

# 2021 Lenten Meditations

Wednesday, 17 February: Ash Wednesday

Searcy Fox

*Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted." Luke 18:9-14*

This past year has been challenging. There have been quite a few changes, struggles, sicknesses and deaths. Despite all of the challenges, one positive thing I can personally attest is the amount of time I have had to reevaluate my life and focus on God – akin to a year-long Lent.

Last year, I spent 24 weeks completing my clinician rotations as an Occupational Therapy student. I interacted with a variety of people with different backgrounds and beliefs. Occasionally during a chart review or a consultation, I found myself thinking "How did this happen? Why wait three weeks to come to the hospital after experiencing stroke-like symptoms? Why wait to bring a child to therapy?" So many questions. I found myself thinking, "Well I hope that I would not delay medical attention if it were me." But it's not my place to judge. The fact is that fear of Covid has totally consumed everyone. I had to refocus to God for His guidance. Luke 18: 9-14 talks about the Pharisee believing he was better than the tax collector because he was "different" than your typical sinner (robber, evildoer, adulterer, tax collector). But the tax collector would not even look up to heaven as he prayed, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Jesus explained the parable by stating the tax collector went home justified before God, not the other. Jesus said, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Often, I am so quick to judge others, but in the end, we are all the same, all sinners. If we cry out to the Lord and truly ask for forgiveness, He will bless us. He promises us that. As He says in Psalm 32, "Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered."

As we begin the "fast" of the Church, that commences with Ash Wednesday, let us remember we are all sinners. However, even though sinners, we are forgiven by our gracious Father. He does not care if you wait three weeks to confess or three years, His forgiveness is a gift, always ready to be accepted. In the same way, just because I repent immediately, it does not make me any better than someone who repents next week or next year, and vice versa. Forgiveness is a free gift to be accepted any time and any place.

*Lord, may we focus on ourselves and our repentance rather than judging others. May we see that among the challenges and questions, you know more than we will ever know, and forgiveness is a gift ready to be accepted. Amen*

**Thursday, 18 February**

**The Rev. Will Compton**

*The next day John the Baptist saw Jesus coming towards him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." John 1: 29-31*

During the Ash Wednesday service, I am struck each year by those words said during the invitation to observe a holy Lent:

“Dear People of God: The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord’s passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of Penitence and fasting.”

Like those first Christians, we are intentional in our devotion. Whenever we celebrate God’s saving acts of love for us, like the death and resurrection of Jesus, we take some time to prepare our hearts and minds for that celebration. So once again we prepare. We prepare to celebrate.

Last Lent was interrupted by the Coronavirus. The joke was, “I didn’t plan on giving up this much for Lent.” This Lent looks different in many ways as well. However, like those first Christians we still prepare. We prepare to celebrate.

We prepare because God is with us. As he always has. As he always will. During plague and pestilence, God is in our midst. God is in the midst of our doubt. God is in the midst of our failures. God is in the midst of our anxiety. God is in the midst of our preparation. God is in the midst of our observance of a holy Lent. John the Baptist recognized God in his midst. He exclaimed with a loud voice, “Here he is! The Lamb of God. The guy I have been telling you all about is here!”

John’s exclamation was full of hope and joy. In this season, as we prepare to celebrate Christ’s victory over death which is our own victory over death, may we find that same hope and joy. May John the Baptist’s hope and joy be our own. For God is in our midst.

Friday, 19 February

Alan Cooper

*As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."*

*Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak, for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved." Matthew 9:9-17*

In our society, it would simply be an innocent, polite acceptance of a friendly dinner invitation (btw, that's something I am always eager to do anytime!). But, oh-no, not so in the eyes of Jewish Pharisees, the dominant teachers and leaders of first century Israel.

The gospels of Mark and Luke make clear that "the house" of this dinner party (v. 10) was the home of Matthew (also called Levi) who had just responded to Jesus' call by throwing a feast. And to make matters worse, Matthew invited his tax-collector buddies and unspecified 'sinners'. Immediately Jesus is criticized for merely eating with "tax collectors and sinners".

The tax collectors were Jews working for the Roman government so they were despised and excommunicated as complicit traitors. And the sinners could have been a collection of anyone who didn't believe the right way and behave the right way as taught by the Pharisees about how to relate to God. Both tax collectors and 'sinners' were viewed as undesirable outcasts. Leaders could, in effect, say "Our God wants us to not associate with such people. Judea would be better off without them around."

Of course, we are familiar with the fact that in passage after passage in the Gospels Jesus makes all sorts of undesirables and outcasts the focus of his ministry, i.e., the hungry, the naked, the imprisoned, the possessed, the lepers, the lame, the sick with various diseases, the prostitutes, the Samaritans (heretical half-breeds), etc. Two days before the crucifixion Jesus summed up his three years of itinerant ministry teachings when he told the parable of the sheep and the goats "... whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me".

In this passage, Jesus associated closely with the people that upstanding, responsible, respectable society leaders did not like and their understanding of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was that it was best to have as little to do with such outcasts as possible. Jesus did and taught the opposite.

Jesus quoted Hosea 6:6 when he told the Pharisees to learn the meaning of "I desire compassion and not sacrifice" and gave them a clue when he said, "For I have come to call not the righteous, but sinners".

Elsewhere in scripture we are told that Jesus came for the whole world. But here Jesus says he came for some (sinners) and not others (the righteous). Either we are the kind of people whose self-righteousness leads us to think we are unique and self-sufficient and well, therefore, as Jesus said, 'have no need of a physician' (tragically unaware that we actually are in such need). Or we are the kind of people like the 'sinners' who give up our self-sufficient pride and in utter humility acknowledge we are just like everyone else; we are not yet well and in daily need of the Great Physician.

**Saturday, 20 February**

**Bill Buhner**

*My soul thirsts for God,  
for the living God.  
When shall I come and behold  
the face of God? Psalm 42:2*

*When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" John 1:48-50*

The Psalmist asks, "When shall I come and behold the face of God?"

Some 1,000 years after Psalm 42 was written, John, via Nathanael, answers, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God!"

Jesus plainly states of Nathanael, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!", meaning that this man does not lie, is not dishonest or treacherous. This from God personified. So, Nathanael, looking upon His face, knew.

Unfortunately, perhaps, not so easy for us to look upon the face of God.

But, we can Live the Face of God:

- When we care about our brothers of sisters
- When we read Scripture and are moved to action
- When we right that which is wrong
- When we do not repeat that which we know is gossip
- When we pray and give our Church

Well, perhaps not so hard after all.

*Lord Jesus Christ, son of the living God, have mercy on us, all sinners.*

**Monday, February 22**

**Suzie Webb**

*When the steward of the feast tasted the water that now had become wine, and did not know where it came from, the steward of the feast called the bridegroom. John 2:9*

Turning water into wine. Jesus' first miracle. One that would be handy on those Sunday night foyer groups when "Buy wine on Saturday" was left off the to-do list!

In Merriam-Webster dictionary, "miracle" is defined as "an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs". We read about the miracles in the Gospels. How Jesus healed, exorcised demons, brought people back from death, and yes, even helped with a very successful fishing expedition! We see the power that Jesus has in order to do all these things.

Are miracles still happening today? Yes! Is it possible for us as imperfect beings to perform miracles! I believe that God works through us to perform his miracles. By our words and actions, we are able to help people and show them the power of our God. You never know when a kind word, a listening ear, a donation to a family in need will change someone's life in a miraculous way.

I have a wonderful friend who is a priest and during difficult times in my life he would reach out to me without knowing what my situation was at the time. When I was at the end of my rope, he would give me a call out of the blue and turn my day around. I asked him once how he always called at just the right time. He told me that there were times when someone would be on his mind and when he reached out, it always seemed to be the time they needed someone the most. He had learned to be aware and listen to God's nudges and act on them. I saw those times that he was there for me as being "divine interventions". By acting on God's gentle nudging, he was able to bring comfort and miraculously turn a bad day into one of hope.

Though we may not be able to turn water into wine, we can still perform miracles today by listening to God and being there for those who need us.

