



2025 Lenten Devotional

Remembering



Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025

ADDITION BY SUBTRACTION

READ: Mark 1:1-13

OPENING PRAYER: Lord, open my heart during this season of Lent. I pray that you reveal yourself to your people in a mighty way as we await the celebration of Easter. Amen.

MEDITATION: Mark begins his gospel with an account of John the Baptist, the messenger who proclaimed a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. John was also well known, had a large following, and had his own disciples. Mark 1:5 says, "All the country of Judea and Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him." John was relevant, respected, admired, sought after, and authoritative. John had a voice and an audience.

Many of us strive to have the acclaim John the Baptist did. We want to be liked, heard, and respected. John had all these things, yet he used them to point to one person: Jesus Christ. Nothing John did pointed to how great he was because John made sure people knew that "there is one who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie." (Mark 1:7)

John didn't stop being great. John still retained all the above attributes, yet John's true greatness was found in the way he used all his gifts to point to Jesus Christ. Consider the talents and gifts God has given you and ask yourself this: Am I using my awesomeness for my glory or God's?

CLOSING PRAYER: I want to give you the glory and honor, Jesus. Help me glorify you in all I do so that my actions point solely to you and no one else. Use me, mold me, and shape me into your likeness. Amen.

Pastor Brad Epperson

From the 2013 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Thursday, March 6, 2025

JESUS STARTS HIS MINISTRY

READ: Mark 1:14-45

OPENING PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, as we begin devotions today, we are thankful for all your many blessings. Thank you for your gift of understanding your word. Help us to focus on the meaning of these words. Amen.

MEDITATION: It was one of those stormy NW weekends – downpours, windy, cold and dark. Several times I had been drenched as I went to and from church.

Then Monday morning, as I started my prayer and worship time, there was still only gloom and rain. As I sat praying, a patch of sky – very small – appeared over the west and the Olympic Mountains could be seen with fresh new snow.

As I watched, a small flight of cormorants flew over the water enjoying the moment as well.

I could not but think of the psalmist and say with him, “What is man that thou art mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?”

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear God, we are reading about the beginning of Jesus’ ministry to those who would listen to God’s word. May we be faithful followers like Andrew, Simon, James, and John, who dropped their nets and followed him without question.

During this Lenten season, may we focus on the ministry of Jesus, on God’s great gift and on God’s plan for our lives. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

In Memory of Betty Coates
who passed away in 2017

From the 2013 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Friday, March 7, 2025

FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND AND MORE

READ: Mark 6:30-44

PRAYER: Father in Heaven, we ask your blessing as we come again to your word, that we may understand and receive it according to your will. We come with repentance and reconciliation in our hearts. Amen.

MEDITATION: As I was reflecting on one of the most famous and most unbelievable miracles in Jesus' short ministry, "feeding the five thousand", it occurred to me that I had read that story before. Mark and Matthew both include not one, but two accounts of miraculous feedings. But Luke and John also have their own accounts of the feeding of the five thousand.

When I studied the part of the gospel, before the feeding episode, I confess that I am also moved by the accounts of healings, a resurrection, removal of demons, etc. that precede the miracle meal. What a joy for all of us to re-read the goings on before the feeding, and of course the miracle meal itself.

The brief accounts of these episodes that took place during the short time during which Jesus preached and taught on earth have been left by the apostles and disciples who were there. They saw the miracles, including the blessing of a minimal amount of food into an adequate meal for a multitude of people who could not get enough of what Jesus was saying and doing. It is certainly easy to assume that being in Jesus' presence was worth any effort, any sacrifice. Accounts like this one are clues for us that sharing his teaching is well worth our time and effort. Today we frequently use the word "miracles" in describing "life episodes", but we know they pale by comparison (if, indeed, these "life episodes" are miracles at all).

CLOSING PRAYER: Our Father, we pray that following your ministry devoutly, our small fishes and loaves, will become bounteous for those who need. Amen

In Memory of Mary K. Long
who passed away in 2015

From the 2013 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Saturday, March 8, 2025

JESUS WALKS ON WATER

READ: Mark 6:45-56

PRAYER: Almighty God open our eyes and hearts that we may truly recognize you in the many ways you choose to reveal yourself to us. Amen.

MEDITATION: After Jesus finished praying, he came back to shore and noticed that the boat was adrift and the disciples were struggling with their oars to stay afloat. The Sea of Galilee is 696 feet (21 meters) below sea level, resulting in violent downdrafts and sudden windstorms. Jesus, seeing their need begins to walk on the water towards them. He meant to pass by them not so that they would fail to see him (in which case he would have stayed farther away from them), but so that they would see him “pass by”, walking on water, thus giving visible evidence of his deity (and thus answering the question they asked after he stilled the sea in Mark 4:41: “Who is this?”).

The disciples are terrified by what appears to be a ghost. Popular Jewish superstition held that the appearance of spirits during the night brought disaster. Seeing their terror, Jesus calms their troubled hearts by identifying himself, saying, “It is I.” When Jesus calmed the storm earlier in (Mark 4:40) the disciples had struggled with faith versus fear. Now they struggle with faith versus fear plus hard-heartedness. Multiplying the loaves should have demonstrated Jesus’ true identity to them, but neither that miracle nor the appearance of Jesus on the water could open their hearts to the reality of his divine nature.

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord when we are afraid or lack faith, help us to look a little closer and listen a bit harder so we too may hear your voice. “It is I.” Amen.

In Memory of Joan Fraser
who passed away in 2015

From the 2013 Lenten Devotional Booklet

First Sunday in Lent, March 9, 2025

THE MORE IMPORTANT MATTERS OF THE LAW

READ: Matthew 23:23

OPENING PRAYER: Father, help us to draw closer to you at this time. Amen.

MEDITATION: Here is a lesson that is a clear and total lesson on giving. The need for money is easily seen, but equally important are the human considerations of mercy, faith, law, and justice. Using these ideals as wonderful guides, a firm basis for our actions can be developed. If you will, life principles are more easily established. This is not meant to belittle monetary gifts and tithes, but to call attention to those things that need to work together for God's Kingdom.

CLOSING PRAYER: We thank you, Lord, for drawing near to us and for letting us feel your presence and your love. Amen.

In Memory of Bob Lordahl
who passed away in 2023

From the 2016 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Monday, March 10, 2025

REMORSE

READ: Psalm 51:1-12

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, help us to understand your incredible forgiveness for our sins. How great is your desire for us to have a clean heart with you. Amen.

MEDITATION: Remorse is defined in the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary as an "act of biting again, a gnawing distress arising from a sense of guilt for past wrongs, self-reproach".

In this Psalm, David is asking for forgiveness, mercy, and cleansing. Are some sins too big to be forgiven? During our life here on earth we sin, some more than others. Some believe that "a particular sin" is too big or too bad to be forgiven. But we all ask for our sins to be forgiven, and we know that if we are truly remorseful, God forgives us. However, some of us find it difficult to forgive ourselves.

Through the death of Christ on the cross, we know that our sins are forgiven. We all want the stain of our sins wiped clean so that God can create in us a clean heart and a restored spirit. To find the strength within each of us to live in this belief can be difficult. When we come to **TRULY** understand and accept that we are indeed forgiven, our faith in Christ Jesus and ourselves is restored. We find that the stain is removed no matter how big or bad and we can walk with a clean heart with our Lord. We can truly start to find the forgiveness of ourselves.

