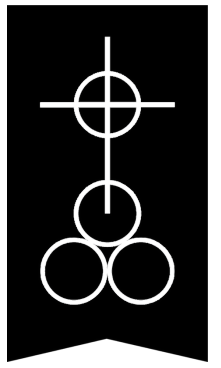


2023



LENTEN

MEDITATIONS

FROM THE CHAPEL OF THE CROSS



ASH WEDNESDAY

FEBRUARY 22
BY SUZANNE FILES

*Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke?
Is it not the share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house: when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.*

Isaiah 58:6-7; 9

Ash Wednesday is a solemn reminder of human mortality; “Remember you are dust, and to dust you will return”. Jesus spent these 40 days fasting in the desert enduring temptation by Satan. And for me it never fails; I am always overpowered by this day. My sister was very sick during the spring of 2002 and died in mid April as I was struggling to understand human mortality for my young healthy sister. It is still an unanswered question for me.

But this day is also a reminder of our need for reconciliation with God. This passage from Isaiah and from Matthew 6 explains how that reconciliation is possible for us. Jesus emphatically spells it out for us in these words. His message to me and to all of us is to live a life of kindness, and God will handle the rest. Jesus was able to resist the temptations of Satan but we clearly cannot. Jesus lived his life on earth loving the poor, the hungry, the oppressed and sinners like me. The ashes placed on my head during this powerful service should not be just an outward sign of my church attendance, it is for me a reflection in a mirror to remind me that I am a child of God and I am here on this earth to do God’s work, to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. As Garrison Keillor once said; *to know and serve God, of course, is why we’re here.*

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth: Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, that we may remember that it is only by your gracious gift that we are given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen

FEBRUARY 23

BY THE REVEREND GATES ELLIOTT

ARCHIVED MEDITATION

“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in Heaven.”

Matthew 6:1

It is a bit ironic that we read a passage about the need to keep our piety to ourselves on a day in which we as a church adorn our foreheads with ashes for all the world to see. But the ashes we wear are not a mark of our piety, but of our humility and even more importantly to remind us that we are all one. We are all the same.

This passage in the sixth chapter of Matthew’s gospel is not specifically about Lent, but the church has chosen to read it on Ash Wednesday to help us set a very important tone to our Lenten observance. We are reminded that Lent is a very spiritual but also a very personal time. Lent is a time for us to spend some quality one-on-one time with our God. God is inviting us through our actions of prayer, fasting, and service to do some hard work on our personal relationship with Him.

We are also reminded that Lent is a time of temptation for us as well. Lent provides us many opportunities to seek others’ approval through our commitment to fasting (giving something up), attendance at regular services throughout the weeks or Bible studies, as well as our stewardship of the church. Jesus is reminding us that we do not do these things to get the approval of others, but we do them to be in a closer and more fulfilling relationship with God.

These ashes that we wear on our foreheads remind us of our humility, that no matter what we do, that God will love us the same as the next person. The ashes remind us that we are no better than any other person out there. And so, when we begin our Lenten observances we do so, not to be singled out as “good Christians” but to come to a deeper understanding feeling of that wonderful love that God has for us.

FEBRUARY 24

BY MEG KILGORE

Anger.....This is not an emotion or topic of meditation that I have ever contemplated in the season of Lent. Yet my scripture assignment speaks of anger, judgement, sin. Take Jonah 4:1-11 for instance (I've given you just a small excerpt of the assigned passage-please do read the rest):

But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord, "Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity."

But the Lord replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

The story continues in verse 9:

But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

"It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead."

But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"

Jonah 4:1-11

Hmmmmmm...where do I begin tying this scripture to our modern day life and events....an ongoing challenge in some ways; however, the more I study the Bible and learn what God is saying through the scriptures, the more I realize we are blessed to have this guidebook to life today where nothing in OUR lifetimes is really new or irrelevant to His Word.

Back to anger....in our world today, we have no shortage of anger.It's everywhere and takes place in so many events going on from local traffic to politics to local, state, federal and world affairs. The Bible has a LOT to say about anger, not just in the verses shared with you for today's meditation. Here are just a few words found in the Bible to describe anger:fierce, cruel, burning, blazing fury, hostility, destroy, boiling with rage, piercing, consuming. You get the picture, right?

The Bible even suggests in some scripture that we should experience "righteous anger" when we are made aware of God's commandments being broken. WOW, that's continuous "righteous anger" some days for me. So, with the idea of "righteous anger"(as defined above) in mind, we "can" actually pat ourselves on the back for being offended and embracing the *right kind* of anger. We cling to our self-righteousness and can't imagine giving it up completely. In reality all that **continuous** anger can become a part of our life and ultimately destroy us. It is not how we are supposed to live.

As Christians and believers, we see daily how our God has been/is being pushed out of the public eye, events, media sites, etc., etc., etc., while at the same time, very evil and worldly practices/events are publicized and glorified in front of the world stage in the name of who knows what—freedom, rights, live-and-let-live, “**anything**(with the exception of worshipping our God) **goes**”. We have seen those brave souls who have attempted to profess their faith in God in a public way who have been silenced, persecuted and removed. For example, in 2021 a Washington state high-school football coach, Joe Kennedy who, after every game (when the crowds left), knelt in prayer at the 50 yard-line to thank God. Many of his team voluntarily joined him. The school board said his prayers **MUST** be done in a “private” setting and suspended him even when he advised that the boys joined him voluntarily. He felt strongly that he should be allowed to express his faith in public. Ultimately the Supreme Court agreed with him. What’s not to make us angry about that violation of silencing public prayer of one single man thanking our God?

But God is saying there is another, more valuable way to live outside of “righteous anger”. God knows; He made us. He knows we can’t sustain being **constantly** offended and perpetually nursing hurt by carrying our anger around in that very heavy bag....dragging it with us everywhere, every day. Will we be angry at times? Of course we will. Anger is a human thing. Will we do all we can to profess and stand up for and stand by our God and Jesus in our daily lives? Of course we will! Will we teach others about our amazing God, our guidebook of the Bible, Jesus dying for our sins? That’s up to each one of us!

As Romans 1:16-17 says:

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes..... 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.”

