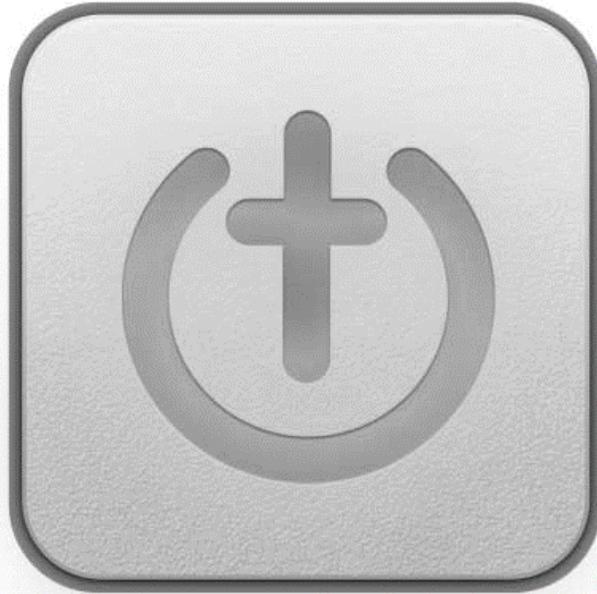


Good Shepherd
LUTHERAN CHURCH



**SPIRITUAL
REBOOT**

BUILDING RESILIENCY FOR A LIFE OF FAITH

LENTEN GUIDEBOOK

A 40 Day Spiritual Reboot

Good Shepherd is a congregation of welcome, forgiveness, and service in response to God's love and grace. To do this well we must always find ourselves around the cross; the center of our life together. Through our worship, we seek to deepen our spiritual and material connections to God and each other. The season of Lent offers us a 40-day opportunity to push ourselves beyond what we think of as our limits in ways that can strengthen us both individually and as God's church. This Lenten season, we will walk through a 40-day spiritual "reboot" as we practice more intentionality around our worship life and how our faith in God connects and enlivens our daily lives.

To discover more visit
gslcwi.com/lent

The Text

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. ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. ¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance. ¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. ¹⁶ For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. ¹⁷ The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. ¹⁸ Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, ¹⁹ then you will delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

PSALM 51

Reflection

This is a question you should think about this text – it could also be a suggestion as you are thinking As Lent begins, we hear Psalm 51 as both inspiration and challenge. How does having a clean heart change things for you?

When you are being challenged the most in your faith, what sustains your hope in God?

The Text

The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, ²“Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.” ³So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across. ⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” ⁵And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

⁶When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: “By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. ⁸Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. ⁹Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish.”

¹⁰When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

JONAH 3:1-10

Reflection

The story of Jonah describes someone who knows the faith and runs from God’s call and the people of Ninevah who don’t know God yet and change their ways when they discover faith. Is spiritual resilience easier when you grew up in the faith or if you are new to the good news? How come?

In verse 9-10, God’s mind is changed. How do you feel about God’s mind being changed? Does it make you uneasy or give you hope?

The Text

But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. ²He prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. ³And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” ⁴And the Lord said, “Is it right for you to be angry?” ⁵Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city. ⁶The Lord God appointed a bush,^[a] and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. ⁷But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. ⁸When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, “It is better for me to die than to live.”⁹ But God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?” And he said, “Yes, angry enough to die.” ¹⁰Then the Lord said, “You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?”

JONAH 4:1-11

Reflection

Jonah names God’s loving and gracious nature, but still doesn’t appreciate this same mercy for those he hates. Can we truly delight in God’s grace for other people?

When have you been angry with God?

The Text

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”² He called a child, whom he put among them,³ and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴ Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.⁵ Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

⁶ “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.⁷ Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes!

MATTHEW 18:1-7

Reflection

When do we become stumbling blocks to ourselves or others?

When have you welcomed someone who others might not into the Christian faith?

The Text

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

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

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶saying 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.’ ”

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

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

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

¹¹Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

MATTHEW 4:1-11

Reflection

Jesus is tempted by Satan to use God’s power as a test. How are we tempted to test God?

What Word of God is your *bread* when you are feeling tempted to sin?