CLOSING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, restore in us a clean spirit and let us walk with you every day in your great love and forgiveness. Amen

In Memory of Barbara Nichols
who passed away in 2022

From the 2017 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

TEST OF FAITH

READ: Mark 1:9-15

OPENING PRAYER: Lord, send the Holy Spirit to work with us to meet and defeat our evil temptations. Amen.

MEDITATION: These seven verses are loaded with content and meaning: baptism, temptation, repentance, and believing. Every day we encounter temptations. God did not make us to become puppets so that he could pull the strings. He gave us freedom of choice.

One daily temptation deals with our thought processes and what we say. An example of this comes from the take-a-ways from a previous sermon. The word "THINK" using each letter to represent a word. Before speaking ask: T: Is it truthful? H: Is it helpful? I: Is it inspirational? N: Is it necessary? K: Is it kind? This is a test of our faith and an opportunity to make the proper decision and grow as a Christian.

We are not alone in this fight. Through our baptism and as believers we have the Holy Spirit on our side. He will help us face the obstacles that prevent our growth. We are all sinners and in need of repentance. We must daily examine our thoughts, words, and deeds and seek God's plan for us. This may involve getting out of our comfort zone and resisting the world's values.

CLOSING THOUGHT: The good news is that we have a Sovereign God who is loving and forgiving and has sent his Son to die for us.

Doug Berglund

From the 2018 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

IN CHRIST, NO CONDEMNATION

READ: Romans 8:1-4

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank you so much for your love. Thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross, so that I can be set free from sin. Please open my heart and mind to your truths. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

MEDITATION: As we journey with Christ to the cross, I am so amazed about God's love for us that He would pay the price for our sins. Jesus Christ, the creator of the universe, loving us so much that he is on his way to the cross, being condemned for our sins. As I walk with Jesus to the cross, I am reminded that my salvation and freedom from sin come only from him. Once you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and are saved, you are set free from your sins. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Wow! If we are believers, we are set free from the condemnation of sin because Jesus took our sins on the cross. The Law showed us our sins, but does not save us. Our salvation is only from Jesus, who sets us free from the bondage of sin.

Once you have accepted God's gift of salvation, the Spirit of God now lives in you, guiding you and convicting you of your sin, but not condemning you. With the Spirit of God, you walk freely, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven and you are no longer condemned for them. You have the Spirit of God living in you, and guiding you. If you have not trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, make today the day you do so. Then you will be made free from the bondage of sin, and will have the Spirit of God living in you.

CLOSING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank you so much for sending your Son to die on the cross for our sins. Thank you for your mercy and grace that saved a sinner like me through faith in Christ. Thank you for no longer condemning me of my sin. You are an awesome God. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Cathy Norberg

From the 2017 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Thursday, March 13, 2025

JESUS LOVES US EVEN WHEN WE FAIL

READ: Mark 14:66-72

OPENING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, give us the strength and commitment to be a good shepherd and fulfill the mission proclaimed by Jesus. Amen.

MEDITATION: In spite of Peter's denial of knowing Him, Jesus continued to love and pray for Him. That look of love broke Peter's heart, and he wept tears of conviction and healing tears of repentance (Mark 14:72).

Jesus extends the same love to all of us. F. Dale Bruner, who taught New Testament theology at Whitworth University in Spokane, Washington for 22 years beginning in 1975 and retiring in 1997, writes, "When Jesus first met Peter, we recall that Jesus told him, 'You are Simon, son of John. You are going to be called Cephas (which translated, means Rock).' But Peter failed miserably during the crucial night. Yet, Jesus entrusts exactly such very human people with his mission – people just like Peter – namely, problematic human beings, errant, sin-marred, but sincerely repentant human beings, who confess their sins and want to be real Christians. Jesus takes people who qualify exactly as much as Peter does – i.e., people who have failed, sometimes quite awfully – for his mission to the world of other sinful, errant, needy, and lost human beings."

CLOSING THOUGHT: Regardless of our shortcomings, Jesus loves each of us and extends grace to fulfill our purpose on earth.

In Memory of Ted Wier
who passed away in 2019

From the 2013 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Friday, March 14, 2025

THE THIRD SERVANT SONG: STRENGTH THROUGH ADVERSITY

READ: Isaiah 50:4-9

OPENING PRAYER: Dear Lord, I know it is hard to give our lives to you and trust that you will do what's best for me. Please open my heart to see the signs that you are with me the whole way. Amen.

MEDITATION: In this passage, Isaiah displays his servitude for the Lord. He talks about all the adversity and opposition he has faced when confronted about his faith. Just because we are God's children doesn't mean we will never undergo hard times in life. We often forget that the devil is also at work to undermine everything for which Jesus died. But God knows what is best for us, and has the most amazing plan for our lives, if we only allow Him to work through us. We should not doubt God's strength, because only he has the power to "dry up the sea...turn the rivers into desert... (and) clothe the sky with darkness." It is hard not to hide from the mocking and spitting from those around us, those who we call fellow people at work, school, and in our community. But we must never forget that "the Sovereign Lord helps me" and will never forsake us. The only way our hunger and thirst can be satisfied is to be fed by God's word. Isaiah talks about how God "wakens {him} by morning, wakens {his} ear to listen," so that we are reassured that everything is already laid out by the most powerful and loving being in our lives,

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear God, I know that I often doubt Your power and ability in my life. Please help me to give my life over to you and trust that you will strengthen me through everything I encounter. Open my heart to see the blessings you bring upon me and give me hope for the future. Thank you for loving me even when I doubt you. Amen.

Kaitlyn Kim

From the 2015 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Saturday, March 15, 2025

WHO ARE YOU?

READ: John 8:53-59

PRAYER: Lord, please give us the ability to understand and realize who you really are. Help us not to lose the meaning of your Words, in this modern age. Amen.

MEDITATION: In this passage, Jesus is trying to explain, “Who he is” to the stiff-necked Jewish leaders of that time. They could not seem to understand that he was much more than “just a man”. He clearly tells them that he is the Alpha and that he was here in the beginning. He also tells them that he knows the Father and does only what the Father tells him.

As a boy, I studied the Bible and thought I knew who Jesus was. As the years went by, I came to realize that I didn’t know him at all. I had missed the point, just like the Jews of that day. Several years ago, he opened my eyes and gave me a small glimpse of who he really is. That was a life changer for me. I finally understood that I had been living my life for material possessions and not storing up my treasures in Heaven, as I should be.

CLOSING THOUGHT: These days we seem to get caught up in modern day values of what we perceive to be the important things in life. What we fail to remember is that there is life after death, in eternity, and that only our belief in Jesus will ultimately save us.

In Memory of Doug Wiseman
who passed away in 2022

From the 2015 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Second Sunday in Lent, March 16, 2025

HOSANNA

READ: John 12:12-16

OPENING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, open my heart and my mind to the wisdom of your word, to a deeper understanding of your teaching for the world and for me. Amen.

MEDITATION: As you read this passage, reflect on the Jewish traditions that are being observed. Jesus comes riding on a donkey, a mount for the common person, but wait ... a mount also fit for princes. The message Jesus brings is for everyone. Not just for poor sinners, but for sinners of every social standing. The crowd of thousands, in Jerusalem for the Passover, greeted him with shouts of "Hosanna!" "Please God, please save us!" This is from Psalm 118, the final psalm from the "Hallel", a series of processional psalms to be sung as the worshipers approached Jerusalem on feast days.