One of the **MOST** encouraging, amazing miracles that I personally witnessed “live” (on TV several weeks ago) was the sudden death collapse of the Buffalo Bills football player, Damar Hamlin, on the field after a play. Being a cardiac nurse for 20+ years, I know that the statistic of the death rate of a sudden death event that occurs outside of a hospital setting is 90%. Sure, he had immediate attention, CPR, a defibrillator within minutes of death; **HOWEVER**, if you watched the event “live” or in replay, you know what happened within seconds (or a minute) of the sudden death event. **WITHOUT** any hesitation or looking around to see who was watching or thinking about the consequence of their actions, every single player/staff/person **IMMEDIATELY** dropped to their knees and prayed to our God. God was there listening to the prayers, feeling the honest reaction to humans **KNOWING** that God was the answer. **WOW!** It was a moment so much larger than the miracle we witnessed. It was humankind giving prayers and hope to God in front of the world. Even the head coach, Sean McDermott, said in a public statement several days after the event, “When you can go through your life 48 years and not really have an experience like that—and then it happens—you know that God’s real, and that there’s power in prayer, and miracles do happen.” So I ask you, who’s really in control here?

Psalms 51:3-6,11-13,16,17:

*3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
4 Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.
5 Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
11 Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.
15 Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.*

In closing, I leave you with a prayer that I found to be so powerful in this season of Lent 2023

Almighty God,

Even the darkness is not dark to You.
Blow on the ember of faith in our hearts,
for we are in need of the oxygen of trust
that all the harm that is done in the dark
will one day become mere ash and dust.

Consume it all in the fire of a belonging that is better
than controlling one another.

This we pray
through Your Son, Jesus Christ,
who was betrayed by a friend in the night
and put to death by a government in plain sight,
yet raised by the Spirit into indestructible life.

And there He now sits and reigns with You,
Three-in-One: Father, Spirit, and Son,
All declaring to darkness:
the light has won. Amen.

Excerpted *The Book of Common Courage* by K. J. Ramsey.

Psalms 51 Jonah 4:1-11 Romans 1:8-17

FEBRUARY 25

BY DICK LAWRENCE

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 18:1-4

After reading the above scripture in preparation for writing this meditation, I realized that I had never deeply reflected on the following two questions. First, what does Jesus mean when He says: "Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Similarly, is being childlike a prerequisite to heaven?

Despite Jesus' emphasizing the importance of being "childlike", I don't think most people would be pleased if someone described them as being "childlike." Indeed, before thinking about this scripture, I would have definitely preferred to be described as mature or wise instead of "childlike." And I don't recall seeing a resume or bio of clergy or lay leaders even suggesting that they are "childlike."

What does "childlike" mean in this scripture? Of course, "childlike" does not mean "childish." Instead, perhaps one meaning is that we should strive to maintain the wonder and awe of a child by being more conscious of how we are dependent upon God for everything. For example, I have an eighty year-old friend who watches the sun rise and set each day because he is still awed by God's gift of the rising and setting sun.

For most of us, it does not take long to lose our childlike awe of God. For example, I remember being about three years old when on a hot summer day, I made what I thought was an amazing discovery. I realized that I felt much more comfortable when I moved from the hot sunshine beating down directly upon me to the shade under a tree. Unfortunately, it did not take long for me to push the miracle of shade into my unconscious mind because we are taught that there is nothing miraculous about shade.

LENTEN REFLECTION: What hinders me from being childlike? What gifts from God am I missing because I am not childlike?

Lord, help me to have a more childlike view of your amazing gifts.

Psalm 51

Isaiah 58:1-12

Matthew 18:1-7

FEBRUARY 27

BY ALLAN COOPER

How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!

Psalm 32:1

I'm sure this is not exactly a reflection of Psalm 32, but it comes to my mind whenever I read this Psalm. An elderly, uneducated man, Jake Jefferson, who is now deceased, told me something about his life that surprised me and that I've remembered a long time.

He and I had some discussions about life and about God and one time Jake said to me, "They's a lot of talk 'bout justice and I been on both sides of a lot of good justice and a lot of bad justice in my life. They's a lot of bad justice in this world and I don't like none of it, but I know the times I been in jail it's 'cause things I done deserved it. That was good justice. Don't 'spose I need to tell you that I've been on the wrong end of a lot of bad justice, too. I sure don't want no bad justice for nobody, but for my life now, I's a lot more interested in the Lord's mercy than I am in justice. That's what I'm tellin' to the Lord evy'day. Yep, he and I got to get to a good knowin' about me evy'day. Yep, I'm tellin' him all the time that I don't want no justice from him, I want mercy!"

I don't think Jake's concern about God having "a good knowin'" about him is because of his reading Psalm 32 since Jake could barely read at all and I don't think he ever even read Psalm 32 in his life. But Psalm 32 teaches the same wisdom. Jake knew that his peace of mind depended on frequent and brutally honest conversations with God about his life.

Amazingly, the psalmist David, a man famous for his faith in God and infamous for his sins and the King of Israel a thousand years before the birth of Christ, and this poor semi-literate twentieth century man, Jake, arrived at the same conclusion about how to find peace with God.

FEBRUARY 28

BY WHIT RAYNER

Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Psalm 32:11

Well, with Lenten season upon us, it is time for the annual imposition of ashes, moving about in sack cloths, and doing all manner of acts of repentance accompanied by a doleful attitude, right? Not exactly, according to the Psalmist. David begins Psalm 32 by recognizing a very common trait in humans: Unforgiven sins weigh us down.

“When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.” Sound familiar? But what happens when we confess our sins and return to the way of the Lord? Verse 5 says, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord. And you forgave the guilt of my sins.” And with that confession and forgiveness comes joy in salvation: “Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!” The exclamation point is David’s—not mine.

There is that phrase: upright heart. A quick search of a concordance shows that the term is used in the Bible dozens of times. But what does it mean? To me, as an old guy, I am reminded of turning the dial of my AM radio for a station. If I am tuned exactly on the frequency, the music is crystal clear. But if I am a little to one side or the other of the station’s frequency, the sound is just a little out of sync. And if I go too far away from the frequency, the music gets garbled... and eventually disappears altogether. Sin and refusal to follow the ways of the Lord similarly tilt our heart one way or the other. We get out of sync, or worse, our “strength is sapped as in the heat of summer”. However, confession, and the accompanying forgiveness, bring us back into communion with God, place us in sync with his ways, and return our heart to the upright position. And with an upright heart, that’s something worth singing about!

One of my favorite anthems sung by our choir is the 16th Century work, “Lord, For Thy Tender Mercy’s Sake.” This anthem is perfect for our closing prayer:

Lord, for Thy tender mercy’s sake, lay not our sins to our charge, but forgive that is past and give us grace to amend our sinful lives. To decline from sin, and incline to virtue, that we may walk in an upright heart before Thee now and evermore. Amen

Psalm 32

Genesis 4: 1-16

Hebrews 4:14-5:10

MARCH 1

BY REBECCA HAAS

See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you, that their angels in Heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in Heaven. For the Son of Man has come to save that which is lost. What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? And if it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. Thus it is not the will of your Father who is in Heaven that one of these little ones perish.