*O Divine Master, grant that I may not seek to be consoled, as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love. For it's in giving that we receive and it's in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it's in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.*

**Tuesday, 23 February**

**Suzanne Files**

*The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the moneychangers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" John 2: 12-16*

I know that theologians and biblical scholar have different explanations of this scripture but since I am neither, I will leave that up to them. I do understand this was a common practice during those days. But the way I read this, Jesus was saying ENOUGH, ENOUGH!!! And now in our country I have had enough! And I am not alone. I believe we have all had enough!! I also believe in turning the other cheek, but if you turn it enough times you find yourself on the ground.

I remembered a sermon published years ago in The Sewanee Theological Review, by William Stafford called The Church and the World (2007). It is too long to print but I wanted to share part of this sermon given to theological students.

The waters of political life must be navigated, because God has launched the ship of the church in the midst of those waters, but that does not mean that they are not terribly difficult to navigate. . . .Whatever monasteries are, they are not havens of peace isolated from political currents in the church and world. . . .You who are being formed for God's service of the Gospel are in the middle of a political storm in the church. Stormy waters do not make bad sailors, as long as the sailors do not jump overboard. And there is a LORD of the storm.

We cannot avoid these waters. If we are called to be instruments and signs of God's reconciliation, peace, and justice, we are called to sail in them. In the midst of all this ambiguity, however, keep this clear in your mind. The Gospel! The Gospel belongs to no one but God. The kingdom of God is God's, and does not belong to any group or any individual, however powerful or pious. No one enlisted in the culture wars died for your sins or rose for your justification. We are accountable to God first and last.

We have to sail in very difficult waters, where rocks and shoal can only be avoided by abandoning the voyage—and that we cannot do. As we take sail on the Gospel boat, however, keep this in your heart; no boat ever finally sank that had Jesus in it, even if he seemed to be asleep.

Wednesday, 24 February

Eric Eaton

*“Father, if You are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but Yours be done.” An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.” Luke 22:42-44*

Fear of the unknown. How often did fear creep into our minds this past year? From the invisible uncertainty of a virus, often times causing us to look at people with mistrust or even blame, to the disbelief at how politically divided we have truly become, 2020 was a year for the trash heap. More than once this year I threw up my hands or let slip a litany of swear words out of frustration at things being canceled, shelves being empty, politicians being themselves, technology not working, people forgetting to unmute or mute on conference calls, being asked if I can see the screen on said calls, washing my hands while singing hymns, not seeing my grandmother, and worrying if I will kill my mother who has cancer by just looking at her. I was very and truly afraid in 2020. I was afraid of believing the wrong thing or making the wrong choice, afraid that doing so would endanger my family and friends. I was angry we didn't get to celebrate Easter but was confident we would be able to enjoy Advent together again. It just wasn't meant to be. Even though we had a surprisingly holy and lovely simple Christmas Eve outside service, it wasn't the same as serving at the altar with Fr. Ben and Fr. Will at the 10:30 PM and being able to embrace them each after midnight with a hearty “Merry Christmas, brother”. The whole church year just wasn't the same for many of us, who see corporate worship as central to our faith. Fear. The fear that we will never be able to resume things like before. Fear. The fear that the last time I shared the common cup was perhaps truly the last time for how long? We just don't know. And not knowing, is fearing.

Yet, I opened my trusty NKJV today and read the above words written about our Savior. I remembered that He too was afraid. Afraid of the unknown. Like each of us, He prayed that this would pass, it would skip us, it would just not be at all. Jesus Christ, while man and yet Deity, was still afraid. At that moment, He was more man. An afraid man, like myself. Like you. He was frustrated, too, at His friends. At their selfishness. I can imagine Him seeing them asleep and looking bewildered, much as I did when I saw that there were literally no rolls of toilet paper in the whole state. And He was also frustrated at the political leaders of His time, just like we are today. Jesus knew fear.

But He also knew how to pray. He knew that prayer was the only way (a nod to Bishop Curry: This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine). He prayed to God, who sent strength to Jesus. He prayed that God's will be done, in spite of the fear and in spite of Christ's own understandable hesitations. There is an old saying that courage isn't the absence of fear...it's carrying on in spite of it. My brothers and sisters, this is the point. God never once promised easy going or smooth sailing. He never said we wouldn't be afraid or frustrated or tired. He knew we would have yet another global pandemic, social unrest, deep political division, and all the multitude of problems that is life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But His remedy for these things, found in the Psalms, never has changed:

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.” Psalm 46:1-3

Jesus knew these words and He prayed for the promised strength He received. We can too at any time, remembering God never breaks a promise and ask Him. Are you tired? Are you tired of being tired? Tired of being afraid? Jesus was, too. And He says: Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. So, fear no more. All that we see will not last or follow us to Glory, including all your troubles. I invite you this Lent to join me, and prayerfully leave those chains at the Cross. Fear not. Don't you know you're already free?! Amen.



**Thursday, 25 February**

**Laney Crampton**

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

*“As in my anger I swore,  
“They shall not enter my rest,”*

*though his works were finished at the foundation of the world. For in one place it speaks about the seventh day as follows, “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” And again in this place it says, “They shall not enter my rest.” Since therefore it remains open for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience,*

*again he sets a certain day—“today”—saying through David much later, in the words already quoted,*

*“Today, if you hear his voice,  
do not harden your hearts.”*

*For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later about another day. So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; for those who enter God’s rest also cease from their labors as God did from his. Hebrews 4:1-10*

This scripture was written about a missed opportunity to enter God’s rest because the people lacked faith. They lacked belief. It could be viewed as a cautionary tale about our own faith and walk. And it advocates God’s rest, Sabbath rest. We are talking about not only physical rest but rest of the spirit as well. Being instead of doing.

How many of you remember Blue Laws which are also known as Sunday Laws? These laws were designed to set aside Sunday activities for religious reasons, more specifically to promote the observance of a day of worship and rest. There was no running to Walmart Sunday afternoon to pick up food for an unplanned barbeque. No retail shopping. It was even unusual to hear a lawn being mowed on Sundays in that not so long ago America. Sunday was set aside for worship, rest from labor and rest for the soul.

This idea is not original with Americans. Blue Laws were, and, some places, continue to be practiced in Europe and other parts of the world. Even the Roman Emperor Constantine enacted what are considered Sabbath Laws!

I have friends from other countries that have lived in this country say to me, “You Americans live to work while most of the world works to live.” Our productivity and innovation have, of course, set world standards, but this 24/7 productivity often times includes no rest. With constant communication available to us now, we know how healthy it is to unplug sometime. There is no race in busyness to win God’s favor. He loves us anyway, Even God rested from his labors. He did it without Blue Laws. So can we.

*Dear Lord, fill me with your grace so that my life reflects the peace of resting in you. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.*

**Friday, 26 February**

**Grace Simmons**

*“Come, let us sing to the Lord;  
Let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.” Psalm 95:1-2*

We are living in a challenging time. Life seems somewhat out of sorts lately. There is much uncertainty- the economy, education, emotional well-being, health, religion, and politics. The list goes on and on. We need to take a moment and reflect on what we can do. I know it is sometimes difficult for me to trust in the Lord. I like to be in control. I have to remind myself that my plan may not necessarily be God's plan.

“I waited patiently upon the Lord; he stooped to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the desolate pit, out of the mire and clay; he set my feet upon a high cliff and made my footing sure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; many shall see, and stand in awe, and put their trust in the Lord.” Psalm 40:1-3

During this hour, let's all try harder to put our trust in God. We need to take care of ourselves and others. Being an educator, I appreciate a child's viewpoint. I recently asked my students what they pray for. It reminds me to keep everything in perspective. Here is what they said:

I pray for the animals, children, and babies.  
I pray for my family and friends.  
I pray for people who are sick.  
I pray for COVID to end.  
I pray for Dad's music.  
I pray for people not to argue so much.  
I pray for an education.  
I pray for the poor.  
I pray for coaches at our school.  
I pray for shelter.  
I pray for the earth.  
I pray for life.  
I pray for kindness.  
I pray for sleep.  
I pray to be loyal to each other.  
I pray for the Church.  
I pray for the Veterans.  
I pray to never doubt God.  
I pray that the Lord will be happy with me.  
I pray to trust in the Lord.  
I pray that the Lord, no matter what, will be with you.