Another message to be gleaned from this short passage is the fact that Jesus was not the long awaited Messiah for the Jewish people and a hope for release from Roman rule. Not a general, in the mold of King David or one of the Maccabeus brothers, but an inspirational leader, riding not on a warhorse, but on the back of a donkey. His message was, and continues to be, PEACE for all mankind.

The Sanhedrin, seeing the worshiping adoration that Jesus received, knew he had to be eliminated. By doing so, they created a sacrificial lamb. This is another powerful symbol of legitimacy for Jesus' message.

CLOSING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, continue to lead us and teach us in your way. Amen.

In Memory of Don Tempel
who passed away in 2022

From the 2015 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Monday, March 17, 2025

BECAUSE HE PROMISED

READ: John 14:1-4

PRAYER: Our heavenly Father, thank you for the blessed assurance that you are waiting for us all to come home. Though we stumble and fall with the trials of life, you are always there to lift us up and carry us through. Thank you God, for the spiritual strength and love. Amen.

MEDITATION: Jesus, with his great love for us, when he knew what was ahead for him, continued to think of us, telling us not to worry, for he would return and bring us home. He tells us that in God's house, rooms have been prepared and he is leaving to take care of these for us. Best of all, believe that he really is who he says he is, and that he will do exactly as he promises. For this is the way home.

God is just and would never put upon us what we could not bear. There are times when we feel that this cannot be, for the burden is so heavy to carry. It is then that he takes us in his arms and quiets our souls to bear the pain and grief of life's journey. The greatest gift of all is to know that this is only temporary and when God is ready, we will be lifted up to our eternal home. How blessed we are!

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear God, forgive our impatience and wanting it all right now. Help us to reach out to others in love and support, knowing we all travel this road together in days of joy and sorrow. Thank you for your promises of eternal love and bringing us home. Amen.

In Memory of Frances Hilliard
who passed away in 2016

From the 2015 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Tuesday, March 18, 2025

I AM THE WAY AND THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE

READ: John 14:5-14

OPENING PRAYER: Dear Lord, as my sight dims and hearing fails, may your glory illuminate the path to the Father. Amen.

MEDITATION: This is a chapter about belief. We can sense Jesus' frustration. (He's basically asking, "How many times must I remind you that I am the way to the Father?") We've all experienced the uncertainty of the disciples. Where should one head? We don't know the place nor how to get there. Children in the back seat moan, "Are we almost there?" They can't see the road and don't know the destination. Grown children become anxious. We are all doubting Thomases about the veracity of directions given, including those given by that voice of the GPS!

When driving to a family fishing lodge for our honeymoon we had good reason to be anxious. And we definitely didn't want to ask my parents! All that I could remember was "Forest Lake" in the Poconos. That's a tiny place in a wide wilderness, and we had no idea what roads led to it. It must have been divine guidance that took us there! Jesus tells us if we truly want to find the Father, we must believe that he is in the Father. We must throw away our earth-bound compasses of ignorance and doubt and follow Jesus' light and truth.

CLOSING PRAYER: Thank you, Jesus, for assuring me that my prayers in your name will be heard. Amen.

In Memory of Molly Edman
who passed away in 2017

From the 2015 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

BIBLICAL PROPHECIES, THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH

READ: Micah 4:1-5

OPENING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank you for instilling the wisdom in the prophets so they could inform the nations what to expect with the coming of the Messiah. Amen.

MEDITATION: The prophet, Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, spoke among the people of the changing of times and that they should reassess their lifestyles, “and walk in the way of our LORD God, forever and ever.” (Micah 4: 5)

These days we have pastors and evangelists preaching the same message and it would behoove us to sit up and listen. We still have those who profess today of doom and gloom, but to me they lack the veracity of the word of the Lord. I feel faith must be first and foremost in living a Christian life. The ability to believe what’s in the Bible and live a corresponding life of confession, repentance, forgiveness, and love is entirely based on faith in God. Sometimes it is a real struggle, but in my humble efforts I trust the Lord to guide me in the right direction.

Words to live by: One of my favorite quotes is found on a watercolor painted by my daughter-in-law that states, “Faith is not believing God can, it is knowing that God will.” (Author unknown)

CLOSING THOUGHT: The Prophets of old were accepted by others for their farsighted knowledge given by God. Even today we can insure our faith in God because of their writings.

In Memory of Ken Upton
who passed away in 2023

From the 2018 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Thursday March 20, 2025

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES – REALLY?

READ: Matthew 5:43-48

OPENING PRAYER: Father in heaven, we thank you for the opportunity to visit your words: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” We are perplexed as we witness the events in our world related to those who would do us harm. Be with us as we find a new understanding and guidance for reconciliation in our lives. Amen.

MEDITATION: When we look up the definition of “enemy” we discover it reveals “A *person* who feels *hatred* for, *fosters harmful designs* against, or engages in antagonistic activities against another.” Perhaps we need to remember that our Father in heaven causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If we, in our daily lives, are striving to reach out to ALL people with LOVE and ACCEPTANCE, even to those who may treat us with harmful designs, then and only then are we doing as our Father in heaven commanded. LOVE YOUR ENEMIES AND PRAY! It is in prayer that we can begin to see how our Heavenly Father wants to change an attitude of hating our enemies to a loving, caring, supportive relationship. By this, perhaps we could begin to see a real change for good.

CLOSING THOUGHT: We know this opportunity to change our attitude toward our enemies is truly difficult; however, with our Father in Heaven ALL things are possible.

In Memory of Dottie Rider
who passed away in 2024

From the 2016 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Friday, March 21, 2025

Feed the Hungry

READ: Matthew 25:34-40

OPENING PRAYER: Lord, help us to discern what we are to do to support our fellow man. Amen.

MEDITATION: The text is surprising. The Lord is telling us that whenever we have fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, aided the sick, and so on, we have done it to him. We, the sheep and the goats, raise the question, "When have we done this?" God answers that whenever you have helped anyone who is sick or imprisoned, etc. you have done it to him and for him.

So, the various charities that we support with monetary donations, work, clothing, school supplies, visiting, education, and so forth, are recognized as valuable to God. Good works have merit in qualifying for receiving salvation. This seems to mean more is required than just believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us several times in the Gospels that obeying his commands is part of loving him.

Remember that the fellow who was hung next to Jesus on a cross was saved by believing that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. Jesus promised that he would be in paradise for that simple confession - no further services were required. The man on the cross had no opportunity for any continued good works. We who have come to believe earlier in life have the obligation to live as Jesus would have us to live while we are here on earth. That is where the good deeds and works come in.

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord, we are thankful that by seeking forgiveness for our sins we can receive salvation. This is the gift and grace of receiving Holy Communion. Amen.

In Memory of Burt Johnson
who passed away in 2024

From the 2016 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Saturday, March 22, 2025

NOW GO AND TELL HIS DISCIPLES

READ: Mark 16:1-8

OPENING PRAYER: God help us all “to go and tell his disciples.” Amen.

MEDITATION: As we meditate the events of what is described to us in this Bible passage, we quickly realize we all are told to “go and tell.” As we try to grasp these words and apply them to our own lives, it quickly becomes clear how hard “go and tell” can be!

I am sure we all are reluctant to “go and tell” just as Mary and Mary Magdalene felt that early morning so long ago. Fortunately, God sent an “angel” to them in order to tell them not to be alarmed. They left the area with these instructions, yet they told no one because “they were too frightened.” That sounds like me and everyone I know. We all want “to tell” but somehow it doesn’t happen and we are in company with a lot of others.

As we contemplate our personal relationship with God, let’s not forget we all can “go and tell!”