Matthew 18: 10-14

This passage from Matthew reminds us of the value and worth of each individual person in the eyes of God. Just as a shepherd would leave the safety of the flock to search for one lost sheep, God also pursues all of us, no matter how far we have strayed.

Let us think about how we may have overlooked the needs of those around us. Let us commit to finding and valuing the “little ones” in our lives, and to being a source of support for those who are in need. Just as the shepherd rejoices when the lost sheep is found, God also takes joy in our return to him.

Dear God, during this Lenten season, guide us in understanding our shortcomings and give us the strength to overcome them. Bring us close to your love and help us to share that love with others. Amen

MARCH 2

BY TOMMY ROBERSON

*I will lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?
My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved and he who watches over you will not fall asleep.
Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep;
The Lord himself watches over you; the Lord is your shade at your right hand,
So the sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.
The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; it is he who shall keep you safe.
The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth and
forevermore.*

Psalm 121

We all need help at times in our lives. The song by the Beatles says, “I need a little help from my friends.” The commercial for Life Alert carries the tagline, “Help I’ve fallen and can’t get up.” Where do you go when you need help? Do you call your family, do you call a friend, or do you dial 911? Sometimes it’s hard to get through our journey alone. We need someone to help us. Psalm 121 tells us that God is our help, but we need to turn to him and ask for that help. God never says that you will never have problems or troubles in life, that’s too easy, but he says that evil will never win out. Nothing can separate you from God’s love.

We are on a journey every day of our lives. There are decisions to make, roads to take, people to love, people to trust, and other things that each of us must face every day. God is there to help you. “I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, maker of heaven and earth.” I do forget that God loves me and sometimes it’s hard to ask for that love. BUT it’s always there, I just need to ask. I need to tell my wife, my children, my grandchildren and others that I love and care for them. I have that love, but I just need to share it every day with people I love and care about. I promise to lift my eyes up every day.....what will you do?

MARCH 3

BY BILL BUHNER

... pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression (Micah 7)

...because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed (Romans 3)

Certainly, being passed over can have profoundly negative connotations, as being “passed over” for a promotion, but our God, in this case, passes over or, put in other ways, God ignores, forgets, overlooks, and disregards our sins. He cuts us some slack, and he does it over and over again. Why? Because he loves us and wants us to do that which is right.

Using a Biblical Timeline, God has been “passing over” us for quite some time, starting with Exodus, written about 1800 BC, to, in the verses noted here, Micah, 775 BC, and Romans, 57 AD, continuing to, well, now. Why? Because he loves us!

This said, as we are sinful creatures, we generally do that which is pleasing to us, and, many times, not that which is pleasing to God. But, because he really does love us, he will allow us to continually return to Him and ask to be passed over, to be forgiven. To this end, he sent his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to live a life that shows us how to do this.

The blood of Jesus Christ is on our door posts and lintels, and as these two uphold the door and the home, so He upholds us.

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

Psalm 121

Micah 7:18-20

Romans 3:21-31

MARCH 4

BY SUZIE WEBB

Lord, trouble not thyself for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof.

Luke 7:6

In thinking about this verse from Luke, I replaced the word “roof” for “soul”. I am not worthy with my sinful nature to have God enter my soul or my heart. There are many times I ignore His call or just don’t make the time to listen. I do feel unworthy of His love and mercy because He has given me the gift of salvation and that is a debt I can never repay.

This portion of the scripture reminds me of the Prayer of Humble Access in the Book of Common Prayer. Especially the sentence that says, “We are not worthy to gather up the crumbs under Thy Table...”. This one portion of the sentence puts me in my place when I am in prayer. Who am I to ask God for anything being the lowly creature that I am? This sentence confirms it, but thankfully the end of that sentence gives me peace as it explains God’s nature and the love He has for us in spite of all that we do. “...but you are the same Lord whose character is always to have mercy.”

Lord, I am not worthy of You. Help me to humbly realize the fact that You desire to come to me anyway. Your love and mercy know no bounds and for that I am grateful.

Psalm 121 Isaiah 51:4-8 Luke 7:1-10

MARCH 6

BY RALPH STILLIONS

Happy is everyone who fears the Lord, ,Thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord

Psalm 128

A few weeks ago, I had a total knee replacement. The first 24-36 hours afterword were a breeze. Then the pain block wore off and the fun began. Thankful for Percocet.

My first post-op physical therapy session was quite painful, as one might imagine, despite the wonder drug. Regarding the PT exercises, I remember the therapist telling me, something along the lines of: If it hurts, it means you are doing it right. If it doesn't hurt, you are doing it wrong.

I also received some training and instruction on how to ambulate with a walking cane. Honestly, I never imagined it would be necessary to have instructions on how to walk with a cane. However, contrary to what I would have thought, I learned that you use the cane as a prop on your "good" side versus the "bad" side.

Both of these seemed to be so counter-intuitive to me at the time. It reminds me of how many of our Bible teachings and spiritual rituals often seem counter intuitive, even some of the basics. The Eucharist for example. We are called to eat and drink the body and blood of another human being (of course, we do believe Jesus was human even though divine also)! Or take the concept of Grace. The good or bad things we do in this life are not determinative of our salvation!

The Psalm for today says if we FEAR the Lord we will be happy. And we will be blessed if we FEAR the Lord. It may be just be semantics, or the word itself in the ancient languages may have a different interpretation, or it may just be a not uncommon divergence of Old Testament versus New Testament concept of God. However, I have always felt fearing the Lord is counter-intuitive to my idea of a loving and forgiving God. What to think?

I personally prefer my intuitive thought of a loving and forgiving God.

Father, we thank you for the blessing of intuition. Sometimes our intuition is right. Sometimes it is wrong. Please grant us the gift of wisdom, that we may discern the difference between our error and your truth. (Thank you Fr. Arnold Bush).

Psalm 128 Numbers 21: 4-9 Hebrews 3: 1-6

MARCH 7

BY MARIDINE WALL

How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways

Psalms 128:1

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold I create Jerusalem for rejoicing, And her people for gladness.

Psalms 65:17-18

For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Romans 4:13

Each of today's readings contains the elements of hope and happiness for those who have faith in the Lord and walk in His ways. They point to a future without weeping and distress—a time of peace and tranquility—a time when things will be made right.

Sometimes, when looking at the daily news, it seems impossible to imagine such a world. However, this generation also needs to heed the call for faith in God and personally demonstrate that faith through their actions. Perhaps we each might in fact help create a better world for those we touch—a future filled with more hope. Small actions, done with faith and love, can make a difference.