Take note this week of the things in your life you would label “temptations”- whether it is a bad habit, questioning your self-worth, judging others or anything that draws you away from God.

The Text

¹⁰ It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹ For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, ¹² saying, “I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.” ¹³ And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again, “Here am I and the children whom God has given me.”

¹⁴ Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. ¹⁶ For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters^[1] in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

HEBREWS 2:10-18

Reflection

Jesus became human to share in the temptation, joy and suffering of human life. How does knowing Jesus was tempted to sin help you in your temptations? In what ways do you support your siblings in faith?

The Text

Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have produced a man with the help of the Lord.”² Next she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground.³ In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground,⁴ and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering,⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.⁶ The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen?⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.”⁸ Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let us go out to the field.” And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him.⁹ Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?”¹⁰ And the Lord said, “What have you done? Listen; your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground!¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.¹² When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.”¹³ Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is greater than I can bear!¹⁴ Today you have driven me away from the soil, and I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and anyone who meets me may kill me.”¹⁵ Then the Lord said to him, “Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance.” And the Lord put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him.¹⁶ Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

GENESIS 4:1-16

Reflection

Cain and Abel continues to be a story of jealousy that we can relate to even now. Where in your life have you felt unappreciated? How did that affect your faith life?

What do you think about God’s mercy to Cain even after he killed his brother?

The Text

“Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven. ¹²What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.

MATTHEW 18:10-14

Reflection

Even when we stray, even when we are tempted, God seeks us out with love and compassion. What do you want to say to God for this gift of grace?

Do you know anyone who is lost? How might you reach out to them with the good news that they aren't alone?

The Text

- ¹I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
- ²My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.
- ³He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
- ⁴He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- ⁵The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
- ⁶The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.
- ⁷The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
- ⁸The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

PSALM 121

Reflection

Our help comes from God, but sometimes we put our faith instead in the things of this world. Where in your life do you struggle with this? Stop for a moment and think about God creating everything in heaven and on earth. What things are you especially thankful that God created?

WEEK TWO | DAY 10 | FRIDAY, MARCH 6

The Text

¹⁸Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity
and passing over the transgression
of the remnant of your possession?

He does not retain his anger forever,
because he delights in showing clemency.

¹⁹He will again have compassion upon us;
he will tread our iniquities under foot.

You will cast all our sins
into the depths of the sea.

²⁰You will show faithfulness to Jacob
and unswerving loyalty to Abraham,
as you have sworn to our ancestors
from the days of old.

MICAH 7:18-20

Reflection

Can you picture God trampling on our sins or throwing them into the depth of the sea?
How would those actions make you feel?

Take time to confess your sins to God, then read the passage again.

The Text

¹After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ²A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death. ³When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, “He is worthy of having you do this for him, ⁵for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us.” ⁶And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; ⁷therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. ⁸For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and the slave does it.” ⁹When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.” ¹⁰When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

LUKE 7:1-10

Reflection

Have you ever thought about being “worthy” in God’s eyes? What makes the centurion worthy?

Did you take note of any temptations in your life this week (as suggested in the Sunday, March 1)?

The Text

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ²He 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.” ³Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” ⁴Nicodemus 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?” ⁵Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ ⁸The 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.” ⁹Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹“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. ¹²If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

JOHN 3:17

Reflection

Where in your life are you searching and waiting for rebirth. Where is our world in need of resurrection? This week practice praying for all the “where’s” in your life today.

The Text

¹The LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ²I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

^{4a}So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him.

GENESIS 12:1-4a

Reflection

We frequently find ourselves in times of transition, moving to new housing, employment, or phases of life (college, marriage, divorce, parenthood, retirement, downsizing). When God called Abram and Sarai to make a new start in a new land, it was for the sake of becoming a blessing for all the families of the earth. Today reflect on whose needs you are taking into consideration during your times of transition. If God also calls us to be a blessing to all families, not just our own, we must reflect on how our choices impact our world: for example – Will this housing move contribute to gentrification? How does this company impact the world for good or ill? What are our children learning as a result of our actions?

The Text

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” ²¹And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” ²²Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” ²³He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’” as the prophet Isaiah said.