CLOSING PRAYER: As I pause in my busy day, I want to thank you for sending your Son and for his resurrection, to give us encouragement to “go and tell” about your being with us. May I never be so busy that I overlook opportunities to share your grace and encouragement with those in my family and community. Thank you for the gift of your son and the promise of eternal life. Amen.

In Memory of Edith Wallace
who passed away in 2024

From the 2017 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Third Sunday in Lent, March 23, 2025

GOD LOVES THE WORLD

READ: John 3:14-18

OPENING PRAYER: Our Heavenly Father, your love for us is exemplified by your sacrificing your only Son whom you sent to save the world. Help us to believe and live as we should, so that our witness will draw others unto you. This is our way of holding you up. Amen.

MEDITATION: Moses lifted a serpent on a pole so that Israelites who viewed it could be spared death from an attack by a serpent. The Lord Jesus was lifted onto a cross so that we may believe and we must believe in his being sacrificed by his Heavenly Father to save us from sin. We do not need to sacrifice lambs or sons as in the old days; the supreme sacrifice has been made on behalf of all believers—the Lord being the Lamb of God.

The choice is provided for us to be with Jesus in love, respect, and relationship. We are to live with him and others as he lives with us and in us. We hold him high when we believe as he would have us believe and we act toward others as he has instructed.

CLOSING THOUGHT: He is lifted up for us to choose. We may choose His way or the way which leads to condemnation and perishing. He came to save.

In Memory of Bruce Kennedy
who passed away in 2024

From the 2018 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Monday, March 24, 2025

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

READ: Mark 15:1-15

OPENING PRAYER: Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD. my strength, and my redeemer. Amen.

MEDITATION: It had to be Jesus. This had to happen. The Good News was promised by God's prophets in the Old Testament, painful as it all was to those who loved him and followed him. How else would we know God's word?

He was not only God's son; he was a messenger to the world. Little did the crowd know what they had done that day. They expected his message would die with him.

That was not to be. The resurrection changed EVERYTHING. So, we can somberly observe Good Friday knowing that on Easter Sunday we can celebrate our faith and live in his loving kindness.

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear Lord, we realize today that your death and resurrection mean forgiveness, freedom, and an opportunity to walk with you in this world and into eternity. Hallelujah! Amen.

In Memory of Duncan Cook
who passed away in 2022

From the 2018 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Tuesday, March 25, 2025

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT RETALIATION

READ: Matthew 5:38-42

OPENING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I ask that you be with me today. Please guide my thoughts and actions, so that others will feel your love through me. Amen.

MEDITATION: Our reading today covers both the law set in Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20, and Deuteronomy 19:21, and in Jesus' confronting the Jewish leaders of his day. God's purpose behind this law was an expression of mercy. It was to ensure in civil cases that the punishment fit the crime. It was not a guide for personal revenge and never meant to sanction acts of personal retaliation. In these five verses Jesus applied this principle of non-retaliation to affronts against one's dignity (v.39), lawsuits to gain one's personal assets (v.40), infringements on one's liberty (v.41), and violations of property rights (v.42). He was calling for a full surrender of all personal rights.

When we are wronged, often times our first reaction is to get even. Instead, Jesus said we should do well to those who wrong us! Our desire should not be to keep score, but to love and forgive. This is not natural to our human behavior. Only God can give us the strength to love as he does. Rather than planning vengeance, pray for those who hurt you.

CLOSING THOUGHT: Only with God's love and grace can we show those who wrong us the same respect and rights that we desire for ourselves.

In Memory of Linda Konsmo
who passed away in 2024

From the 2016 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

TRUSTING GOD EVEN WHEN WE DON'T SEE WHY

READ: Exodus 14:10-14

OPENING PRAYER: Lord, thank you for guiding us through life even when the future is unknown. Amen.

MEDITATION: The Israelites had just left Egypt. Pharaoh and his troops were close behind as Moses prepared to part the Red Sea leading them all to safety. But then the Israelites complained about leaving Egypt, the “better” place, where they were suffering but still alive.

As a reader of this story, my initial thought toward their complaints was, “How dumb of them! God is helping out. Why can’t they recognize that?” But after looking into it, I understand where they were coming from. The Israelites were stripped of their normal life. The only hope they had was stemming from Moses. With the Egyptian army right behind them, that faith was barely hanging on. Without the comfort of everyday routine, they fell into a fit of frenzy.

Many of us know what the Israelites were going through. When life-changing events occur, our instinct is to listen to doubts and worries. Our trust in God is lost and only chaos ensues. However, there is good news. Just as Moses comforted his people, we must look to God for that same consolation. God will always fight for us. He will never leave us in the dark and will always stay constant in our lives. The one thing we have to do is to be still and keep our eyes on him.

CLOSING PRAYER: God, we are so grateful for you and what you have in store for us. Help us to understand that our lives are in your hands and with your love, we will always be safe. Amen.

Kailey Kim

From the 2017 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Thursday, March 27, 2025

JOHN THE MARTYR

READ: Mark 6:14-29

PRAYER: Father, help us understand the significance of this scripture story in our daily lives. Amen.

MEDITATION: Several years ago, Bill and I had the opportunity to visit The Louvre in Paris. As we looked at many of the famous paintings, I remember seeing one of John the Baptist's head on a platter. It was so real. So it must have been for Herod at the conclusion of this passage in Mark.

Reading this passage as a stand-alone, you might think that you're reading about John's beheading as it happens. That's not the case. It's a flashback. People are trying to figure out who Jesus is. Herod says Jesus is John the Baptist, whom he imprisoned (Mark 1:14) and beheaded, and is now raised from the dead and at work in Jesus. Why did Mark insert this story at this particular time? John hated sin. Therefore, when John found out that King Herod was sinning, he was not able to sit idly by and say nothing. He called Herod on his sin in hopes that Herod would repent and turn to God. Herod initially did not want to kill John, but later he bowed to peer pressure and had John beheaded,

Here we notice the striking contrast between John and Herod. One cared about doing what was right in the eyes of God, while the other cared about doing what was right in the eyes of other people. When we are faced with choices, we should constantly be asking ourselves on which side we want to be. Do we go along with what the world believes to be right, or do we want to do what God tells us is right? When we make the right choice, when we act in accordance to God's will instead of man's will, we know we are making the right decision.

CLOSING PRAYER: You gave us your servant, John the Baptist. May we follow his example, constantly speaking the truth and boldly rebuking sin. Amen.

Alice Amblad

From the 2013 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Friday, March 28, 2025

A MIRACLE/METAPHOR BLINDNESS STORY

READ: Mark 8:22-26

OPENING PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father - please grant us the ability and desire to discern our “blindness” and unawareness. Help us to “see” and share your love that surrounds us all. Amen.

MEDITATION: In reference to our own spiritual journey, the phrase “I was blind but now I see” is as relevant today as it was during Jesus' earthly ministry. The gospel stories of healing blind individuals (other examples: Mark 10: 46-52; John 9: 6) are matters of personal relationship - not impersonal magic. This miracle-story for today is unique as it is the only one in the Gospels describing a gradual cure - in two stages - the cure is complete only after a second touch from Jesus. This can be seen as a metaphor for the faith journey of many of us. As we recognize our blindness - rather than an instant flash of knowing - we discern the need to study, to pray, and to begin a life-long spiritual journey. The more you learn the more you realize the joy and challenge of the quest! We are so blessed at LCOP to have pastors and lay leaders eager to assist our progress.