During this Lenten season, I am going to pray my students' prayer each day. I am going to pray to trust in the Lord; I am going to pray for patience and solid footing. I will remember that God is with me- always has been and always will be. Amen.

**Saturday, 27 February**

**Lisa Stutzman-Graves**

*When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink"? The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink? Jesus answered her, "If you know the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." John 4: 7-10*

*Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be sons of your Father in Heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and send rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." Matthew 5:44-45*

I wonder when Jesus was talking to the woman at the well if he would have done the same today? After all, she had been married five times; she was of a different descent; and was currently living with a man. Back then that must have been huge. By today's standards five marriages is a lot. And then she is at the well by herself—that seems odd to me. In biblical times women didn't go places alone, or speak to strange men. Yet here she and Jesus are just chatting it up. In John 4:1-26 and Matthew 5:42-48, Jesus sets a clear example to us of talking to the underdog and loving your enemy. Jesus could have been basking in the company of his disciples, and yet here he is talking to someone on the fringe of society. He is growing her spiritually and gently loving her. Jesus didn't take society's opinion of the Samaritan woman. He was about saving souls.

*Lord Jesus help us to love all your people, especially those that are difficult to love or different from us.*

**Monday, March 1**

**Whit Rayner**

*But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Luke 6:27-38*

I have on more than one occasion kidded with our fearless Lenten Meditation organizer that the passages she doles out to me are impossible in which to find a theme, context, or juxtaposition. Thank you, fearless organizer: today's readings hit me over the head like a two by four.

In Jeremiah, the prophet speaks of a battle to come, with God protecting the people against the attack of their enemies. In Psalm 56, David laments that "All day long, (my enemies) twist my words; all their schemes are for my ruin. They conspire, they lurk, they watch my steps, hoping to take my life... In your anger God, bring the nations down."

Fast forward from the Old Testament readings to the Gospel of Luke. And what of exhortations for God to destroy one's enemies? Jesus says, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you... Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." There it is: The Golden Rule. And what better time to be reminded of the Rule... a time when tempers are at their flash points, a time when social media serves as an accelerant for the fire of diatribes between people professing to be "Facebook Friends", The Gospel tells us to forgo the pleas for God's wrath and destruction of our enemies. Jesus tells us to love your enemies, bless those who curse you and pray for those who mistreat you.

What a concept. Seems like I can remember a time when people treated those with whom they disagreed with a bit of dignity, when people treated one another with a bit of respect, when people treated others as they would like to be treated. I long for those days.

Does that mean that we, as Christians have to roll over amidst the freight train of modern mob mentality? Bishop Curry, in his new book Love Is the Way, says it well: My only challenge was learning how to receive anger and not give it back in return. I needed to do something very difficult: to stand and kneel at the same time. I needed to stand in my conviction... and when the response was anger, I needed to learn to kneel before it... when you are facing someone else who feels as strongly in their conviction as you do, anger is totally unproductive... you've got to create space for the other person... This is the dance of nonviolent change."

Easy? No. Essential? Yes! But I am reminded of the old camp song of my youth: "Let there be peace on Earth, and let it begin with me." It is incumbent on us as Christians to lead our country out of the hatred ripping our nation apart. In the words of the wonderful Inaugural poem of young Amanda Gorman: "For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it, if only we're brave enough to be it.

*Go, give us that light. Amen.*

**Tuesday, 2 March**

**Mary Anna Ingram**

Our older sister was born with special needs. She passed away in January 2007. How wonderful if you all could have known her. She loved everyone and she would tell you. We could be anywhere and when anyone spoke to her, she'd smile her beautiful smile, and always say, "you're so nice!, you're so pretty/handsome! I love you!".

Her trusting and loving soul brought so much love to all who knew her, but especially to our family. There's no doubt that she played such an important role in who I am today, and she never even knew it.

It's true that special needs children are "God's gifts". My sister came as close as anyone I have ever known to having the unconditional trust, faith and love commanded in my scripture.

Isaiah 1:2-4 writes that the people of Judah were sinning greatly and had turned against God:

*Hear me, you heavens! Listen, earth!  
For the LORD has spoken:  
"I reared children and brought them up,  
but they have rebelled against me.  
<sup>3</sup>The ox knows its master,  
the donkey its owner's manger,  
but Israel does not know,  
my people do not understand."*

In Romans 1:16-17, Paul explains that the righteous live by faith:

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*

As you walk out of the Chapel, if you look to the left, you will see a granite bench inscribed: "In loving memory of Harriett Elizabeth Searcy." Harriett is our special needs sister whose ashes were spread at the Chapel. Also inscribed on the bench is Romans 8:28,

*"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."*

Harriett's purpose was to teach us compassion, which she did every day of her life.

*Lord God, please help us have the faith to have compassion for every human being.*

**Wednesday, 3 March**

**Betty Ruth Fox**

I love country music and when I am asked why, my answer is always: 'I love it because the lyrics are easy to understand'. The same themes recur again and again in country songs ... someone loves someone, someone breaks someone's heart, someone leaves someone, and on and on. I know you are wondering what my love for country music has to do with today's scripture. Well Jesus' instructions in Matthew, unlike many parables to me, are simple and direct. After the disciples barter for the first and second positions by Jesus, He tells them being first or second is not the gig. But service is.

Jesus said in Matthew 20: 26 -28: "Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave -- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many".

Psalms 119:76 tracks the servant theme: May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant".

So, what does it mean to serve? Jesus explains in Matthew 25:35-36, in no uncertain terms: 'for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' The Chapel has an amazing Servant Ministry Committee that offers countless opportunities to serve. Many of the same ministries recur again and again.

In thinking about service, one cannot help but focus on Jesus' life. He gave it all. So, I will keep trying to serve. Jesus' instructions are pretty simple. And the opportunities are endless.

*Lord please help me serve.*

**Thursday, 4 March**

**Becky Herren**

*“Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in splendor every day and a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered in sores and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man’s table.” Luke 16:19-21*

This parable has always puzzled me. You know the story. The rich man died and was cast in hell and Lazarus, the poor man, died and went to Heaven. What had the rich man done to Lazarus that would warrant eternal damnation? Was the sin being rich? Had the rich man abused Lazarus? Had the rich man demanded that Lazarus be removed from gate?

We have seen the Lazarus of our lives lying on a pile of newspaper with a rough blanket in a doorway. Perhaps he has a dog with him for safety. The modern day Lazarus rattles a few coins in a cup as we pass. Then, you hear a voice saying that his living conditions is his fault. The voice continues with he is crazy; he likes the life he lives; if you give him money, he will use it for drugs or drink; there are agencies to help him; he might be violent; do not look; keep walking. And you walk by.

This parable I believe is telling us that the sin was not the rich man’s wealth. The sin of the rich man is that he never noticed Lazarus and he accepted him as part of the landscape. The sin of the rich man is he could look at Lazarus and feel no grief or pain at his suffering. The rich man offered no kind word and he could look a fellow human being’s misery and feel nothing.

Empathy is the key. We need to imagine ourselves in another person’s place no matter how different they are from us. John said, “Those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen cannot love God whom they have not seen.” The same God who came to this world as Jesus comes to all of us in the bodies of our fellow human beings, even those who do not look like us. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ. In the words of Barbara Brown Taylor in her book, Holy Envy:

“One of the ways the Son of Man smuggles himself into our midst is by showing up as a stranger in need of welcome.”

So, let us be about the task of treating those we meet even those we think evil with kindness and respect. That will make a difference in our world!

**Friday, 5 March**

**Sarabeth Clark**

*Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually.  
Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he  
has uttered. Psalm 105: 4-5*

In Psalm 105, we are reminded to seek the Lord and his strength at all times. I seem to call on the Lord fervently, when I'm experiencing a difficult situation, feeling the pains of grief, or when I or someone I love is encountering a health issue. When life is flowing smoothly and effortlessly, I need to be reminded to call on the Lord with as much passion. In Jesus Calling, Sarah Young puts it beautifully, "Seek My Face, Speak to Me, and I will light up your mind."