JOHN 1:19-23

Reflection

Harriet Tubman died on this day in 1913. Born into slavery, she helped nearly 300 enslaved people escape to freedom. After the Civil War, her home in Auburn, New York, became a center for women’s rights and served the aged and poor. Sojourner Truth, also born into slavery, died on this day in 1883. After slavery was abolished in New York in 1827, she discerned a call to become a preacher. She became a powerful speaker against slavery and advocated for women’s rights. Our nation’s history is littered with the stories of individuals, who by strength of faith, made an enormous difference for the marginalized people of their time. Where is God calling you to act and for whom? Are you discerning a new call in your life of faith? Harriet Tubman saved 300 people but started with just one. Is there a person in your life that needs your strength of faith today? Who is that person that shared their strength with you? God places people in our lives and calls us to be that person for others.

The Text

- ¹I lift up my eyes | to the hills;
from where is my | help to come?
- ²**My help comes | from the LORD,
the maker of heav- | en and earth.**
- ³The LORD will not let your | foot be moved
nor will the one who watches over you | fall asleep.
- ⁴**Behold, the keep- | er of Israel
will neither slum- | ber nor sleep; R**
- ⁵the LORD watches | over you;
the LORD is your shade at | your right hand;
- ⁶**the sun will not strike | you by day,
nor the | moon by night.**
- ⁷The LORD will preserve you | from all evil
and will | keep your life.
- ⁸**The LORD will watch over your going out and your | coming in,
from this time forth for- | evermore.**

PSALM 121

Reflection

What would you do today if failure was not an option?

If you lift your eyes to look at the world you encounter today, what do you see?

Pray for God's protection in all the places and dark corners that hide in your life during this season.

The Text

²⁶While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” ²⁷Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; ²⁸for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” ³⁰When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

MATTHEW 26:26-30

Reflection

Verse 30 is often left out of our Sunday readings on this text, but the last supper ended with the singing of a hymn. On this day in 604, Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome died. Because of his work to establish a school to train church musicians, Gregorian Chant is named in his honor. What is your favorite hymn and why? Today you are invited to sing that hymn. Open a hymnal or find a version online, whichever you prefer and sing to the lord. If you are not familiar with Gregorian Chant check out YouTube for examples. Here is a link to a channel providing 3 hours of healing music to enhance your prayer or meditations on this day in Lent, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-hrBhA4XkM>

The Text

¹What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? ²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” ⁴Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. ⁵But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

¹³For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

¹⁶For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, ¹⁷as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”)—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

ROMANS 4:1-5, 13-17

Reflection

In modern society we often talk about our need to earn someone’s trust, or how we’ve lost trust in someone because of their actions. But in the person of Abraham we discover that a right relationship with God does not involve earning a reward from God but entails trusting God’s promises.

How does trust play a role in your faith? Where do you trust God emphatically and where do you doubt? Write down your *Trusts* and *Doubts* on a sheet of paper. Are there similarities or parallels to other places in your life? What is one area, larger or small that you can hand over to God and pray for the strength and the faith to trust God will carry that weight for you?

The Text

⁴ Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— ² although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. ³ So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

⁴ Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

JOHN 4:1-6

Reflection

Jesus rested. It's not an image or part of this story we are used to focusing on. Jesus did a lot of adventures in his ministry, but rested? As we come to the end of the second week in the season of Lent. In the midst of our Spiritual Reboot, maybe it's time for a reboot of the reboot. Can you give yourself 5 or 10 minutes today to sit down and rest? When you do sit down, read through Chapter 4 of John's gospel and the encounter Jesus has with the Samaritan woman at the well. Often times it is in our moments of rest, when we stop and pause for a moment that we open ourselves up to encounter the divine. If your Lenten journey has gotten off track, use this time unapologetically as a course correction.

The Text

¹Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³ And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. ⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹ But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

ROMANS 5:1-11

Reflection

Can you think of how you've seen suffering lead to endurance, endurance to character and character to hope?

It's rare enough that someone would die for a righteous person – but Paul highlights the fact that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. How does this framing shape how you look at your relationship with Jesus?