MARCH 8

BY LYNNE STILLIONS

Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to cast a stone at her.

John 7:53 – 8:11

In John's gospel Jesus is telling us we are not to judge unless we are without fault. I have always found this a little confusing since all stable societies judge. Everyday we have judges and juries determining a person's guilt and the punishment for their wrongdoings. I really doubt all these fine folks in our judicial system are sin free, but can you imagine what a country would be like without law and order?

I think what Jesus is saying in John's gospel is to quit worrying about other's sins and to look inward into our own souls. Take stock in our weaknesses and ask God to help us overcome them.

Jesus does say to the woman caught in adultery, in John 8:11 "Go your way and sin no more." So while our God is a merciful and forgiving God, he does expect us to do our part and sin no more.

Every year around January 2nd, after some reflection, I write down my goals for the brand-new year.

Writing my goals down has always helped me with my commitment. Many of my goals are worldly endeavors but I always include spiritual ones also. After writing this meditation I plan to go back to my list and add that I should be less judgmental. In addition to judging less, I want to make a conscious effort to be kinder, more thoughtful and to talk to God all throughout the day.

Lord, please forgive me for my many shortcomings. Help me this Lenten season, though your Grace, to be more loving, kind, thoughtful and accepting of others. Amen.

Psalm 128 Ezekiel 36: 22-32 John 7: 53 – 8:11

MARCH 9

BY MARTHA RAYNER

“For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him.”

Psalms 95:3-4

“He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Colossians 1:17

While reading each passage of scripture for today, I was reminded of the Lord's sovereignty and provision. So often I find myself like the Israelites in Exodus 16, grumbling and not trusting in the Lord's faithfulness and power. Exodus 16:3 states, “The Israelites said to them, ‘If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.’” If you continue reading in Exodus 16, you see that the Lord provided quail and manna for them, just as He said. I think of how often I forget the Lord's faithfulness, and reading this passage reminds me of a verse I have heard throughout my life. While Jesus is teaching, He says “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?” (Matthew 6:26).

Looking back on times of transition and waiting periods of unknowns throughout life (I know that I am young and still have many of these ahead of me!), I see that God continuously teaches me of His faithfulness and provision. So often, rather than remembering the Lord's control, I find myself instead trying to rely on my own strength and control. Today's passages remind us that the Lord is in control of it all! Psalm 95 verses 3-4 says “For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him.” Whatever we may be going through, I pray that we each cling to remembering “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together...so that in everything he might have the supremacy.” (Colossians 1:17-18). As you continue your day, remember who holds the supremacy over all that you may be going through.

“Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care” (Psalm 95: 6-7).

I pray that we find rest in the Lord and remember His supremacy.

MARCH 10

BY BETTY RUTH FOX

Come, let us sing to the Lord; let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.

Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving and raise a loud shout to him with psalms.

Psalms 95:1-2

If you know me, you know that I have a horse and ride him as often as I can. The interesting point about horses is that they are fright/flight animals. Regardless of their size, they flee if they sense danger. However, if they trust their owner/rider, they trust her fully. In other words, if the rider is not afraid, the horse is calm and not afraid. This phenomenon became very apparent to me when my son was riding our horse in a covered arena in Pensacola preparing for a show the next day. My son was so focused on practicing the show pattern, neither he nor the horse flinched when a kid tripped the fire alarm which caused lights and alarms to go on for what seemed to be an eternity. The fire department arrived within 5 to 10 minutes to disarm the alarm. Again, the horse was not bothered in the slightest. It was amazing!

That event reminds me that a faith of a horse in his/her rider is similar to the faith I should have in God. In today's scripture, God tells Moses that He will provide food for His people, and He does: Quail for the evening and manna for the morning. Exodus 16:9-21.

In Ephesians 2:11-22, Paul writes that Jews and Gentiles (anyone not a Jew) have been reconciled to God in one body through the cross. For through Jesus Christ, all people have access in one Spirit to the Father. God has got this and there is so little we can control. Faith in Him is essential!

So, like Psalm 95, let us sing to the Lord and come into his presence with thanksgiving.

And day by day, I will pray to God I have faith in Him like my horse has in me.

MARCH 11

BY THE REVEREND WILL COMPTON

When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but his disciples were, He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And He had to pass through Samaria. So He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

John 4:1-6

One of my campers at Special Session at Camp Bratton-Green is a big fan of The Lion King. I enjoy exchanging letters with him from time to time where we discuss the Disney movie. In his letters, he refers to himself as Simba, and me, as Zazu, his trusted royal messenger which is quite the high honor to be regarded in this way. I thought of him as I read John 4: 1-6 because I thought of The Lion King, specifically where Simba is told not to go to the elephant graveyard, but of course, goes anyway.

Jesus is like Simba. He has been told his whole life by society and by friends and family alike, not to go to Samaria, but in chapter four of John's gospel he goes anyway. We don't need Paul Harvey to give us "the rest of the story" because we know that it is in Samaria that Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman at the well and offers to her what he offers to the whole world. Even the Samaritan woman at the well is surprised to see Jesus, a Jew, in her presence. Jesus transcends boundaries. Jesus destroys barriers. He goes into the elephant graveyard, where he has been told not to go, and he offers life.

Jesus is breaking into our Lent; going to those places in our heart and soul where we do not want him to go because it is dark, but he is going anyway. Jesus is transcending the boundaries of our heart and destroying the barriers of our soul. Jesus is going into the elephant graveyards we have created within ourselves, those places where we do not want him to go because we do not want him to see us for who we really are. This is what Lent is about; Jesus breaking into our lives; Jesus breaking down the barriers of our soul and heart; Jesus offering resurrection and new life in those places within ourselves and within our lives that are dead and desolate. This Lent, where there is Good Friday within us, Jesus is making Easter. Where there is death, Jesus is creating life.

Lord Jesus Christ, you turn the night into morning and the darkness into light. Enter our hearts and souls this Lent, scatter the darkness, and as you offered life to the Samaritan woman, offer life in those places within us and within our lives where we are too frightened for you to see and feel unworthy for you to go. Amen.

MARCH 13

BY BECKY HERREN

In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:4-5

No angels! No shepherds! No sheep! The opening verses of John focuses on creation and the One who gives LIGHT to all people. God tried over and over again to get the Word across to us. When nothing worked--- sun, moon, stars---God sent flesh and blood. This Word became “flesh” and lived and died among us.

John assures us that the Word that spoke the world into being continues to speak to us today. People experience sorrow, or grief, or loneliness. I believe that we must recognize these experiences for what they are and WE WILL pass through them. A beloved priest at the Chapel, David Christian, said that when we are in Hell, just keep on walking putting one foot ahead of the other and we will continue to the light.