*Heavenly Father, remind us to seek you in good times as well as in bad times. Open our eyes that we may see all the wonderful things you have done for us. Open our ears that we may hear the wisdom you have spoken to us. Let our voices speak gratitude for all that you have provided for us. Let all our senses feel your continual guidance and strength and share Your love with others.  
Amen.*



**Saturday, 6 March**

**Nelwyn Madison**

*Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For “no human being will be justified in his sight” by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.*

*But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.*

*Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law. Romans 3:19-31*

I was thrilled when asked to prepare a Lenten meditation from the third chapter of Romans because it is probably my favorite chapter in the Bible. It is the foundation of our understanding of Christianity. It explains Grace!

There may not be many of you who remember the mid-1970's when Jimmy Carter was running for president. It was a fun time to be a southerner, because the news moguls were gaga over everything southern and the stories abounded of their ignorance of our customs. The brief story below is just one of many circulating at the time.

A group of national reporters were in Plains, Georgia, having breakfast. When their plates of eggs and sausage came out piled high with grits, they all looked askance and one pointedly asked, “What’s that?” The waitress responded, “That’s grits.” The reporter said, “I did NOT order any grits.” She sweetly replied, “You don’t orders grits; they just comes.”

And, so it is with Grace. We can’t buy it, we don’t work for it, we don’t ask for it; it just comes. It is a totally free gift from God.

In the first two chapters of Romans, Paul explains how God laid out the law in the beginning of the world and there would not be eternal life for those who did not entirely obey it. Beginning with Adam and Eve there was no 100% obedience, even though many worked hard at trying. Paul tells us in chapter 20: For by works of the law, no human being will be justified in His sight. He further says the purpose of the law is to show us our sin.

So, no matter how hard we try, we can never be perfect under God’s law. What to do?

Paul tells us in verses 21-23 that the righteousness of God has been manifested from the law.... for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, BUT are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. And, what a gift it is!

As sinners, we are able to gain eternal through the acceptance of this gift.

*We pray that we will be forever grateful, if not always worthy, for the gift of God’s grace forgiving our sins through the redemptive price of Christ Jesus. Amen*

**Monday, 8 March**

**Dick Lawrence**

*On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind;" and, "Love your neighbor as yourself." "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." Luke 10:27- 28*

The above scripture is from the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The Samaritans were Jewish people who intermarried with foreigners. They were despised by the orthodox Jews because of their mixed blood, different beliefs, and low economic status.

To his credit, the expert on the law answers his own question of "Who is my neighbor?" by replying that the Samaritan was a "neighbor" to the man who had been left for dead on the side of the road by robbers. The Samaritan went out of his way to help the victim on the side of the road. On the other hand, despite their high positions in the Jewish hierarchy, the priest and Levite were not neighbors to the victim because they had purposely avoided helping the victim.

Jesus used the parable of the "Good Samaritan" to teach that a dynamic lifestyle of love is much more important than religious dogmatism.

In Archetypal Nonviolence, Renee Moreau Cunningham recounts the story that when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assisting in the voter registration for some blacks in Lowndes, Alabama, the voter registrar told King he was not welcome there. King responded that he did not understand. The registrar replied, "Then you are damned dumb if you don't understand." King asked the registrar, "Are you a Christian?" The registrar answered, "Yes. I'm a Methodist, but what has Christianity to do with the vote?"

In the Future of Faith, Harvey Cox expresses the opinion that Christianity got away from following the example of Jesus when people began establishing uniform systems of what one had to believe in order to be a true Christian. For example, in a number of Christian denominations complying with the man-made dogmas became more important than following Jesus. Today, some Fundamentalists take their literal view of Scripture, bolstered by their doctrine of inerrancy, to exclude a great number of their "neighbors."

*Dear God, during this Lenten season, make me focus on the ways that any dogmas prevent me from loving my neighbor as myself. Let me repent by learning to follow your way. Amen.*

**Tuesday, 9 March**

**Susan Lawrence Hedglin**

*Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all day long. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is always with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your decrees are my meditation.” Psalm 119: 97-99*

“90% of the Book of Common Prayer comes from scripture. We use the Bible constantly, but do we use it consciously?” Archbishop Welby

Like Archbishop Welby says, the Bible is the foundation of our faith and our worship. The most important part of our weekly worship, the Eucharist, comes directly from Jesus’ directions to us in the Gospels. Sometimes, we Episcopalians aren’t the best at reading the Bible for ourselves. We rely on weekly worship and sermons for the heavy lifting. We’re hearing it constantly in worship, but are we using it consciously in our everyday lives?

I have wavered over the years. Sometimes I’ve built great habits. I’ve read some wonderful devotions about specific books of the Bible. A few years ago, when I was teaching middle school Sunday school, I even read the entire Bible in a year, two years in a row. Those middle school students kept me accountable! And yet there have been more times when I haven’t been disciplined enough to maintain a daily reading practice. This year I have recommitted to a Bible in One Year (BiOY) plan, available for free at the Center for Biblical Studies. I know that when I read scripture regularly, and when I make time to listen to it, I draw closer to God. By reading God’s word, I can better discern the paths I need to take.

Recommit to a personal devotional practice that continues after Lent. How will you engage with God’s word more regularly? Lord, help me read the Bible regularly and see its applications for my life.

Wednesday, 10 March

Meg Kilgore

As I read through the scriptures for my meditation, I thought of my dear friend who often sends me thoughts/meditations/stories/scriptures for the day. I don't get one every day. Some are comforting, some upsetting, some encouraging, some just bring a smile. Some have uncanny relevance for the day and times we are living ...others seemingly have no relevance at all. These scriptures for today define humans and our life's experiences:

- All-consuming love
- God's chosen city
- The wrath of God and suffering of His people
- Death and family blessings
- Human traditions (socially destructive behaviors) vs God's commandments
- What comes from the heart vs what comes from the world

WHEW! Where to begin ... I don't believe in coincidences. I used to when I was young. I was just momentarily amused at the timing of the "coincidence", and I moved on quickly without another thought or without pausing to reflect. When did I change? I'm not really sure. I was well into my adult life that was defined by my professional career in nursing. I suppose that I began to pause and reflect on the absolute reality that the timing of these "encounters" could NOT be random. Through a friend, I was introduced to the writings of Squire Rushnell, author of the God Winks series. I found so much guidance, comfort and grounding in trusting God as my "Navigator" of these encounters. I can't make them occur or wish them into existence; HOWEVER, I must be open to observe them and reflect on their meaning for my life at that precise moment. So, what does this rambling have to do with my meditation?

As I prepared to write my meditation for the above scriptures, I have had God Winks along the way: books I have not seen or opened for years; pages open to the wisdom on the exact topic of the scriptures; a message sent by my friend at the exact time that I was thinking about how to write a meditation! All of these have given me insight for meditation. The message I received from my friend was an article about an author's journey through her very difficult life. The concept of meditation is like "wintering" as described in a book by Katherine May, How Wintering Replenishes. She describes wintering as "a season of the natural world, a respite our bodies require, and a state of mind...a cyclical, recurrent weather pattern...a time to withdraw from the world to maximize resources". I know some would argue that we have been "wintering" far beyond our "winter" season this year with the pandemic, but I digress.

I have been blessed to study the above scriptures and realize that "WHO WE ARE" is simply God's. God made us. God made every person. God loves us for no cause or reason: love that is pure, absolute, divine, and uncaused. We can't do anything to earn it, to lose it, to cause it. No matter what, HE will love us always. God loves all of us equally. If we chose to receive that love, His amazing grace, we change our life. We are able to show the miracle of God's unending/uncaused love for us by loving the "unloving and the unlovable". We receive the love of God that has no reason or cause, and we can love others the same way, with no reason or cause.