The Text

¹Sing aloud to God our strength;
shout for joy to the God of Jacob.
²Raise a song, sound the tambourine,
the sweet lyre with the harp.
³Blow the trumpet at the new moon,
at the full moon, on our festal day.
⁴For it is a statute for Israel,
an ordinance of the God of Jacob.
⁵He made it a decree in Joseph,
when he went out over the land of
Egypt. I hear a voice I had not known:
⁶“I relieved your shoulder of the
burden; your hands were freed from the
basket. ⁷In distress you called, and I
rescued you; I answered you in the
secret place of thunder; I tested you at
the waters of Meribah. *Selah*
⁸Hear, O my people, while I admonish
you; O Israel, if you would but listen to
me! ⁹There shall be no strange god
among you;

you shall not bow down to a foreign
god. ¹⁰I am the Lord your God,
who brought you up out of the land of
Egypt. Open your mouth wide and I will
fill it. ¹¹“But my people did not listen to
my voice;
Israel would not submit to me.
¹²So I gave them over to their stubborn
hearts, to follow their own counsels.
¹³O that my people would listen to me,
that Israel would walk in my ways!
¹⁴Then I would quickly subdue their
enemies, and turn my hand against
their foes.
¹⁵Those who hate the Lord would cringe
before him, and their doom would last
forever.
¹⁶I would feed you with the finest of the
wheat, and with honey from the rock I
would satisfy you.”

PSALM 81

Reflection

What do you make of the fact that God is described as “giving them over” to their stubborn hearts – to “follow their own counsels”?

This Psalm closes with promises of abundance – how have you experienced this abundance from God? Take time to give thanks for this abundant life.

The Text

¹I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-4

Reflection

When you read the stories of the new and old testament – do you see your story as part of the same continuous story? Why or why not?

As Christians, we profess Christ along with believers from a range of many different denominations. What's one thing you can do to increase unity in the body of Christ this Lenten season?

The Text

⁴Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. ⁵Thus says the Lord:

What wrong did your ancestors find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthless things, and became worthless themselves?

⁶They did not say, “Where is the Lord who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, in a land of drought and deep darkness, in a land that no one passes through, where no one lives?”

⁷I brought you into a plentiful land to eat its fruits and its good things. But when you entered you defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination. ⁸The priests did not say, “Where is the Lord?” Those who handle the law did not know me; the rulers transgressed against me; the prophets prophesied by Baal, and went after things that do not profit.

⁹Therefore once more I accuse you, says the Lord, and I accuse your children’s children.

¹⁰Cross to the coasts of Cyprus and look, send to Kedar and examine with care; see if there has ever been such a thing.

¹¹Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for something that does not profit.

¹²Be appalled, O heavens, at this, be shocked, be utterly desolate, says the Lord,

¹³for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and dug out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that can hold no water.

JEREMIAH 2:4-13

Reflection

Has this Lenten season brought any “worthless” things into focus for what they really are? What “broken cisterns” incapable of holding water need to be replaced?

The Text

²⁵ So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. ²⁶ Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and do not make room for the devil. ²⁸ Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. ²⁹ Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. ³¹ Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, ³² and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

EPHESIANS 4:25-32

Reflection

Imagine if our words were made up of only that which was useful for building up. Who is one person you can “build up” with words of encouragement this week?

We read we are to forgive as Christ has forgiven us – no small task! If there is a journey of forgiveness you are currently on – what is a next step you can take this Lenten season?

The Text

¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, ²and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ³But fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed, must not even be mentioned among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴Entirely out of place is obscene, silly, and vulgar talk; but instead, let there be thanksgiving. ⁵Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷Therefore do not be associated with them. ⁸For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light— ⁹for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.

EPHESIANS 5:1-9

Reflection

What do you think of the contrast between dark and light highlighted here?

What makes it hard to live as children of light?

The Text

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

JOHN 1:1-9

Reflection

The words “All” and “Everyone” feature prominently in this passage – what do you think they highlight?