Metaphor: a figure of speech in which a word or phrase about one idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness between them

CLOSING PRAYER: We thank you, Lord, for the gift of your Son and Holy Spirit. May our ability to “see” your light and One True Way be a daily miracle and blessing in each of our lives and in the lives of all whose lives we touch. Amen

Janet Lordahl

From the 2013 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 30, 2025

THE DAY AND THE HOUR UNKNOWN

READ: Mark 13:32-37

OPENING PRAYER: Since the beginning of time, your word has been true and faithful. When will we finally learn, believe, and prepare ourselves for that promised last day? Amen.

MEDITATION: Again and again throughout the Old Testament, prophets have made reference to the last days. The books of Job, Joel, Isaiah, and Micah to name a few. Interestingly, Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-3 are almost word for word telling of the Mountain of the Lord. There are also many references to the last days in the New Testament but none quite as clear as this passage. Here Jesus clearly emphasizes that there will be the last days.

During his conversation with the disciples on the Mount of Olives he says “watch” on three to four separate occasions (depending on the version of the Bible being read). First, he says to watch, pray, and be alert because no one knows the day or time except the Father. In the parable, the porter is told to “watch” the door and “watch” for the master who could return at any time.

Finally, Jesus says all must watch, which also implies daily application of waiting, patience, love, and study. Observe events in the world today and wonder when the first Horseman of the Apocalypse may be loosed. Watch! Prepare! Live each day with fullness and grace.

CLOSING PRAYER: Father, you have been so patient with us. We ask for Your continued patience and guidance to help deliver your word of these coming last days and the promise of everlasting love and grace. Amen

H. L. “Shelly” Shellabarger

From the 2013 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Monday, March 31, 2025

AARON SPEAKS FOR MOSES

READ: Exodus 6:29 – 7:7

OPENING PRAYER: Lord, make me a better disciple. Amen.

MEDITATION: Moses and I have something in common: sheer terror in the face of doing what seems impossible. I have a pretty terrible memory, but some things stick with me like it happened yesterday.

It was a beautiful early September day, and I was a brand new teacher graduate from the best teacher training school in the state. Hopeful, focused, and enthusiastic were my middle names. I had a job. Lessons were planned. Supplies were in place. Everything was rosy. I stood outside of my classroom door and looked up the hall as 6th graders as tall as I was marched toward me led by their very experienced teacher. Terror seized me as I ducked quickly back into my room, pulling the door behind me.

“Ack! What am I DOING? How can they send me out to TEACH with only 4 years of college? I don’t know enough! How do I handle 12-year-olds when I’m only 9 years older than they are!? What...? How...?” In that moment I wished I were ANYWHERE ELSE. After a quick prayer, the kids walked in and I began 37 years of teaching.

I imagine that Moses felt much the same way as he dealt with Pharaoh, and later faced the sea of people God had asked him to lead. To act as their savior leading them out of Egypt was what God called him to do. Speaking with “faltering lips” (6:30) or being “eighty years old” (7:7) had nothing to do with the success of what God called Moses or any of us to do. All we have to do is be brave and trusting enough to say, “yes!” God uses ordinary people, like us!

CLOSING PRAYER: “Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.” Amen.

Gretchen Alden

From the 2017 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Tuesday, April 1, 20253

LIVE IN HARMONY WITH ONE ANOTHER

READ: 1 Peter 3:8-9

OPENING PRAYER: Lord, thank you for Little Church. We love you. Please help us be a hardy core, yes, a hardy corps working excellently from your outpost here in Lakewood. Amen.

MEDITATION: This is a brief passage in a short book. Taking a cue from our pastors, I read all of 1 Peter to try to see context. I feel a little bad saying this, but the setting makes the sweet words of 3:8-9 a lot grittier. By my count in NIV, there are eighteen variations of “suffer” in 1 Peter, as in “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering...” (4:12). “Love”, the predominant theme of today’s short reading (3:8-9), appears only eight times in 1 Peter. Christians were being persecuted. Peter himself was later crucified. Another word that rings out of the book is “stranger”, as in “Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires...” (2:11) The hardy core that grew to millions of believers blessed with God’s love, was brave and faithful while being treated as antisocial and dangerous.

What are we to take from this? Gratitude for those who came before us, saw the truth, and held to it, seems fitting and deserved. That doesn’t seem quite enough. Faithfulness of our own, awareness of what threatens our belief in and love for Jesus, and the resolve in facing up to it are all parts of the equation. I like to think that we at Little Church are also a hardy core. Let’s work at that and have and show love for Him and for one another as we keep on learning how to be a faithful people.

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord, thank you for Little Church. We love you. Please help us be a hardy core, yes, a hardy corps working excellently from your outpost here in Lakewood. Amen.

Alan Macpherson

From the 2016 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Wednesday, April 2, 2025

JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD

READ: John 10:11-18

OPENING PRAYER: Thank you, Jesus, for your gentle, tender care. You are worthy of our love, our praise, and our worship. Amen.

MEDITATION: This is one of the most beautiful and gentle passages in the Bible depicting Jesus as the Good Shepherd. In biblical times, the good shepherd was recognized as one who truly loved the sheep he tended; it wasn't just a job to him. The good shepherd knew each sheep. Because he loved them and they recognized his voice, they followed him wherever he led them. When a sheep strayed, he would bring it back with his staff. He would go ahead of them to smooth the terrain for them. He would lie down in the gateway of the sheepfold so no one could enter or exit except through him.

Isaiah 40:11 predicted the coming of a Messiah with these words: "He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young." (NIV)

Jesus fulfilled all these descriptions of a good shepherd. When we stray, he reminds us of his words through the Holy Spirit, redirecting our path. He went ahead of us, living a perfect life on earth as an example for us to follow as we live our lives. And, most importantly, he willingly laid down his life to save us. He is the only gate into God's kingdom. What an amazing Savior we worship and serve!

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord Jesus, Lamb of God, thank you for dying for us, your lambs. You perfectly fulfilled your role as the predicted good shepherd. Amen.

Deanna Price

From the 2017 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Thursday, April 3, 2025

THE WEALTHY RULER: IT'S ALL ABOUT PRIORITIES

READ: Luke 18:18-30

PRAYER: Lord, I know there are times when I find too much value in worldly things. I don't always keep my priorities straight. Use this time of study to refocus me, and to remind me what is most true and valuable. Amen.

MEDITATION: In this passage Jesus uses the illustration of the wealthy ruler to remind us, his disciples, what he wants most from us: a giving up of ourselves to be truly his. Jesus knows that his kingdom has so much more to offer than anything we humans could even fathom. He longs for us to put our trust in him, above all things; yet because we are human, this is a struggle for us. We stray from Christ when we put our faith and trust in other things before him.

The rich ruler in this passage “misses the boat” when it comes to putting his trust in Jesus first. In his own mind, he is a true follower because, as he says in verse 21, “All these (commandments) I have kept from my youth.” But rule following is not what interests Jesus most. He wants our hearts. For this wealthy ruler, earthly possessions had stolen his heart. This struggle is probably familiar to many of us. We get enamored with things of this world and forget that we find the most eternal value in our relationship with our Lord.

CLOSING THOUGHT: What priority in your life may be ranking higher than your relationship with Jesus? It could be wealth or possessions; it could be a career, a relationship, any number of things. It is a constant struggle to keep our priorities where they should be and keep our eyes fixed on Jesus – as humans, we are selfish by nature, and we need Jesus to help us stay firm in our faith. Spend time in prayer today thanking God for all He has done and ask him to reveal to you anything that is an obstacle in your complete submission to him. It may be painful to give up something you've put too much faith in, but in the end the reward is much greater than we can imagine.