Of course, there will be barriers and many obstacles...lots of temptations to get us off the pathways, detours, meandering side roads and dead ends. We have choices all along the way. God gave us free will. Forces of dark and light (GodWinks) will always be tugging at us. Light or Dark? The side we stay on is up to us.

Scriptures have relevance...we often have to search and "meditate" to find it. We have to put it in modern-day translation for that relevance, which is so hard sometimes. Just look and listen for the GodWinks.

I leave you with a prayer of Thomas Merton from Thoughts in Solitude who died in 1968 at the young age of 53. (Talk about relevance for today's times):

God, we have no idea where we are going. We do not see the road ahead of us. We cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do we really know ourselves, and the fact that we think we are following your will does not mean we are actually doing so. But we believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And we hope we have that desire in all we are doing. We hope that we will never do anything apart from that desire. And we know that if we do this, you will lead us by the right road, though we may know nothing about it. Therefore, we will trust you always though we may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. We will not fear, for you are ever with us, and you will never leave us to face our perils alone.

AMEN and AMEN!

**Thursday, 11 March**

**Sarah Anderson**

*"I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth." Genesis 9:13*

I have found myself looking for signs this year. Signs of hope when all the news seems dark, signs of love in a world that seems predisposed to hate, signs of justice for people who are consistently oppressed. Instead of falling into despair, I opened my ears and my eyes. I don't know what I expected to find, certainly not the voice of God calling down from Heaven- probably not even a whisper in the back of my mind. The funny thing about God though, is that He delights in exceeding our expectations and finding new and interesting ways to call to us and care for us. For the past few years, I have attempted to take on a spiritual practice for Lent instead of giving something up. Last year, I decided that every time I felt joy or experienced an act of kindness, I would make a mental note of it and say a quick prayer of thanksgiving. My joyous moments ranged in size and scale from eating tomatoes from my garden and catching up with old friends to simply having the strength to get out of bed and go to work. As the world got more chaotic and the pandemic hit us hard, I decided to keep this practice alive.

Throughout this year I have seen a million signs of God's enduring and everlasting love beating back the fear and hate and doubt we've all felt. This week, I think of Noah and his family and the animals on the ark- fearful and tired, but steadfastly trusting that the Lord would deliver them safely to dry land. I think about the intense faith they must have had and the strict obedience to the Lord. I wondered how I would react in such a grave situation. Although it hasn't started flooding yet, this year felt dire. Despite that, God was and is forever with us and speaks to us daily, we just have to look and listen for Him. His means of communication may not be what we expect, or even what we want, but God speaks and we are obligated to open our ears and listen. Our signs may not be a dove or a rainbow, but I have faith that God will deliver us from our hardships and land us on dry ground.

**Friday, 12 March**

**Martha Rayner**

*“Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” Genesis 18:14*

*“Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.” Psalm 57:1*

*“Be exalted, O God, above the heavens: let your glory be over all the earth.” Psalm 57:5*

The Lord promised Abraham a son in his old age, which seemed impossible to both Abraham and Sarah. In today’s reading from Genesis, Sarah laughs (just as most people would) when she is told that she will have a son within a year. However, the Lord remained faithful to Abraham and Sarah, and Sarah bore a son “...at the very time God had promised him” (Genesis 21:2). Whether or not it seems realistic in the moment to us, God keeps His promises.

Today’s scripture is a reminder of the Lord’s faithfulness, which is especially comforting in times of distress. In today’s scripture, we see another characteristic of the Lord particularly comforting for us as we are living in such uncertain times. Psalm 57 expresses God’s protection for those who take refuge in Him. The past year has been full of so many unknowns for all of us. However, we can find comfort and assurance in knowing that the Lord will protect us “in the shadow of [His] wings until the disaster has passed” (Psalm 57:1). We know that the Lord is faithful, and the disaster will pass.

*I pray that we are reminded of the Lord’s faithfulness and protection, both now as we are still in the midst of the pandemic, and always. Let us give God the glory because of His goodness and love for us!*

**Saturday, 13 March**

**Lynne Stillions**

*Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. John 4:36*

With this new year beginning, I decided I wanted to read and focus on something positive. I had grown so weary of CoVid news and all the political fighting in our country. I finally dusted off my copy of by Randy Alcorn. It had been sitting on my bookshelf unopened for over two years.

How much better off I would be if I could focus on all the blessings of eternal life in Heaven, instead of musing over all the current troubles we face on this earth.

John 4:36 shares with us the promise of heaven. Jesus gave us that promise of Heaven when he died for our sins. If we accept Jesus as our Savior, we can look forward to eternal life with him.

What will Heaven be like? Randy Alcorn states “In heaven, the barriers between redeemed human beings and God will forever be gone. To look into God’s eyes will be to see what we’ve always longed to see: the person who made us for His own good pleasure. Seeing God will be like seeing everything else for the first time. Why? Because not only will we see God, He will be the lens through which we see everything else---people, ourselves, and the events of this life.”

Another theologian Sam Storms writes, “We will constantly be more amazed with God, more in love with God, and thus ever more relishing His presence and our relationship with Him. Our experience with God will never reach its consummation. We will never finally arrive, as if upon reaching a peak we discover there is nothing beyond. Our experience of God will never become stale. It will deepen and develop, intensify and amplify, unfold and increase, broaden and balloon.”

These beautiful descriptions of heaven give me so much comfort and hope. I have found that by reading a few pages each day about the joys of heaven, I have a better outlook and am talking to God more often.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the blessings of eternal life you have promised the faithful. Thank you for your Son’s sacrifice on the cross so that we may enjoy the fruits of Heaven for all eternity. Amen.*

**Monday, 15 March**

**Ralph Stillions**

*For those blessed by the Lord shall inherit the land, but those cursed by him shall be cutoff. Depart from evil, and do good; so you shall abide forever. For the Lord loves justice; He will not forsake his faithful ones. Psalm 37: 22; 27-28*

I was cleaning out some old files a while back and I came across something I saved a long time back. It was a document entitled "Advice from An Old Farmer". As we in Mississippi know, often some of these rural tillers of the land have wisdom born from experience that is far beyond what we might expect.

A sampling of some of these idioms: You cannot say an unkind word; Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer; If you get to thinkin' you are a person of some influence, try orderin' somebody else's dog around; Live simply, love generously, care deeply, speak kindly. Leave the rest to God.

There was one, however, that grabbed my attention the most:

When you wallow with the pigs, expect to get dirty.

I got to thinking about the religious practice of shunning. In a religious context, I found one definition that says shunning is "a formal decision by a denomination or a congregation to cease interaction with an individual or a group and follows a particular set of rules." I think the practice is most commonly associated with the Amish, but it is, or was, also practiced by Jehovah's Witness. These are not exactly fringe element denominations. So I started searching for some biblical references that arguably could support the practice of shunning. Some are:

*Do not be misled. Bad company corrupts good character. 1 Corinthians 15: 33*

*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. 1 Corinthians 6: 14*

*Be careful of associating with people who are disobedient. Be you not therefore partakers with them. Ephesians 5: 6-7.*

There are many others. These are just a sampling.

Lest there be any mistake, I am in no way advocating a formal congregational practice of shunning. Far from it. After all, we are all clearly called to be evangelists, which often means interacting with those who differ from us in their belief system. In other words, we often may have to "get dirty."

However, if a relationship with another gets toxic to the point that you are tempted or being led to do things that are contrary to your beliefs and morals, there is plenty of biblical support of, as Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:5, "...from such withdraw yourself."

One last piece of advice from the Old Farmer: Always drink upstream from the herd.



**Tuesday, 16 March**

**Becky Herren**

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in Heaven.” Matthew 5: 43-45*

This passage is a portion of the “Sermon on the Plain” delivered by Jesus to his inner circle of disciples as well as to those who are gathered around to overhear this teaching. Having pronounced God’s blessing on the poor, having lived out God’s intention of generous blessing by healing all who came to Him, Jesus now instructs those who wish to follow him regarding their behavior, particularly toward their enemies.