The Text

The Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.” ²Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.” And the Lord said, “Take a heifer with you, and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’” ³Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.” ⁴Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, “Do you come peaceably?” ⁵He said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. ⁶When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is now before the Lord.” ⁷But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” ⁸Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” ⁹Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” ¹⁰Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen any of these.” ¹¹Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.” ¹²He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, “Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.” ¹³Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

1 SAMUEL 16:1-13

Reflection

It’s all too easy to make judgements about someone entirely on outward appearance. We read that the Lord looks to the heart instead. Who in your life have you perhaps disregarded or written off based only on outward appearances? Pray for wisdom to look at these relationships with renewed vision.

The Text

9 Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us; we wait for light, and lo! there is darkness; and for brightness, but we walk in gloom. 10 We grope like the blind along a wall, groping like those who have no eyes; we stumble at noon as in the twilight, among the vigorous as though we were dead. 11 We all growl like bears; like doves we moan mournfully. We wait for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us. 12 For our transgressions before you are many, and our sins testify against us. Our transgressions indeed are with us and we know our iniquities: 13 transgressing, and denying the Lord, and turning away from following our God, talking oppression and revolt, conceiving lying words and uttering them from the heart. 14 Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands at a distance; for truth stumbles in the public square, and uprightness cannot enter. 15 Truth is lacking, and whoever turns from evil is despoiled. The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. 16 He saw that there was no one, and was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm brought him victory, and his righteousness upheld him. 17 He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in fury as in a mantle. 18 According to their deeds, so will he repay; wrath to his adversaries, requital to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render requital. 19 So those in the west shall fear the name of the Lord, and those in the east, his glory; for he will come like a pent-up stream that the wind of the Lord drives on.

ISAIAH 59:9-19

Reflection

In this passage there is a strong sense of lament – it's clear that not everything is right in the world and there seems to be no hope. But then we read that the Lord is displeased. As imitators of Christ – how are we displeased with the injustice we see in our world?

The Text

9 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. 11 May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

Reflection

How does it feel when you know that someone has been praying for you over the course of a long period of time? What about to *be* praying for someone else? Is there a group or individual you can dedicate time to pray for throughout the rest of the Lenten season?

The Text

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

LUKE 1:26-38

Reflection

What characteristics/traits do you notice about Mary that come through the conversation with the angel Gabriel?

The Text

1 Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

2 Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

3 If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?

4 But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.

5 I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;

6 my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.

7 O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is
great power to redeem.

8 It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

PSALM 130

Reflection

Can you think of a time when you have been eagerly waiting on God? What practices, thoughts and actions were a part of that waiting? What does this passage reveal about what waiting on the Lord looks like?

The Text

Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: “Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?” ¹¹ Say to them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel? ¹² And you, mortal, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not save them when they transgress; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, it shall not make them stumble when they turn from their wickedness; and the righteous shall not be able to live by their righteousness when they sin. ¹³ Though I say to the righteous that they shall surely live, yet if they trust in their righteousness and commit iniquity, none of their righteous deeds shall be remembered; but in the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. ¹⁴ Again, though I say to the wicked, “You shall surely die,” yet if they turn from their sin and do what is lawful and right— ¹⁵ if the wicked restore the pledge, give back what they have taken by robbery, and walk in the statutes of life, committing no iniquity—they shall surely live, they shall not die. ¹⁶ None of the sins that they have committed shall be remembered against them; they have done what is lawful and right, they shall surely live.

EZEKIEL 33:10-16

Reflection

In verse eleven it is made clear that God’s desire is not for the death of the wicked but instead for repentance for all people. What about God’s heart is revealed in this passage?

The Text

⁴⁴Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

⁵⁰Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵²And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

LUKE 24:44-53

Reflection

Try and place yourself in the position of the disciples hearing this from Jesus. How would you feel? Encouraged? Confused?

The Text

¹Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” ⁴But when Jesus heard it, he said, “This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” ⁵Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

⁷Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” ⁸The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?” ⁹Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. ¹⁰But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.” ¹¹After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.” ¹²The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.” ¹³Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” ¹⁶Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

JOHN 1:1-16

Reflection

“For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe.” Like Lazarus, our story as God’s children does not end in death, but rather ends in the glory of God’s resurrection promise. Is there a time in your life that you felt God’s absence in your life? When you called like the sisters, but received no response? We needn’t wait until death to be awakened. What part of your life, or your faith can awaken in response to this text? Knowing that God’s response does not always follow our requested timelines?