Heather Epperson

From the 2016 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Friday, April 4, 2025

GOD'S DISCIPLINE

READ: Hebrews 12:1-12

OPENING PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you for your encouragement through your Word in keeping me on the right path to victory. Amen.

MEDITATION: It is hard to resist the temptations of everyday living in this freewheeling "it's all about me" society of social media, entertainment, drugs, political thinking, etc. It's everywhere and seems OK because "everyone" is doing it. It's also hard to escape our hardships let alone the hardships others in our world are enduring through natural disasters, terrorism, hunger, political strife, and genocide. But we, as Christians, are called upon by God to fix our eyes on Jesus. Eternal life is a free gift but it does not free us from the requirement for faithful obedience. All Christians must give account for how they lived.

We are called upon to resist temptation and endure hardship as discipline. Though my hardships right now are few, I cry for what's going on in our world and the thought of where our society is headed. But I am reminded, through God's Word, the Bible, that God's discipline is for our good. He disciplines in love as a father to a child so that we might reap our heavenly reward. It is his way of teaching and coaching us to take the right path. As painful as it might seem at times, as we obey, we set an example, not just for our own survival, but for others to make it easier for them to believe and follow Christ and mature in him. Drawing on the strength of Jesus, we can use our growing strength to help those who are weak and struggling. We will have the encouragement to "run with perseverance" to obtain "a harvest of righteousness and peace" through worship, the strength of Jesus, and God's discipline.

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, give us the strength to endure and to find joy in your Word through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Judy Eng

From the 2018 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Saturday April 5, 2025

LOVING GOD'S CHILDREN

READ: 1 John 5:2-3

OPENING PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you for loving us and for being a God who cares and provides for us. Help us to show our love to you in how we love your children. Amen.

MEDITATION: The greatest commandment is this: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." Second is this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 23:37-39). The writer of 1 John affirms these words of Jesus by reminding us that loving God and loving others are inseparable. You cannot do one without the other. These commandments tell us how to express God's love to others. We might have a thought or a feeling, but it does not become love until that "thought" or "feeling" motivates us to act. God calls us to love his children by action as a means of expressing our love and obedience to him.

This past year, I reread the book "Five Love Languages" by Gary Chapman. Not only did I learn about my love languages, but I also learned how my family expresses love. One thing the five love languages have in common is that they all require us to act. Reading this book was a great reminder that we can implement these different love languages in our lives to love others the way God loves and honors us.

CLOSING PRAYER: Thank you, Lord, for your word today. Help us to love your children according to your commands. Thank you for showing us the ultimate act of love by dying for our sins on the cross. We are forever grateful. Amen.

Helen Kim

From the 2016 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Fifth Sunday in Lent, April 6, 2025

OUR HOME IN HEAVEN

READ: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

OPENING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help us to remember that the best home of all is our home in heaven. Amen.

MEDITATION: As we journey in our life on earth, we, as Christians, get caught up in our life of daily living. Feeling the importance of looking forward to vacations, daily fun, caught up in our work, activities and time with our family and friends, we forget that this life on earth is only temporary.

In these verses, Paul wants to remind us of what the Gospel is. Gospel means “good news.” The Gospel message is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is applied to our lives by faith, repentance, and baptism. Once we come into the Gospel we have forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. Paul preached this to the Corinthians and is writing in confidence to them, telling them that “what goes down must come up.” The Gospel gives us a place to stand. Jesus Christ is our stability and security. WOW, what a wonderful feeling!

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord Jesus, thank you for the gift of eternal life in fellowship with you today and forever. Amen.

Jean Rich

From the 2018 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Monday, April 7, 2025

DELIGHT IN THE LAW

READ: Psalm 1

OPENING PRAYER: Dear Lord, in all our relationships, give us the wisdom and grace to be wise and kind as we follow the path you have chosen for us. Amen.

MEDITATION: The first group of Psalms is mainly attributed to David. The Psalms are a collection of poems, songs, and prayers of praise to God. Different authors composed them over many years, from 1446 B.C to 586 B.C.

The Psalmist reminds us how we must choose the “road” we will follow. There are two paths. One is the life of the faithful. The other is the life of the faithless. Do we strive to enhance our lives, or are we drawing away from things that really matter?

Those who reject evil and find joy in obeying and worshiping the Lord are blessed.

The writer gives the example of the fruitful tree, or the faithful who were nourished by clean water; the chaff, or the wicked, who were separated from the grain, and were easily blown off the path. With study, prayer, and by our actions, we can follow God’s plan for each of us.

It is important to surround ourselves with like-minded people who share our faith and who try to draw others and ourselves closer to God.

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear Lord, help us see people as you see them, without judgment, but with love and forgiveness. Help us live our lives in the way you have shown us. Amen.

Joan Jackson

From the 2017 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Tuesday, April 8, 2025

RETURN TO ME

READ: Jeremiah 3:11-18

OPENING PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, open our ears and our hearts so that we may hear you through the noise that surrounds our daily lives. Amen.

MEDITATION: College creates an environment that can challenge one's faith. When I began my journey last year at the University of Southern California, I had no idea where I wanted God to be in my life. It seemed so easy to leave my faith behind in pursuit of academics, activities, and a thriving social life. God, on the other hand, had other plans for me. Just like God had called for Israel and Judah to return back to him, I felt him doing the same with me. He sent his people from InterVarsity, a nationwide Christian organization, to my dorm and eventually convinced me to come out to their group meetings and Bible studies.

I now sit here writing this devotion as a leader in InterVarsity. As I focused on God, he also instructed me to lead others back to him through dorm ministry and Bible studies. I worked with those who are lost. I have witnessed as people either committed or recommitted their lives to Jesus.

CLOSING PRAYER: God calls us to return back to him. For those of you who consider yourselves faithful and do not think that this particular passage applies to you, I encourage you to find a way to reach out to those whom God might be calling to return to him. Let us be open to what God is calling us to do. Amen.

Sara Pelster

From the 2017 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Wednesday April 9, 2025

FEAR OF DEATH AND REJECTION

READ: John 13:36-38

OPENING PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you for your sacrifice on the cross to save us from our sinful nature. Thank you for your unlimited love for each of us. Help strengthen our faith and help us share that faith with those we meet. Amen.

MEDITATION: Peter claims that he is willing to lay down his life for Jesus. However, Jesus questions Peter about whether he will really follow through. Then Jesus tells Peter plainly that because of his fear he will deny Jesus three times. Jesus understands Peter's shortcomings but continues to love him and believe in Peter's future.

This story allows us to see ourselves in Peter's shoes and how Jesus loves each of us despite our shortcomings. We all experience fear as a motivator in our everyday lives. The Bible frequently reminds us to "Fear not" and "Do not be afraid." When we have faith in God through Christ's teachings, we can experience less fear. The joy that results will allow us to share our faith and serve others without fear of rejection. God is always with us and wants us to have fruitful lives.

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear heavenly Father, give us the ability to trust your promises given through Jesus Christ our Savior. Thank you, Jesus for loving us sinners and for giving us the Holy Spirit to guide us. Amen.

Carol and Rob Wilson

From the 2017 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Thursday, April 10, 2025

WHAT DOES WORK HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

READ: Acts 20:32-35

OPENING PRAYER: Lord, help me to understand your meaning of work and the reason we do it. Amen.