This particular verse from Matthew Chapter 5 has always perplexed me UNTIL I discovered that I was thinking of love as a feeling not an act of will. The Greeks had a different word for the different kinds of love—eros, philia, agape. The basic message is this: do not retaliate against those who wish you harm. Do not seek vengeance. This of course flies in the face of conventional wisdom, which dictates that one should be good to friends and hurtful to enemies. Jesus points not to society but to God’s nature as the model of Godly behavior. God is kind and merciful to all, no matter whether they are good or wicked. God will give more than we ask for, so we should, too. We as Christians are called to a HIGHER STANDARD than that of sinners; we are called when faced with evil to respond with restraint and kindness He is telling us to be willing to work for the well being of everyone in our path.

Sometimes people mistake this teaching as an admonition to be passive. But the behavior Jesus calls for is not passive but active. GIVE; LOVE; LEND (and expect nothing in return); OFFER your other cheek; EXTEND mercy.

Here is the challenge. ALL people are called to be kind to one another-- treating one another as brothers and sisters. There is hardly a day in our lives that we cannot offer a smile or a kind word not just to those we know but the people who are strangers. So beginning today, let us be kind, offering a gentle word or a smile to friends and strangers wherever we are, demonstrating a Christ-like character as a Christian witness in the world. Taking the high road deflects or de-escalates hostilities. Responding with kindness transforms the interaction. Kindness mirrors God’s character! It takes courage and conviction to extend mercy beyond one’s circle and especially to one’s enemies.

*Please bless me Father as I go about my day and continually remind to be kind to others. Amen*

Wednesday, 17 March

Bob Williams

*Oh sing to the Lord a new song;  
sing to the Lord, all the earth!  
Sing to the Lord, bless his name;  
tell of his salvation from day to day.  
Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvelous works among all the peoples!  
For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;  
he is to be feared above all gods.  
For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,  
but the Lord made the heavens.  
Splendor and majesty are before him;  
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.  
Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,  
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!  
Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;  
bring an offering, and come into his courts!  
Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness;  
tremble before him, all the earth!  
Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!  
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity."  
Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;  
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;  
let the field exult, and everything in it!  
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy  
before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness. Psalm 96*

The psalm for today is a beautiful song calling on us to tell nations about God's glory and His great salvation. So the order of the psalm is first, worship God joyfully, sing, sing, sing, and then bear witness of his glorious salvation to the nations who have never heard.

As I read these words, I began to think about 2020 and the Pandemic. Many people have lost their lives. Others have lost their jobs and security. What is there to sing about? I search my soul as to why should we sing and rejoice. Then I remember, this is a man-made disease. This was not God's creation. We should sing and rejoice because through God's divine will our scientist and chemist have found a vaccination for this deadly disease. For those that have lost their lives, we should give thanks for God's salvation. Without it, these individuals could not know everlasting life.

Chapel Family, we must persevere through this storm. We must continue through our ministries to tell of God's salvation and marvelous works. Through rejoicing and singing, we can bring others to know of God's mercy and kindness to His people.

*Jesus, help us to focus on you and not the storm that rages around us. Let us put our trust in you, even when we do not understand your plan. Amen*

**Thursday, 18 March**

**Tommy Roberson**

*"I will bless the Lord at all times and his praise continues to be in my mouth." Psalms 34:1*

As I think about the verses in this Psalms, I realize how imperfect I really am. David the shepherd boy like many of us had highs and lows but he always returned to his belief in the Lord. As we look at this past year, it has definably been a low time for many. We grieve for people who have died, miss being able to attend church, miss fellowship with our friends and family, and we miss not doing things that we enjoy doing. We are tired of being locked down but as tough as this past year has been, it's hard to believe we can find satisfaction. During this time, I have learned that I am not alone because I have a wonderful wife, wonderful children, and a Lord who loves me for who I am and is always with me. The Lord formed me like a potter forms a beautiful cup or bowl. He molded me into who I am, imperfect in so many ways and yet he loves me despite my shortcoming.

My parents loved the great hymn "How Great Thou Art". As I listen to this hymn it revives my faith and love. As we journey through Lent, let us remember the great thoughts/words from this song and know how great the Lord is in forgiving our sins and loving us for who we are.

**Friday, 19 March**

**Rebecca Haas**

*But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:20-25*

In a dream, Joseph was told of a promised child to be born of his virgin wife, Mary. The child was to be named, Jesus, meaning Savior, bringing salvation from sin as promised in Old Testament Scriptures. After this dream Joseph was no longer afraid. These words remind me of so many fears and anxieties I've had throughout life beginning as a child. Sometimes, after talking through them with those close to me I'm still not relieved. The best way to extinguish these fears is to pray and ask God for help. Just as Joseph did not understand what was happening, God explained it to him in a dream. Our prayers are often answered in various ways, sometimes those we don't expect such as Joseph. When we are faced with difficult situations do we turn to God in prayer? We are invited to take our problems and dilemmas to the Lord in trust.

*Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**Saturday, 20 March**

**Reggie Sims**

*When any of you has a grievance against another, do you dare to take it to court before the unrighteous, instead of taking it before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels—to say nothing of ordinary matters? If you have ordinary cases, then, do you appoint as judges those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to decide between one believer and another, but a believer goes to court against a believer—and before unbelievers at that?*

*In fact, to have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? But you yourselves wrong and defraud—and believers at that.*

*Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. 2 Corinthians 6:1-10*

In researching this passage from St. Paul, some commenters referred to this passage as Paul's resume. After reading the passage a few times, what struck me was how lucky Paul was. I always have struggled with what to do as a lay person to fulfill my responsibility of "spreading the good news of Christ, or more succinctly, how do I use the talents that God gave me to serve Him. First of all, I would fail miserably as a clergy person, and second, I've spent time in, what my mom called "Reggie's purgatory". The Reggie purgatory was my college years until I got married, started a family, and figured out that I needed to grow up and "get right with the Lord" as mom would say. There has to be a place for me somewhere between going to seminary and Reggie's purgatory. I assume, like me, you have spent time praying and asking God to tell you how to use your talents. That's where my jealousy of St. Paul comes in. He's going down the road, minding his own business and God hits him over the head, so to speak, with exactly what he needs to do for the rest of his life. That's a terrifying thought but liberating. Would I, or do I, have the courage to look through the scales that are on my eyes today and do God's work in the hopes of hearing someday, "Well done good and faithful servant." I hope and continue to pray that I do.

*Godspeed and may Christ's Peace which passes all understanding be with you always.*

**Monday, 22 March**

**Isabel Weathersby**

Our dear friend, Isabel Weathersby died on November 11, 2019. This was a meditation she wrote in 2017.

*For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy ... and precious is their blood in his sight. Psalm 72:12-14*

Whereas this psalm was written with an earthly king(s) in mind (descendants of David), it definitely has a messianic meaning. It really does sound like a description of Jesus' ministry many centuries later, the ultimate descendent of David! All through his ministry Jesus was concerned with the poor, needy and weak, the least among us, those most easily abused by the powerful.

And now we, as Christians, are called upon to follow his example and help the needy. At the Chapel we do just that. We support Stewpot and Our Daily Bread. A few years ago we helped build a small home in Flora for someone in need. Some of the money we raise each year from Day in the Country goes to various organizations helping the poor, needy and weak. I think this is one of our greatest blessings, helping others.

Just as the psalmist exhorted his contemporaries, let us remember the disadvantaged. During this Lenten season as we meditate on our many blessings and acknowledge our many sins, let us not forget those least among us and the Christian church's role in sustaining them. We need to ask ourselves have we done enough. What more can we as Christians do? What more can the Christian community and specifically the Chapel do, for we all are our brother's keeper?

*Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son came not to be served but to serve: Bless all who, following in his steps, give themselves to the service of others; that with wisdom, patience, and courage, they may minister in his Name to the suffering, the friendless, and the needy; for the love of him who laid down his life for us, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

**Tuesday, 23 March**

**Margaret Roberson**

During this season of Lent we often speak of fasting. Throughout the ages, fasting was known as one of the most important religious duties. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book The Cost of Discipleship said, "Jesus takes it for granted that his disciples will observe the pious custom of fasting. Strict exercise of self-control is an essential feature of the Christian life. Such customs have only one purpose-- to make the disciples more ready and cheerful to accomplish those things which God would have done. Many references to fasting are given in the Old and New Testaments. To prepare for ministry, Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness fasting and praying. To seek God's wisdom, Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted for the church elders before committing them to the Lord for his service. To show grief, Nehemiah mourned, prayed, and fasted when he learned that the walls of Jerusalem had been destroyed. To seek protection or deliverance, Ezra declared a fast and prayed for a safe journey for the Israelites as they fled Babylon. After Jonah pronounced judgment on the city of Nineveh, the king ordered the people to fast and pray. To gain victory after losing 40,000 men, the Israelites fasted. The next day they defeated the Benjamites. Luke writes of a prophetess named Anna who never left the temple. She fasted and prayed day and night to express her love and devotion to God. These are only a few examples of fasting in the Bible.

In Mark 2:18-20, the people asked Jesus why his disciples were not fasting as John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees. Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?" Jesus gave a simple explanation. There is a time for fasting and time for celebrating. At a wedding it is a time to rejoice and celebrate with the bride and bridegroom. For the disciples, this was a time for rejoicing in the Lord's presence and celebrating his goodness. There will be a time for the disciples, as with all his followers, to seek the Lord with humility, fasting, and prayer in order to have a more intimate relationship with Christ.

In Mark 2:21-22, Jesus uses the comparison of pouring new wine into old wineskins to having a "closed mind" and refusing to learn new things. In Jesus's time wine was stored in wineskins and not in bottles. As the wine would ferment, the excreting gases would cause pressure on the wineskin. The new wineskins were flexible and would expand, the old ones were hard and would easily burst. Just as there is a time for fasting and for feasting, there is a time for the old as well as the new. Jesus brought a new world, a new teaching, a new beginning. Through his resurrection he brought each of us new life. The Lord wants us to be open to the new work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as the new wineskin is open to receiving new wine.

Use this time of Lent reflection as a time of fasting and joy to grow in your knowledge and understanding of Christ's Word and rejoice in a deeper relationship with our Lord.

**Wednesday, 24 March**

**The Rev. David Christian**

David Christian was a much-loved priest at the Chapel of the Cross who died in June 2005 at the age of 53. This is a portion from one of his sermons.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Peter 1:3*

In the poem, "Unharvested", Robert Frost tells of walking in a country land and of a pleasant fresh fragrance in the air. He looked over a stone wall to find out what it was and where it came from, and discovered that on the other side of the wall was an apple orchard. The apples of one of the trees had fallen and lay ungathered in the grass. Undisturbed they had turned themselves into cider. It was their fragrance the poem had caught, and it set him thinking. Listen to the last verse of "Unharvested."

May something always go unharvested,  
May much stay out of our stated plan,  
Apples, or something forgotten and left  
So smelling their sweetness would be no theft.

"May something always go unharvested." There is a philosophy of life in that sentence. If we make it our own, it could change an attitude that needs changing. What we do and what we leave undone; whether we spend our days in quiet desperation or possess the peace of the humble in spirit; whether we struggle to fulfill all our ends before our end or learn to "go gentle into that good night." If we were content to allow something to go unharvested in our life, it might improve our perspective, change our priorities, refine our humor, and broaden our appreciation.

What Jesus and the church call us to as Christians is a kind of detachment; a detachment from the things of this world. We are neither to disdain them or covet them. We are to hold them lightly, as gifts to be delighted in and to be used for our well-being and for the well-being of others.

The detachment is expressed well by Paul in his letter to the Church at Philippi: "I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In all and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

It can be seen in this story from the life of Horetz Chaim, a Polish rabbi from the last century. One day a tourist from America paid him a visit. The visitor was astonished to see the rabbi's house was only a simple room filled with books, plus a table and a bench. "Rabbi," asked the visitor, "Where is your furniture?" "Where is yours?" replied the rabbi. "Mine?" asked the puzzled American. "But I am only passing through." "So am I," said the rabbi. "So am I."



**Thursday, 25 March**

**Betty Ruth Fox**

*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion "your God reigns." Isaiah 52:7*

Boy, could I use a reminder of good news. For the past year the news has been doom and gloom. I cannot stand it. I am a glass half-full person. I quit listening to the news some time ago. I don't check the Covid numbers every day. Don't get me wrong. I am very careful, wear my mask, and respect everyone's opinions.

But I am a good news kind of person. An eternal optimist. And this liturgy is filled with good news, so I am thrilled to be reflecting on it.

In John 1:9 the good news continues: The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

Verses 12 and 13 continue: Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God -- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

With all of the time I have spent at home, I have reflected quite a bit on the past year. I want to be around people. I don't like staying quarantined. I so much appreciate more now than ever our opportunities to be together in church, for dinner, or just visiting.

My takeaway is that the good news of Jesus Christ is with us forever and cannot be taken away. On that I must focus.

*Christ's peace to you all.*

Friday, 26 March

The Rev. Ben Robertson

*I have become a laughingstock all day long. Jeremiah 20:9*

*Make 'em laugh, make 'em laugh  
Don't you know everyone wants to laugh?  
Now you could study Shakespeare and be quite elite  
And you can charm the critics and have nothin' to eat  
Just slip on a banana peel, the world's at your feet  
Make 'em laugh, make 'em laugh, make 'em laugh.  
Donald O'Connor, Singing in the Rain*

Laughter is a powerful thing. In public speaking, in the pulpit or at the Rotary Club meeting, start with a funny story, and your congregation is predisposed to like you, and to listen to whatever you say next. When a situation is tense, a well-timed quip can lower the temperature. When making friends – or perhaps wooing a potential sweetheart – witty repartee can be winning. And never underestimate the ability of a good “dad joke” ... to annoy my teenage daughter.

According to a February 2020 article in Scientific American, laughter, “clearly serves a social function. It is a way for us to signal to another person that we wish to connect with them.” When we laugh, around the dinner table, in a crowded theater (remember those!?!), or even when we respond to a friend’s text with a sincere “lol,” we are connecting, we are bonding, we’re really saying, in the words of Louis Armstrong, “I love you.”

Who knows why Jeremiah’s audience was laughing at him. Maybe he was a funny guy. Perhaps it was nervous laughter because the people felt guilty about the sinful moments of their lives. Jeremiah could have been calling out injustices that the people were not prepared to confront. Or maybe, they actually wanted to connect with Jeremiah’s God and they didn’t know how to start.

The entirety of scripture – Genesis to Revelation – is the story of a God who wants to connect with His creation, especially these people He made in His image. But we, wrapped up in our arrogance, our fear, our blasphemous belief that we are unworthy of love, avoid this connection-searching God. And Lent, at its core, is not a season to wallow in our wretchedness (save that for football season) or obsess over the ways we separate ourselves from God. Instead, in this holy season, we could contemplate the ways God invites us to connect with Him. Wonder and look for the ways our God is looking for us. And admit – and this is the hardest part – that God loves us and wants to connect with us just as we are.

One of my favorite prayers in the entire Book of Common Prayer is from the Prayers of the People: Form II. It reads, “I ask your prayers for all who seek God, or a deeper knowledge of Him. Pray that they may find and be found by Him.” I pray that each of us seeks God this day and this Lent. And when we find him, perhaps we will share a good laugh. Amen.

**Saturday, 27 March**

**Robert Pooley**

*And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." Matthew 9:35-38*

Today's Gospel reading begins with a very busy Jesus healing the many multitudes of sick people throughout the kingdom. He demonstrated great compassion for their helplessness. As a practicality to continue this ministry through the ages, with Jesus leading by example, the gospel reading concludes with challenging the disciples to pray for help with the plentiful harvest.

As I understand it, the harvest Jesus is challenging the disciples to help with are broken people needing compassion, just like all of us are in need of compassion at one time or another. So according to scripture, we are part of the plentiful harvest needing help or healing. We are more often called to help work as a disciple.

Jesus was moved with compassion and so should we be. Paul's letter to the Ephesians calls for us to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, in the unity of the Spirit.