The Text

¹⁷When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” ²³Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” ²⁵Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” ²⁷She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

JOHN 11:17-27

Reflection

I believe! Two of the most important words spoken in the Bible. You are invited on this first Monday in the 5th week of Lent to sit and ponder these words. Find a quiet place or time throughout your day and sit with this phrase, “I believe” for 10 minutes. Keep it in your thoughts and let it be your focus. If your mind drifts away return to this phrase, “I believe.” Finish by praying for God to strengthen your belief in all God’s promises found in this life and the life to come.

The Text

²⁸When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” ²⁹And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³²When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” ³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵Jesus began to weep. ³⁶So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” ³⁷But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

JOHN 11:28-37

Reflection

If only you had been here Lord. What do we do with unanswered prayers? Why didn't God answer my prayer? If God is God, why is there pain and suffering in the world? These are questions we've asked ourselves or heard from others when sharing our faith. And amid them all, Jesus weeps. A beautiful savior amid a broken world.

We worship a God who knows what it is to experience pain, and loss, and betrayal. Each Lent we are asked to hand these places in our lives over to the God we experience through the life of Jesus and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. What pain, or loss, or betrayal can you hand to God today to help carry your burden. A life of faith is not a life void of pain, but a life filled with presence. May the presence of God's Spirit support you in your Lenten journey.

The Text

³⁸Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

⁴⁵Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

JOHN 11:38-45

Reflection

Come out! Often as a society we kid ourselves in thinking that our LGBTQIA+ brothers and sisters are the only ones faced with the choice and challenge to "come out" to an often-unforgiving society. Truth is we all have things we hide in the closets of our hearts and minds. But we kid ourselves if we believe anything is hidden from God. God knows you, knows your gifts and knows your faults... all of them. As a new month begins in this season of Lent signs of new life are springing up around us. Where can you release the closeted sins of your heart and soul and give them to God? You are loved, you are valued, you are God's child, so go in peace today and share the understanding you yourself have found at the foot of the cross.

The Text

⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

ROMANS 8:6-11

Reflection

The Apostle Paul defined spirituality as living in the reality of the Holy Spirit. Sin is a powerful force in our lives. We pray to God for strength and wisdom, for guidance and protection, but then go out into the world as if we were alone. The Holy Spirit is promised to be with us, as the driving force behind our actions and values. Remember the presence of the Spirit in your life today. Write SPIRIT on your hand or put it on a note and stick it in your pocket and look for opportunities to call on God's Spirit for support and guidance throughout your day. As we approach Holy Week, together we proclaim as God's people come Holy Spirit!

The Text

⁷So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. ⁹Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” ¹⁰I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

EZEKIEL 37:1-14

Reflection

A great multitude? Sometimes when we look at our world. We don't see new life standing up. Instead we see division and divide that lays waste to a vast multitude who are stigmatized, isolated or systemically cut out of society and culture. Each voice in our world matters. Each breath has the power to create sinews and flesh and skin. Each breath has the power to rattle the bones of oppressors and set captives free. What is one ministry or movement you are passionate about and why? Share that ministry or movement with one person today. Tell them your story and ask them to share theirs.

The Text

¹Out | of the depths

I cry to | you, O LORD;

²**O LORD, | hear my voice!**

Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my | supplication.

³If you were to keep watch | over sins,

O LORD, | who could stand?

⁴**Yet with you | is forgiveness,**

in order that you | may be feared. R

⁵I wait for you, O LORD; | my soul waits;

in your word | is my hope.

⁶**My soul waits for the Lord more than those who keep
watch | for the morning,**

more than those who keep watch | for the morning.

⁷O Israel, wait for the LORD, for with the LORD there is | steadfast
love;

with the LORD there is plen- | teous redemption.

⁸**For the LORD shall | redeem Israel**

from | all their sins.

PSALM 130

Reflection

Our Lenten journey reaches a pivotal moment today as we approach the gates of Jerusalem and Palm Sunday. Holy Week is upon us. Wait for the Lord. Open your soul to hear God's word throughout the week ahead. Keep a copy of Psalm 130 with you today or pull it up on your phone. During the dozens of times throughout the day you reach for your phone and the noise it contains, turn instead to Psalm 130. Write it on your heart, wait for the Lord.