The light shines in the dark and the darkness NEVER quenched it.

So where do I stand? I have learned that I cannot banish darkness and I am not content to sit in the darkness. I am called to reflect His light and shine my light in the darkness. And I know the darkness will never put it out!

This little light of mine

I'm going to let it shine

Let it shine

Let it shine

Let it shine

Jesus Christ, you have taught us that on life's voyage, we need not be afraid. For all seas are the seas of God, and if we sink, we sink but deeper into Him.

R. Maurice Boyd

MARCH 14

BY STAN HERREN

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

Psalms 139:7-10

The three scriptures assigned for today talk about God's covenant with man. From the early times in Genesis with Adam and Eve, with Jacob, with Moses and the Israelites in Egypt and the desert, man has continually forsaken the covenants for their personal desires. In Psalms, David says of man "if you would but listen to me."

In 1 Corinthians Paul talks about these historical human behaviors and consequences as examples for the early believers who were establishing their personal covenant with God.

Now, what does this all mean for us today? I feel very strongly about the personal covenant I have with God. Every time there is a baptism and I renew my baptismal vows, I feel a very special renewal of my faith and my relationship with God and God the Holy Spirit.

I recognize as a human being, I will continually do things that do not please God. God the Father will continue to call us to Jesus through the presence of the Holy Spirit that is always with us. The covenant God has with us today is that Jesus came and died and rose again for our salvation. That is the covenant we have as believers.

Sins in our human nature is known to God but with our faith and belief in Christ we can repent and know that salvation is freely given. When we start to make choices and do things that please God we have the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for guidance.

Psalm 81 Genesis 29: 1-14 1 Corinthians 10:1-4

MARCH 15

BY SARABETH CLARK

I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it.

Psalm 81:10

In my corner of the world, Lent coincides with spring and, often, with spring cleaning. We scrub winter boots clean of dirt, wash coats and snow pants, toss broken toys lurking at the bottom of the toy box, and rid fridge shelves of their mysterious stickiness. Windows are opened to invite fresh spring air in. All that is dirty is cleaned, all that is broken is tossed or fixed, all that is old is gone. The dirt, the old, is cleared away so that the new may come.

Reading Psalm 81 during Lent, we see a God who longs to be the center of his people's lives. A God who has rescued them and wants His people to love Him. *Hear me, my people—I have rescued you, not some other god. It was me. Don't worship anyone (or anything!) but me.* As you read, set aside what distracts you. Clear away all that keeps you from following God's ways.

*I removed the burden from their shoulders;
their hands were set free from the basket (v. 6)*

The Psalm evokes memories of Israel's dark days of slavery in Egypt, toiling day in and day out making mud bricks by hand: their lives made bitter by harsh Egyptian masters who worked their slaves ruthlessly.

*I removed the burden from their shoulders;
their hands were set free from the basket (v. 6)*

God reminds the people who He is and what he has done, I set you free. I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. I set you free. I removed the burden from your shoulders. In the words of singer Adele, God sings here to his beloved people, *"Let me be your, your one and only."*

Passionate about his people, God wants them to be focused upon Him. In the poetic lines of Psalm 81, we see a God who desires to give his people good things. We see a God who wants his people to give up their stubbornness and to follow God's ways.

During Lent, people may fast or "give up" things for 40 days (TV, social media, meat, etc.); in this season, people fast from something that distracts them from God. Others "take on" a spiritual practice or discipline for Lent; they commit to pray daily, to read Scripture with a friend, to eat simple meals and give the money saved to a charity. The simple practices of Lent can remind us to not have "stubborn hearts, to follow our own devices" (v. 12) instead of God's ways. Not satisfying every hunger we have can make us more aware of our hunger for God, and aware of God's desire to be in relationships with us.

Like spring cleaning, the season of Lent helps us pause and take an honest look at our own lives. What needs to be cleaned out within us? What is distracting us from God? What is cluttering our lives? What do we need to set aside for God to be *our, our one and only*?

MARCH 16

BY BOB WILLIAMS

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin"[a]: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 4:25-32

The logic of these passages is that Paul is concerned with making us more like Christ. Verses 25-32 demonstrate that God wants to provide us sure and practical steps, laying out a pathway that we can utilize to grow strong and Christ-filled lives.

I'm sure we can all nod in agreement that Paul's instructions of what to do or not do. But for you personally, what is your motivation for doing (or not doing) them? When are you tempted to lie, or stretch the truth? How does everything we have and are in Christ speak to that temptation? Are you holding on to any anger (or bitterness or resentment) that you need to let go of?

I know personally I have held on to anger and bitterness towards others. In the end, it only made me unhappy and did not change the situation with the other person. As God instructed through Paul, I should always get rid of all bitterness, rage and angry. I should forgive that person as God has forgiven me.

Lord God, sometimes the glory of Your presence seems distant; we flounder in our problems and fail to connect with You who alone can make sense of life. Put a stop to our wallowing in self-pity, and lift us up to delight in the higher things of life. Bring us back to the heart of our faith that we may trust again in You the Maker and Redeemer of all and the One whose love will never end! Lord God, draw closer! AMEN

MARCH 17

BY DOUG GOODIN

*The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
He refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,[a]
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.*

Psalm 23; A Psalm of David

Ah yes, the Psalm of The Good Shepherd. I would assume that this is a piece of Scripture we all are incredibly familiar with. It not only is one of the first prayers that many of us are likely taught in our youth, but it also is one of our first lessons in the overall nature of God as well. For a passage that is so well-ingrained in many of us, what can possibly be gleaned from yet another meditation? I, for one, am focused on the least familiar verses during this reading, those being verses 5 & 6. Here, we are told that God not only is our protector in times of trouble and distress, but God is also a gracious host whose “goodness and love will follow [us] all the days of our life.” This is certainly a picture of God that we see countless times throughout Scripture, but it is still one that I am simply captivated by.

I often find myself questioning how or why God is able to come down to our level and know us personally the way that God chooses to know us, but it is here in these verses and those similar that I find the sweetest truth about our God. There is no great cosmic contract that demands the same God who created the Heavens and the Earth to love and care for us the way He does, and yet God still chooses to grow close to us and see us as the flawed and self-destructive people that we are. The table is always prepared for us even though we may not always run to it, and in spite of that, God will continue to wait and be on the lookout for us like any good shepherd would.