This reminds me of an element of what is taught in the Cursillo movement. Piety is an outward expression of a person's faith. A living piety translates into action. "Make a friend, be a friend, bring your friend to Christ." Christian action is part of our baptismal covenant. We are called to prayerfully do the Lord's work. We are called to be compassionate like Jesus and do what we can to help the helpless. We are sent by God to perform Christian action in the world. We are sent into the world to represent Christ and his Church, and to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation and healing throughout the "plentiful harvest".

*Lord God Almighty, help us to prayerfully consider your calling to continue your ministries for healing, reconciliation and representing Christ in Your kingdom. Amen.*

**Monday, 29 March**

**Ellen O'Neal**

*Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." John 12:1-8*

In this story, Jesus has gone to a dinner in his honor at the home of Lazarus, whom he had previously raised from the dead (I think Jesus was certainly deserving of a dinner in his honor, no?). Jesus and Lazarus lounged at the table while Martha, Lazarus's sister, served them. Suddenly Martha took about a pint of quite expensive perfume and poured it all over Jesus's feet and then wiped them with her hair. What an extravagance! All that expensive perfume, gone. Judas Iscariot scolded her, thinking only of the value of the perfume and how it had been wasted.

But was the perfume "wasted?" I believe Jesus intends us to "waste ourselves" on him. We are to worship him with all we have and all we are. Just as we learn that Jesus is the pearl of great price, then are we not to figuratively sell all we have to buy that pearl? Jesus is worth that, and to Martha, a pint of perfume, and her own clean hair, were nothing in comparison to her worship of and praise for Jesus.

I do not think this is only about giving of money and expensive things, but of intangibles as well. How much are we willing to give, to throw away, to "waste" on our love for and worship of Jesus. Our pride? Our reputation? Our pretty things? I think Jesus wants us to fling ourselves onto the rocks, to waste ourselves, in our love for and worship of him.

*Lord, you are worthy of my love, my praise, and my devotion – as much as I can give. Help me to pray to you unceasingly, to constantly seek a closer relationship with you, to throw all caution to the wind and to "waste myself" on my love for and worship of you, in all that I do.*

**Tuesday, 30 March**

**Becky Herren & Frederick Buechner**

Christmas has a large and colorful cast of characters including not only Mary, Joseph, and the Baby Jesus, but the Angel Gabriel, the Heavenly Hosts, the Innkeeper, Herod the King, the Wise Men, and the animals in the stable. We have seen them represented so many times we would recognize them anywhere!! We know all about the birth of Jesus. The manger is as familiar as home. We have made a major production of it and we have added minor attractions.. carols, Santa Claus, Ebenezer Scrooge, and so on.

The symbol of Easter is the empty tomb. The empty tomb does not move people to sing carols and give gifts or string it with lights. However, for believers life has never been the same since. Death was defeated...simple...direct... the heart of the Good News and it is why the cross has become the Christian symbol.

Easter gives back to us everything that Good Friday takes from us. It is Jesus Himself, and he is restored to us and in this wonderful restoration He gives us eternal life. He is ours forever! He holds us so closely that not even death can part us!

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

**Wednesday, 31 March**

**Stan Herren**

*A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: even as I have loved you, that you also love another. By this all men will know that you are disciples if you have love for one another. John 13:34-35*

Of all the powers, love is the most powerful. It alone can conquer the human heart where marching armies cannot. Jesus asks us to love one another. I think this love is shown through a willingness to work for another person's wellbeing. I also believe that this command means we do not necessarily have to like the person we are serving. Sometimes liking someone may actually stand in the way of loving them.

Working in the banking industry for forty-four years, there were customers that I did not like, but I loved them in that I had a desire to work for their well being always providing excellent services and quality advise to them. This was my way of showing Christ's love daily.

So, let us truly love one another and seek God's face on every human face we see.

## Thursday, 1 April: Maundy Thursday

**Bill Buhner**

*Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. John 13:1*

From the 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter of John:

- Jesus knew that his hour had come...
- Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands...
- “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”
- For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.”
- “Do you know what I have done to you?”

On this day, the Sanctuary is cleared, the Altar stripped, the Ambry or Tabernacle is opened, the Blessed Elements removed, and, at the end, the Sanctuary Lamp is extinguished. He is not here--and tomorrow He will die.

He knew all these things that would come to pass, but, his Disciples did not know—yet.

Now, after all this time it comes down to us. What do WE know?

By the grace of God we KNOW that he does not leave his Disciples, or us, but, rises from the dead on the third day. We KNOW, as they knew, that He will ALWAYS be with us. When there is no one else, when there is no hope, we KNOW that He is here. ALWAYS.

Lord Jesus Christ, son of the living God, have mercy on us, all sinners. Lord Jesus, stay with us this day. Help us, yet again, to KNOW you.

## Friday, 2 April: Good Friday

Greg Crotty

*My God, My God, why have You forsake Me? But You, O Lord, do not be far from Me; Deliver Me from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion's mouth and from the horns of the wild Oxen! You have answered Me. Psalm 22*

King David faced his share of trail and danger as expressed in Psalm 22, but it was his confidence and trust in God that resonates in the verses above. His example of trust, while in the midst of struggle, was so impactful that his words would be repeated by Jesus Himself while on the cross. The psalm has been referred to as an expression of Suffering and Faith, a prayer for Help and a Song of Praise and seems to predict the first Good Friday.

Jesus appears to have drawn from this message in His greatest time of need and perhaps saw His crucifixion as a fulfillment of David's psalm. Why have you forsaken me? These words made sense for David, but for Jesus, it was more complicated. I doubt Jesus had ever experienced a separation from God, His father, before that day and surely faced His greatest test of faith.

God the Father regarded God the Son as if a sinner so that He could bare the wrath of God against sin for us. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice needed to complete the great act by which light conquered darkness and goodness conquered sin. Only Jesus could be the perfect sacrifice because His humanity allowed Him to experience separation from God the father as if a sinner and His holiness allowed His sacrifice to be perfect and undeserved so to save us from sin.

Dear Lord and Christ, We thank you for your pain and suffering and the gift of eternal life. As we face trials in our own lives, let us remember those before us that have suffered but maintained faith and trust in you. While undeserving of your mercy, we especially honor you during this season and acknowledge your great example of suffering and trust as direction for our lives as Christians.



**Saturday, 3 April: Holy Saturday**

**Susan Lawrence Hedglin**

*Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, "He has been raised from the dead," and the last deception would be worse than the first so they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone. Matthew 27: 64-66*

Jesus told his disciples that he would return after three days. The leaders who advocated for Jesus's death believed that he wasn't the Messiah -- so they were worried that his disciples would perform a trick, by stealing Jesus away from the tomb. In the Gospel of Matthew, the leaders obtain permission to secure his tomb by sealing it over with a stone so that the disciples would not be able to take away the body. These leaders and guards never could have imagined what would really happen!

The disciples must have been crushed at the time. Jesus told them he would return, but they did not understand how that could possibly happen. Seeing the guards roll a heavy stone over the tomb probably felt like a final blow. A permanent reminder that their Messiah was gone from the Earth forever. But what we Christians now know is that there is hope behind the rock. Easter isn't here yet on Holy Saturday, but we know that the tomb will be empty, because He will rise again in glory.

*Lord, give me faith to remember that even when the tomb is sealed with rock, there is hope on the other side. Amen.*

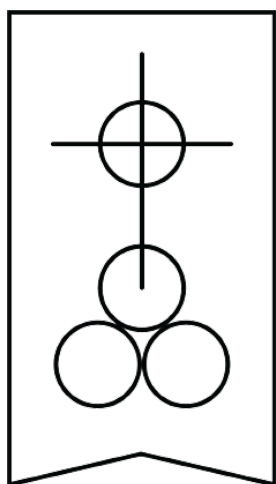
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The Rev. Ben Robertson, Typesetter

Many thanks to everyone who wrote our reflections



may God bless all who encounter these reflections with a most holy Lent



CHAPEL *of*  
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