they open wide their mouths at me,  
like a ravening and roaring lion.*

<sup>14</sup> *I am poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint;  
my heart is like wax;  
it is melted within my breast;  
<sup>15</sup> my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,  
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;  
you lay me in the dust of death.*

<sup>16</sup> *For dogs are all around me;  
a company of evildoers encircles me.  
My hands and feet have shriveled;*

<sup>17</sup> *I can count all my bones.  
They stare and gloat over me;  
<sup>18</sup> they divide my clothes among themselves,  
and for my clothing they cast lots.*

<sup>19</sup> *But you, O Lord, do not be far away!  
O my help, come quickly to my aid!*

<sup>20</sup> *Deliver my soul from the sword,  
my life from the power of the dog!*

<sup>21</sup> *Save me from the mouth of the lion!*

*From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.*

<sup>22</sup> *I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:*

<sup>23</sup> *You who fear the Lord, praise the Lord!  
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify the Lord;  
stand in awe of the Lord, all you offspring of Israel!*

<sup>24</sup> *For the Lord did not despise or abhor  
the affliction of the afflicted;  
the Lord did not hide the Lord's face from me,  
but heard when I cried to the Lord.*

<sup>25</sup> *From you comes my praise in the great congregation;  
my vows I will pay before those who fear the Lord.*

<sup>26</sup> *The poor shall eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek the Lord shall praise the Lord.  
May your hearts live forever!*

<sup>27</sup> *All the ends of the earth shall remember  
and turn to the Lord;  
and all the families of the nations  
shall worship before the Lord.*

<sup>28</sup> *For dominion belongs to the Lord,  
and the Lord rules over the nations.*

<sup>29</sup> *To the Lord, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;  
before the Lord shall bow all who go down to the dust,*

*and I shall live for the Lord.  
30 Posterity will serve the Lord;  
future generations will be told about the Lord,  
31 and proclaim the Lord's deliverance to a people yet unborn,  
saying that the Lord has done it.*

*-Psalm 22*



### "The Black Telephone"

When I was a little kid, my Grandpa was my pastor. He was my storyteller and my wisdom-giver. He made me laugh and he encouraged me to sing and he always made me feel safe. On Good Friday, when I was eight years old, my Grandpa suffered a heart attack and was in critical condition in a hospital.

We hurried to their home to await news. I was told that Grandma would call when she knew anything. My grandparents' black phone lived in their kitchen. For some reason, everyone else stayed in the living room, but I went to the kitchen and sat on the floor, all alone, next to that phone. I stared at it and it did nothing. I can picture it vividly – taking up all my vision and remaining coldly silent. And I picture my very young self – gripped with fear for the first time in my life.

And when the telephone finally rang, Grandma said that Grandpa should be okay. The relief rushed through me. But before that call, I sank deep into Good Friday. Good Friday became personal. I was a little kid dwelling in thoughts of death and what loss would feel like.

Every Good Friday, I remember my Grandpa. The words that ring true from this psalm, chosen for today, are found in verse 11: "Do not be far from me." I pray this to God as I ponder His Son's death. And I look back and remember my childhood prayer that the black telephone would ring and bring news of life.

-Karen Lee

## Day 40: Holy Saturday, March 31, 2018

*14 Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

*7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; 9 and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*

*-Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9*



## A Prayer of Approach

You are the bread of life;

I give thanks for the bread, the new loaves of bread.

You are the water of life;

I give thanks for the bread, the soft bread of my heart.

You are the grain, the mighty seed;

I give thanks for the bread, the smooth bread of milled grains.

You are the oil, the oil of gladness;

I give thanks for the bread, the rich bread of pressed grains.

You are the egg, the binder of souls;

I give thanks for the bread, the thick bread of barren womb.

You are the heat, the consuming fire;

I give thanks for the bread, the crusty bread of the oven.

You are the breath, the rising voices of the dying;

I give thanks for the bread, the risen and leavened.

For you have appointed to me

Pumps

Millstones

Presses

Beaters

Ovens

Fires

And the new loaves of bread.

-Harold Laurence

Easter, April 1, 2018



*He's Risen! He's Risen Indeed!  
Alleluia!*

**our**  
**redeemer's**  
LUTHERAN • BALLARD