MEDITATION: Of the 38 parables Jesus told, 16 of them are about money. The Bible has fewer than 300 verses on prayer, less than 500 on faith and over 2,000 verses that deal with wealth and possessions! From the beginning God commanded us to work. "The Lord God took the man (Adam) and put him in the Garden of Eden to WORK it and take care of it." Genesis 2:15

The passage you read today told you Paul worked hard at being the best tent maker he could. He did it to honor God and to provide for his living expenses. 1 Timothy 5:8 reads: "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." Our responsibility is to work so that we can take care of ourselves, our family members, and our fellow church members. We must also work so we "may have something to share with those in need." Ephesians 4:28

Who are those in need? Anyone we know, or don't know, who lacks in something: The needy people in Zimbabwe, Burundi, your next door neighbor, a fellow family member, people in our church. Proverbs 22:9 reads: "A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor." It's not our money that he asks us to share. "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." Psalm 24:1.

Don't just work in order to have. But work in order to give.

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord, thank you for all the things you have given me to take care of. I pray that I use them to honor you. Amen.

Don Becker

From the 2016 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Friday, April 11, 2025

HEART OF WORSHIP

READ: Isaiah 1:13-17

OPENING PRAYER: Lord, open our minds to your words from Isaiah and our hearts to your message that is relevant to all ages. We thank you and praise you for the love that you constantly offer us, even when our attitudes are a bit on the difficult side! We love you, Lord. Amen.

MEDITATION: Wow, this seems kind of harsh as we read in Isaiah all that the Israelites were doing that God did not take pleasure in. He did not want their sacrifices anymore, and all their festivals were a burden to Him. Worshiping Him or sacrificing to Him and then going out to do evil seems to make Him pretty unhappy. God knows our hearts, and Israel's heart was not with him anymore. It is not our actions that bring us close to God, it is our heart seeking after his own heart that brings us close to him, and then our actions reflect where our heart is.

God desires relationship with us, not empty sacrifice or worship. He gave the Israelites direction to get back to him: wash and make yourselves clean, stop doing wrong, learn to do right, seek justice, defend the oppressed, take up the cause of the orphans and plead the case of the widows. Over and over, Jesus calls us to community – to love one another. It is what Jesus was building with his disciples and apostles, a community of sinners whose main objective was to love one another. In our society, we have our families, our church bodies, and our community where we can practice this “loving one another.”

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord, help me to recognize my insincerity in worship and bring my best as an offering to you. I want to learn to love as you have loved and help build a community that reflects your grace to all who come in contact with us. Help me to keep my mind and heart open to your leading for our community at Little Church. Amen.

Karen George

From the 2016 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Saturday, April 12, 2025

WHERE THERE IS HUMILITY, THERE TOO IS STRENGTH

READ: Mark 10:32-45

OPENING PRAYER: Lord in heaven, grant me the wisdom to plan for the future with hope, but to understand that the path to ultimate reward is uncertain, and requires trust and faith in the example of Jesus. Amen.

MEDITATION: As Jesus approached Jerusalem in his final earthly journey, he appeared to his disciples and to the people at large as an astonishing king, a man of miracles and power that could conquer any obstacle in his ministry. Yet he understood that to conquer the darkest problem of fallen humanity - sin - he himself would soon suffer and suffer greatly as the ultimate sacrifice, to make possible the spiritual reconciliation of God and Man. Even when he foretold this coming event, his disciples did not fully comprehend its significance, but continued to jockey for favor and the opportunity to seat themselves literally close to the power of his persona. Jesus then instructed them further that proximity to power was not the issue, but rather the need to be humble and meek, acting as such in service to their fellow man, and in particular to those in less fortunate circumstances. In addition to faith itself, self-sacrifice and personal generosity allows each of us the opportunity - in a very small way - to emulate the ultimate sacrifice and incomparably generous gift of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CLOSING THOUGHT: As Christ points out in today's passage, what is important in our day-to-day lives is to focus on seizing each opportunity to be a servant to our fellow man, not to worry about the seating arrangement in heaven. If we do that, and keep our faith in the redeeming sacrifice of Calvary, the details of our eternal spiritual rewards will take care of themselves.

Preston Carter

From the 2013 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Palm Sunday, April 13, 2025

HALLELUJAH! PRAISE THE LORD!

READ: Psalm 150

OPENING PRAYER: God, it is so easy to get caught up in the busy-ness of life, that we forget what an awesome God you are. Amen.

MEDITATION: Psalm 150 opens and ends with the refrain, "Praise the Lord!" Praise the Lord is the English translation of one Hebrew word - *hallelujah*. Hallelujah! It's a call to praise. When the Jews heard this word, they knew that they were being summoned to praise God. Psalm 150 functions as the bookend to the book of Psalms. The book of Psalms began with the word, "Blessed" and it is because we are blessed, we are called to "Praise the Lord." *Hallelujah!* As you read the psalm, pay special attention to the prepositions: "in" "for" and "with". The Psalm is divided in the following way:

- The call: Hallelujah - Praise the Lord.
- Where: In his sanctuary and in his mighty heavens.
- Why: For his acts of power and his surpassing greatness.
- How: With harp, lyre, timbrel and dancing, strings and pipe, and cymbals.

Because God is great and awesome, all under his mighty heavens are called to praise God with unrestrained enthusiasm. Let it all out! Big bands, drums, and dancing! Bring it! Bring the praise, because God is worthy! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord, we are blessed because of you. We have life because of you. We have joy because of you. It's all because of you. Thank you God. You are most worthy of our praise! Amen.

Pastor James Kim

From the 2017 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Monday, April 14, 2025

JESUS ARRESTED AND TAKEN BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

READ: Mark 14:43-65

PRAYER: Oh precious Lord, help us to see the forces in this present world that want to destroy or distort the gift that our Christ Jesus has given to us. Keep us aware of false teachings and open our minds to the true Word. Amen

MEDITATION: This is a picture of the extremes that the powers of authority were willing to go, to remove Jesus from their presence. Jesus had been drawing people to him with his teachings. This was a great threat to the Sanhedrin who had full power over religious matters and questions, but they had no power to inflict the death penalty.

On the night of the betrayal, they broke all their own rules, being a body of seventy-one persons that consisted of Sadducees, Pharisees, and Scribes. They met in a specific room in the Temple during daylight hours to perform their designated duties. Wanting not to let the masses know what they were up to, they formed at night to seek Jesus out and try Him.

Peter was the only one of the Twelve that did not flee or abandon Jesus. He followed at a distance and stayed in the courtyard by a fire. He was recognized three times and denied it each time. At this point, the cock crowed, just as Jesus had foretold during their final meal. Peter had the courage to stay with Jesus as close as he could, yet when recognized he panicked and denied that he knew Him.

CLOSING PRAYER: Help us Lord to be open and courageous when confronted by nonbelievers, to tell them boldly the truth of the Gospel. Amen.

In Memory of Odell Wallace
who passed away in 2013

From the 2013 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

WHAT DOES PASSOVER HAVE TO DO WITH EASTER?

READ: Exodus 12:1-14

OPENING PRAYER: Dear Lord, be with us as we experience the Lenten season, a time to reflect on the pain, sorrow, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ, knowing that he did this for all of us. Amen.

MEDIATION: Why should Christians care about what Passover means to the Jewish people? What does it have to do with Easter? **Everything!**

The Jewish liturgical year is the basis of Christian moveable feasts (those that are based on astronomical occurrences). Therefore, it is no coincidence that Passover takes place before the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. These two holidays have been intertwined from the beginning. We must first remember that Jesus was Jewish and, therefore, recognized all Jewish holidays. It was during Passover that he was celebrating the “Last Supper” on what is now the Christian Maundy Thursday.