The Text

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, just say this, ‘The Lord needs them.’ And he will send them immediately.” ⁴This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, ⁵“Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” ⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” ¹¹The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

MATTHEW 21:1-11

Reflection

Jesus, Son of David, Son of Man, King of Kings, arrives in Jerusalem... on a donkey. This display of power present in humility is the foundation of all Christian spiritual practice. All we have heard and done over these past weeks was in preparation for this Holiest of Weeks. How do you practice humility?

The Text

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ²There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ³Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵“Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?” ⁶(He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) ⁷Jesus said, “Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.” ⁹When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, ¹¹since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.

JOHN 12:1-11

Reflection

Again, an astounding reversal of expectations. Rather than prudently saving for a rainy day, Mary anoints Jesus' feet with a pound of “costly nard”. (\$54,000 today!) Today is the day that God has given you to serve extravagantly.

The Text

¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

²⁰ 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? ²¹ 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. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³ but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.

²⁶ 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. ²⁷ 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; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no one might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ in order that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-31

Reflection

In yet another reversal Paul pronounces the message of the cross not as all-powerful but as foolishness to the wise and discerning. It seems we are to take God’s call for what it is: a demand for immediate action and trust! Thankfully, God also gives us the gift of faith to make this possible... a reminder that we can do nothing without Him not even believe!

The Text

⁴The Lord God has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens—
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.

⁵The Lord God has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward.

⁶I gave my back to those who struck
me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled
out the beard;
I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.

⁷The Lord God helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to
shame;

⁸ he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?

Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.

⁹It is the Lord God who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?
All of them will wear out like a garment;
the moth will eat them up.

ISAIAH 50: 4-9a

Reflection

This week we are reminded that Jesus' victory comes wrapped in death on the cross. God reminds us in the words of the prophet: not even death has the final say. How might we live our lives in this confidence?

The Text

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

¹²After 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?" ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

¹When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³Little 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.'³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

JOHN 13: 1-17, 31-35

Reflection

In a penultimate act of service and humility, Jesus pauses at a meal to wash His disciples' feet. Here is the King of Kings, kneeling on the ground, touching another person's feet to wash them. Jesus' journey towards the cross is, again and again, wrapped in humility and service to those he loves. How far does our love extend?

HOLY WEEK | DAY 39 | FRIDAY, APRIL 10

¹My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? ²O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. ³Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. ⁴In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. ⁵To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame. ⁶But I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people. ⁷All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me, they shake their heads; ⁸“Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver—let him rescue the one in whom he delights!” ⁹Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother’s breast. ¹⁰On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God. ¹¹Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. ¹²Many bulls encircle me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me; ¹³they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. ¹⁴I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; ¹⁵my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. ¹⁶For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me. My hands and feet have shriveled; ¹⁷I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me; ¹⁸they divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots. ¹⁹But you, O Lord, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid! ²⁰Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog! ²¹Save me from the mouth of the lion! From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me. ²²I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: ²³You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! ²⁴For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him. ²⁵From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him. ²⁶The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the Lord. May your hearts live forever! ²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. ²⁸For dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations. ²⁹To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him. ³⁰Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord, ³¹and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it. **PSALM 22**

Reflection

The words of the Psalmist are repeated by Jesus hanging on the cross. Yes, even the Son of God cried out in pain, sorrow, and isolation. It is more telling that Jesus knew these words by heart. Perhaps this journey has helped us take the words of Scripture off the page and place them in our hearts.

The Text

³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For whoever has died is freed from sin. ⁸But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

ROMANS 6:3-11

Reflection

These are the words clergy say at the beginning of Lutheran funeral services. A reminder that through our adoption into God's family through our baptism we have also received Christ's inheritance, eternal life. It is the silence that precedes the Easter Good News that becomes our spiritual practice for today. Try sitting in silence for 30 minutes and in those moments you find your mind wandering let your focus return to silence using these words: "God, even in the silence, help me know Your presence."