Holy and Perfect God, our Good Shepherd, thank you for your willingness to set a table and feast for us that we, in no way deserve. God, you show us a love that surpasses all understanding and one that we can never hope to duplicate, but in spite of our continuous flaws, I ask that you continue to guide us towards that love. Help us to see our fellow brothers and sisters as you see us. Show us the ways in which we can reflect your great and abounding love in all that we do. We will continue to give you the honor and praise that is due your name. Amen.

1 Samuel 15:22-31 Ephesians 5:1-9

MARCH 18

BY AMANDA CAMP

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, abides under the shadow of the Almighty.
He shall say to the Lord, "You are my refuge and my stronghold, my God in whom I put my trust."*

Psalm 91:1-2

He shall cover you with his pinions, and you shall find refuge under his wings; his faithfulness shall be a shield and buckler.

Psalm 91: 4

For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.

Psalm 91: 11-12

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I am with him in trouble; I will rescue him and bring him to honor.

Psalm 91: 15

Psalm 91 is the Great Protector Psalm or the Soldier's Prayer which was prayed by infantry soldiers during WWI and WWII. Today God is willing to keep His words of promise to me. As many of you know, these last two years have been very trying for me and my family. It seemed as when one battle started, God gave me another to deal with.

Reading the psalm, I can think, "If I love and abide in God, He will answer ALL MY prayers. The verses make me think that evil and our enemies will be crushed. And in my interpretation, this will happen RIGHT NOW.

The NOW part is where I have had to find faith. Nothing in my situation has happened the way I envisioned it or nearly as quickly as I have wanted. I have spent hours praying. IT seems that I have prayed for the same thing over and over--- WHAT I WANT. I have come to realize that it is fine to pray for what I want, but I also need to realize God is in charge and I must have faith in Him. Yes, I still pray for what I want, but I also have faith that God will "deliver and protect me." His plan for me may not be what I want and when I want it, but I have faith that His plan will be delivered in just the right way and just in the right time.

Lord, you know how I want answers and for You to fix my situation. Right now, You aren't revealing what's down the road, but You are giving me exactly what you intend for me in this moment. Give me faith in this mercy and grace and let that be enough. In Jesus' name. Amen.

MARCH 20

BY BECKY HERREN

*Our Father, who art in heaven
hallowed be thy Name
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen*

Matthew 6: 9-13

This was one of the first prayers I learned as a child and I assume it was one of your first memorized prayers. As my assigned Lenten meditation, I began to focus on singular words in the prayer. In the Book of Common Prayer, the Celebrant says: *And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say... Our Father...*

I would like to focus on the word **BOLD**. Why was the word “bold” used by those who compiled the BCP? **Bold** means courageous. So, maybe we should not pray this prayer lightly. It really takes courage for us to pray the Lord’s Prayer at all! Now we can pray this prayer in an unthinking way which if we are totally honest we usually do. What are we praying or asking God?

“Thy will be done” is what we say. That is the climax of the first half of the prayer. We are asking God to be God. We are asking Him to not do what we want, but what God wants. As a theologian once said, “We are asking God to make manifest the holiness that is now mostly hidden; to set free in all its terrible splendor the devastating power that is mostly under restraint.”

“Thy kingdom come... on earth” we say. And if this happens, what then? Who or what would stand and who or what would fall? Bold. Yes. When we speak these words, we are asking God to unleash a force that would make an atomic blast look and sound like a firecracker.

And then we have the second half of the prayer which we need to have courage to say. *Give us. Forgive us. Don’t test us. Deliver us.* It takes boldness to face the unlimited power of God in the wake of our weakness and helplessness.

The Lord's Prayer is many, many prayers wrapped into one. It is a prayer of blessing, of justice, of deliverance, righteousness, of relationships, and of power. We also express our own desire to be a part of the arrival of heaven on earth.

So when we pray the Lord's prayer let us be **bold** and listen carefully to the words of Jesus. Feel blessed that we know God and are loved by Him.

MARCH 21

BY STEVE MIDDLETON

The Journey

Up the rocky road I walk
Hot, Thirsty, Tired
Sounds of pain, sounds of sorrow, those pulled into the dark
Crest of the hill now reached, more rocks more souls more pain
Faith, hope all but lost, I sit, no further can I go
Alone, in fear I wait
Then a touch, not hard nor cold, but soft and kind
Pulling me not down, but lifting me up
Over marble steps, through gates of gold,
Laid by a stream
He came and sat by my side
I asked "Lord who brought me here "
He said "I watched and waited and I saw you not, I anguished and worried "
"Go down, look, search in all places till you find him who I love"
"I shall not rest till I know he is safe"
"Bring him to me, and that they did "
Who do we look for, who shall we find, Who will we take to our Lord

MARCH 22

BY WHIT RAYNER

A MEDITATION FROM 2021

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

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 forego the pleas for God's wrath and destruction of our enemies. Jesus tells us to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, and pray for those who mistreat us.

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 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 that light. Amen

MARCH 23

BY SUSAN LAWRENCE HEDGLIN

Have you ever had a moment where you knew you needed to do the right thing, but you REALLY didn't want to? You heard voices fighting in your head. Perhaps an angel on one shoulder, a devil on the other. Your heart sank even as it recognized the truth. Or maybe, in the words of the readings today, your conscience felt "bitter in your stomach."

Such is the life we are called to as children of God! The Bible is full of comforting images: the Lord as our shepherd, watching over the sheep. Prayers in the Psalms, praising God for his kindness and mercy. Jesus, healing the hopeless sick and reaching the outcasts. And yet. While we experience this grace, we are also called to change. We are called to deny our earthly desires and put all our hope into Jesus. We are called to turn away from power, from wealth, from security...all to walk what Bishop Curry calls "The Way of Love" with Jesus. It is easy for us to hear about the beautiful kingdom of God. It's harder for us to put it into practice.

What do you need to turn away from, to walk closer with God? Like the Psalmist says today: God will redeem us from our iniquities...so let us listen for His call.

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (A Collect for the Second Sunday of Lent, Book of Common Prayer, pg 218)

Psalm 130 Ezekiel 1:1-3, 2:8-3:3 Revelation 10:1-11

MARCH 24

ARCHIVED MEDITATION FROM 2021

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, Rudolph, and on and 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 the 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

MARCH 25

BY STEVE MIDDLETON

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

We have a Father in the Heavens above
His name is Holy, so full of Love
Here on Earth we wait and watch for his kingdom to come
Let us not tarry in his will to be done
In this world full of anger, hate and strife
We hunger for his Bread of life
Forgive us we pray as we trespass and stray
And teach us to give your grace to each other day by day
Lead us not to be tempted this day
Deliver us from the evil way
And as we ponder Who, Who are you?