As we read the Bible passage, we understand that Passover commemorates the final and tenth test to Pharaoh that convinced him to allow Moses to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt. Before retiring for the evening, the Israelites were told to mark their doors with the blood of an unblemished lamb. The Lord “passed over” their homes while killing first born males – humans and animals – everywhere else in Egypt. For Christians, an unblemished lamb has come to be one of the most sacred symbols for Jesus Christ. Just like the Passover lamb, the Lamb of God, perfect and complete, was sacrificed for us. His blood was shed for us to wash away our sins.

CLOSING THOUGHT: The Lenten and Passover seasons are profoundly significant in the Judeo-Christian faiths. This is the opportunity for all of us to renew our basic tenets that guide our everyday lives.

Becky Huber

From the 2017 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Wednesday, April 16, 2025

A CRY OF DISTRESS

READ: Psalm 142

OPENING PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you for always being there for us and listening to our complaints as well as our praise. Please comfort us when we are feeling imperiled or afraid. Forgive us when we forget you are in control and we question your ways. Amen.

MEDITATION: It must have been very hard for David to understand why he was having to hide from Saul. After all, he had been anointed by Samuel, filled with the Holy Spirit, became part of Saul's court, showed that the Lord saves by killing Goliath, became a commander in Saul's army, and married one of Saul's daughters. What must he have thought of having to escape with his life, live in the wilderness, and elude Saul and his army?

Today's reading shows us that it's alright to cry out and complain to God, to ask God for help. But unlike Saul, David did things God's way and didn't take matters into his own hands - he didn't kill Saul when he had the chance. He continued to follow God's commands and to trust in Him.

Trusting God, at least in my experience, can seem very difficult at times. I have to admit I'm not always successful at it. Believe me, God has gotten an earful from me. But, if I stop and reflect, I am reminded "that all things work together for the good of those who love God". I can't truthfully say that this gives me immediate peace of mind, but it does give hope. And that hope encourages me to do my best to do things God's way.

CLOSING THOUGHT: It's not always easy being a follower of God, but I take comfort in knowing that God can handle my questions and complaints. I don't always get the answers I'm looking for, but I am learning that "God is our refuge and strength, a helper who is always found in times of trouble." (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

Rick Norberg

From the 2013 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Maundy Thursday, April 17, 2025

THE SECOND SERVANT SONG

READ: Isaiah 49:1-6

OPENING THOUGHT: “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45 (NIV)

MEDITATION: In this scripture, the prophet states that the Servant (the Messiah) will outline the purpose of his coming, the Jewish rejection of the gospel, and the goal of enlightening the Gentiles. All the nations of the world will hear his voice. He was named even before he was born. He will be glorified by God. His earthly work would fail, but his future success would be glorious. He would become a light to all Jews and non-Jews of the world, bringing salvation and peace to the ends of the earth.

During a 40-year commitment to the military profession and to military support organizations of this country, I have experienced the true meaning of service to others both on active duty and then in support of those in need. Salvation can be defined as “a means of being saved from harm, ruin, or loss” and the preservation of our way of life. These are the commitments to the protection and support of our population. A well-known phrase depicting the service goal of military vigilance is, “For God and Country!” We pray that God will look at us favorably in this service and caring mission.

CLOSING THOUGHT: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

Roy J. Davis

From the 2017 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Good Friday, April 18, 2025

THE STUMP OF JESSE

READ: Isaiah 11:1-6

OPENING PRAYER: Dear Lord, please help us focus on what you want us to hear and retain as we listen and study your Word. Thank you for sending your Son, Lord. Amen.

Meditation: In today's passage, we read about an eagerly awaited Messiah from the perspective of the Israelites – their hope for the future. Our only hope for the future is the same Christ, the awaited Messiah. In addition to Isaiah 11:1-6, Isaiah prophesied much about Christ – from his birth (Isaiah 7:14) to his sufferings (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). Isaiah and the other Old Testament prophets spoke a great deal about the coming Messiah and what he would do.

During my journey as a Christian, I was fortunate to have a wise Adult Sunday School teacher who showed us many scriptures in the Old Testament where Christ could be found. What a blessing she was in my Christian walk. How wonderful of our Lord to weave so many threads from the Old Testament into the New Testament. The more we read God's Word, the more threads we find – what a treasure and a treat. For instance, when Jesus was in Nazareth, he read from the scroll of Isaiah (Luke 4:14-21) – another thread is found!

CLOSING PRAYER: We thank you Lord for the direction you have provided us in your Word. Please be with us as we journey through life keeping our hearts and minds open to you. Help us to live out our faith actively within the community based on what you have shown us in your Word. Amen.

Marilyn Sexton

From the 2017 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Saturday, April 19, 2025

DON'T JUST LISTEN TO THE WORD: DO WHAT IT SAYS!

READ: James 1:22-27

OPENING PRAYER: Dear Father, enter my heart so that I might dedicate myself to reading your word more, so that I would know your perfect law, and better live a life devoted to your teachings. Amen.

MEDITATION: Life in these United States is sometimes so puzzling. While I claim that I value freedom, I find myself so enslaved by the “values” I see around me, I think that I might have freedom upside down. Sometimes I feel like the best way for me to make it through a day of Facebook, social media, and the evening news is to remember that just because something is legal, doesn't make it right. I was pretty sure I didn't make this saying up, so I Googled it, just to check. The first reference? The Bible, not surprisingly. 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, which begins: “Everything is permissible for me” – but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me” – but I will not be mastered by anything.

James writes that “the one who looks into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it...will be blessed...” When he compares the Word to the perfect law, he is writing about the entire Bible. A law, or group of laws or limitations can give me freedom. All I have to do is follow them continuously.

CLOSING THOUGHT: In a world that continually tempts us, we don't have to stick our head in the sand to avoid becoming polluted. All we need to do is read the Word, God's Word, and do what it says.

Amy Trevino

From the 2016 Lenten Devotional Booklet

Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

READ: Luke 24:13-35

PRAYER: Lord, thank you for your patience with us as we all will fall short of perfection. Please guide us through our day-to-day lives and provide us your wisdom so that we will be better followers. Amen.

MEDITATION: Two of Jesus' followers were traveling to Emmaus when Jesus approached them. They did not recognize that it was Jesus. When Jesus casually asked what they were talking about, they were surprised that the person addressing them had not heard of what had happened to Jesus of Nazareth. These followers said that their hope was that Jesus was about to bring redemption to Israel, but now all hope was lost when Jesus died. Then Jesus proceeded to interpret the laws of Moses and the writings of the prophets for them in order to demonstrate what these authoritative texts have to say about himself. Later, when he was at the table with them, Jesus took the bread, blessed, broke, and distributed it. These were familiar actions and it opened the followers' eyes. They finally recognized that it was none other than Jesus. The two followers returned to Jerusalem, to relay to the other disciples what had happened.

CLOSING THOUGHT: We all get so preoccupied by our own troubles and day-to-day routines that we may not always see Jesus as the two followers did. We must remember to take a little time throughout each day to pray and acknowledge him. It is so easy to adapt to today's society where we must visually "see it in order to believe it", but as Christians we must trust what is written or spoken to us by God. Thanks be to God that Jesus put his life on the line for our sins.

Bob Kagarise

From the 2018 Lenten Devotional Booklet