For you are
The Kingdom of all that is true and right
The power of the Sea, The Storm, The Day and the Night
The glory of the Red Sun Set and the Golden Morning Light

Forever and forever more
Without end

Amen

MARCH 27

BY GRACE SIMMONS

ARCHIVED MEDITATION

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; I will guide you with my eye."
Psalm 32:9

"Put your trust in God; for I will yet give thanks to him, who is the help of my countenance, and my God."

Psalm 42:7

I like to have a theme for each year. It's kind-of my New Year's Resolution. Last year, my theme was: *Year of Reflection*. This year, my theme is: *Year of Action*. We continue to live in uncertain times; I am exhausted. I had to order more gloves, hand sanitizer, and masks. Last week, I had my *fourth* COVID test. I know we are all thinking, "When will things be normal again?" It's hard to carry out my theme (*Year of Action*) when we seem to keep taking two steps forward and ten steps back...When I look at the readings for Lent, I am reminded that we must put our trust in God. Not only when times are difficult, but always. Once again, I turned to my students to get their perspective. Children always have a unique way of making us see things in a different light. I asked them how they put their trust in God. Here are some of their responses:

"If you are in hard times, just pray and He will lead you to better times." "If you are going down the wrong path, trust Him to lead you down the right path."

"He put his trust in us by creating us, so we must return the favor." "He will always be with you. If someone knocks you down, you get back up." "God won't let the people who hurt your feelings get to you." "He will teach you to do better things." "If you believe in God, He will help you." "When you know it's wrong, step away from it. He will guide you."

I am hopeful for things to get better soon. New seasons always seem to bring a new, brighter attitude. We need a little skip in our step! I leave you with a prayer from my students:

Lord, I am thankful for every morning. We pray for our family and friends; we pray to stay safe. We pray that God will be with us, because we can't really live our life in fear. We pray for our house, our family, our friends, hot water, our beds, and our pets. I pray for teachers to help us learn so we can get smarter. I pray for the homeless and those who have been in accidents. We pray to show that we love you and we don't want to have the guilt on our backs. We are thankful that Jesus wanted to spend time with the not so good people, because we are all sinners. We are sorry for some things we did. If we are sad, we will trust God- He will forgive us even if we did something bad. I hope people remember they are perfect just the way they are! Just look around- He made all of us!

God will always be with you and will guide your path. Amen.

MARCH 28

BY LINDA BERRY

Psalm 143

The ancient Israeli songs of worship and entreaty which we know as the Psalms, particularly the royal hymns of King David of Israel, are without peer for expression of the dawning knowledge among Jewish scholars of that day that they were addressing in music and lyrics a mighty Being of incomprehensible power, yet also One who cares. He is Yahweh, Lord of thunderous mountaintops and sweeping banishments of seas – and in His power and gift is blessing or disaster, hence the frequent awestruck repentances of the writers.

David knows that his deepest humility and entreaty will move the Father Himself to pity His creation, and he sings this moving song in short verse with sonorous Hebrew meter and rhythm, and in minor key. David is praying at night, alone in his chambers or before an altar which only the King was allowed to approach. And he is desperate. Some awful trial has come to him which demands every ounce of faith and bravery he can summon. The man is utterly unguarded in his moving verse, as if speaking to a beloved and trusted Caregiver. He touchingly acknowledges his utter dependence on this invisible but tangible God who is clearly, to him, a Person: “For the sake of your NAME (YHWH the Tetragrammaton, which none may utter), keep your promise to save me.....for I am your servant!” Between the lines also is David’s stark demand that the Lord continue to love him, but “kill my enemies” and destroy those who are threatening his life and kingdom.

Remember, this is theology of 3,000 years ago. Though David seems to have had a forgiving nature, by the time he writes and sings this poem of faith and warfare, he sees no other option for relief than utter destruction of his unknown foes. He reminds the Lord that he, David, has long served Him well, and pleads for “your promise to save me” which was guaranteed to Israel from the time of Moses and Joshua, documented in the Lord’s revealed, recorded word.

As history shows us, David’s prayer was answered in full. All challenges to his person and his kingdom were beaten back before his old age, and God was pleased with his service as both an earthly and a spiritual warrior of excellence.

II Kings 4: 18-37

Elisha the Prophet of Israel, who “poured water over the hands of Elijah”, has generously repaid a Shunammite woman for her hospitality by communing with Yahweh and then speaking to her in faith that she would have a son. She and her husband were well off, apparently with broad fields and servants to cultivate them, and the little boy was born, grew up and went to the fields with his father, but suffered a sunstroke from the harsh Middle Eastern heat. His distraught mother held and comforted him, still small enough to sit on her lap, but the boy died at noon. Then the lady gives us a magnificent demonstration of faith. Placing the boy on a bed located in the guest room she had made for Elisha, she closed the door, mounted a donkey and said **no words to contradict faith**, indicating that her reliance on Elisha’s God,

Who was also hers, was absolute. When Gehazi, Elisha's servant, saw her coming on a donkey, he approached and asked if the boy was well, she – astoundingly! – said “YES” On reaching Elisha, she falls at his feet and the prophet, moved with compassion, sends his servant back with his staff, to heal the sunstroke and raise the woman's son from the dead! Gehazi obeys and goes ahead of them, but when Elisha and the boy's mother reach her home, there is still no sign of life. Elisha then enters into a kind of interaction with the Divine which is the stuff of legend in Israel: he “went in and shut the door on the two of them and prayed to Yaweh. He then climbed onto the bed and stretched himself on top of the child.....and the child's flesh grew warm” Elisha then got up, walked to and fro in the room, repeated the procedure, seven times (!) in all. “then the child sneezed, opened his eyes and was alive again. “ “Take up your son!” he says to his hostess, and she fell at his feet in gratitude and carried the boy out, alive and well.

Note: This passage about an Old Testament miracle has resonance for us today. The procedure employed by Elisha to awake the child and bring him back to life was apparently part of an unrecorded ritual employed by senior prophets in Israel during a period when they had deep need of miracles in several areas. Elisha is clearly the one who revives the boy from the dead, but if we look at the faith of his MOTHER, who first spoke life about her child (“YES!”) when she had just left his lifeless body – she seems to be lying or imagining an outcome not normally seen on earth. But her single word of faith – spoken in anguish of grief and hope, but showing faith's mastery over natural reactions – is the key to this passage. Her faith in the Prophet's relationship to the Divine, and her blind commitment to stand upon what she knew of Israel's fierce but compassionate God – produced the result of which she spoke – BEFORE SHE HAD SEEN IT. The intervention of the Prophet sealed the outcome, and the boy was restored. *****I have seen the equivalent of this in my family: a baby delivered in the 24th week of my daughter's pregnancy, eyes and organs undeveloped, weighing 18 ounces, was born at Christmas 35 years ago. Not caring if the medical staff at UMMC considered me and my praying friends as psychopaths, we spoke only positive words about the outcome, and continued to stand on the same faith that inspired the Shunammite woman. Emily survived and is grown up, restored. She has four healthy children, works full time and is quite well.***** In situations calling for totally reckless, radical faith, I believe we can move God as Elisha and his Shunammite friend did. And He is never displeased if we refuse all thoughts of failure and focus entirely on His mercy and love.

All this, of course, is in the Bible – the Word of God, recorded for our instruction. And I remain exceedingly glad that it is!

EPHESIANS 2: 1 – 10

Saint Paul of Tarsus, an incomparable scholar and theologically adept Pharisee, was among the most intense and dedicated followers of “Moses and the Prophets” – the Law of Israel. So determined was he to see it upheld and enforced, that he participated in persecuting anyone among the Jewish faith who was perceived as aberrant. Far from accepting what he knew of Christ – and he may well have heard an exposition of Christianity – he angrily sought papers from the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem to capture and wipe out any Christians he found, and approving death by stoning for anyone proclaiming Christ as Messiah. On the way out of town to do more mayhem of this type, the invisible Christ summarily knocked him off his horse,

blinded his eyes temporarily and spoke to him in a thunderous voice which terrified him and his companions. “Saul.....why do you persecute me??” And in that instant, the young man’s life was changed completely. He went on to accept Jesus as Christ by faith and the witness of Ananias, whose prayer restored his sight – and to write much of the New Testament! Where formerly Saul (shortly to become Paul) had relied on religious charity and good deeds, he now began to grow into the world-shaking belief that 1) This Jesus who he had persecuted was in fact alive, still active in Israel, both fully man and fully God, 2) He (Saul/Paul) was chosen as one of many new believers to seek fellowship with others and to carry the joyous word of salvation everywhere he could go and 3) ALL that was ever necessary to know and receive the reality of God’s rescue from sin and pain was to accept the loving Christ as Lord in a personal assent and commitment to follow Him. This required, and still requires – voluntary action of the spirit, our inner man – not just mental assent..... The “VOLO” – “I will” was and is all that is needed from the new believer. And the work of salvation instantly becomes operative. This was the doctrine of FAITH NOT WORKS which meant that slave and master, old or young, priest or merchant, might equally and freely receive God’s lavish grace, becoming a brand new person inside. Paul was a stickler, even in his Christian faith, that moral laws and customs be respected, and that one never could achieve self-rescue without drawing on the love with which “God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy.....when we were (inside ourselves) dead through our sins”. This is the simple doctrine of “faith through grace (God’s grace, enabling us to have faith to believe Him)” which has come down to us in the liturgical churches’ worship and preaching, and in the evangelical and protestant denominations’ teaching, and which represents the core doctrine and reality of Christianity – available any time, free, as soon as we utter the “volo”, in any language: “Lord Jesus, come into my heart”. Paul says “We are God’s work of art, created in Christ, Jesus, to live the good life as from the beginning He had meant us to live it.”

The sine qua non of receiving freedom and joy.

MARCH 29

BY FREDERICK BUECHNER

In many cultures there is an ancient custom of giving a tenth of each year's income to some holy use. For Christians, to observe the forty days of Lent is to do the same thing with roughly a tenth of each year's days. After being baptized by John in the river Jordan, Jesus went off alone into the wilderness, where he spent forty days asking himself the question what it meant to be Jesus. During Lent, Christians are supposed to ask one way or another what it means to be themselves.

If you had to bet everything you have on whether there is a God or whether there isn't, which side would get your money and why?

When you look at your face in the mirror, what do you see in it that you most like and what do you see in it that you most deplore?

If you had only one last message to leave a handful of people who are most important to you, what would it be in twenty-five words or less?

Of all the things you have done in your life, which is the one you would most like to undo? Which is the one that make you happiest to remember?

Is there any person in the world or any cause that, if circumstances called for it, you would be willing to die for?

If this were the last day of your life, what would you do with it?

To hear yourself try to answer questions like these is to begin to hear something not only of who you are, but of both what you are becoming and what you are failing to become. It can be pretty depressing all in all, but if sackcloth and ashes are at the start of it, something like Easter may be at the end.

MARCH 30

BY STEVE MIDDLETON

Prayers for Our Church

Lord, may we continue to welcome those who visit, those who are tired, and those who need comfort, with your bread and wine
Lord hear our prayer

Lord, grant us the love and kindness for each other that your fellowship brings
Lord Hear our prayer

Lord, may our joy and faith summon your Holy spirit to dwell among us and fill this Holy room for ever more
Lord Hear our Prayer

Lord, may this bell continue to ring out for those who need your justice, your peace, and your grace Lord call us together in Love, worship and praise. Bless this holy place.

Lord Hear our Prayer

Amen

MARCH 31

BY BEN ROBERTSON

A MEDITATION FROM 2022

This is the night when you brought our fathers, the children of Israel, out of bondage in Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea on dry land.

This is the night, when all who believe in Christ are delivered from the gloom of sin, and are restored to grace and holiness of life.

The Exsultet from the Great Vigil of Easter (BCP page 286)

On Holy Saturday, as Jesus rests in the tomb, we should contemplate the silence of the day and the horrible thought of a world without Christ. That is truly terrible, and worthy of examination as we prepare for the Feast of the Resurrection. You could do that, but I am blithely jumping ahead to the Vigil.

A few years ago, I worshipped (not the Vigil, just an average Sunday) at the Cathedral of St. Philip in Atlanta—a beautiful space with beautiful music. But what I remember from that service was probably something no one else worshipping there that day found remarkable: how the Dean introduced the Nicene Creed (very church geek, I know, but stay with me).

On a Sunday, we say the Nicene Creed (page 326 or 358 in your Book of Common Prayer) after the sermon, and the Creed is introduced quite simply. I usually say something like, “turning to page 326/358, let us say together the Nicene Creed.” But on that Sunday at St. Philip’s, the Dean said, “joining with Christians across time and throughout the world, let us say...” THAT is a very dramatic introduction.

And I thought about that intro when I considered the prayer above from the Vigil. Because both remind us that we are not alone on this journey of Lent, and we celebrate the miracle of Easter, with many sisters and brothers in Christ. We walk with beloved friends at the Chapel of the Cross, Episcopalians across Mississippi, Anglicans in all the Provinces of our Communion, and members of the Jesus Movement (as our Presiding Bishop names us) on every corner of the globe. Good disciples have walked this walk before and we are inspired by them. Good disciples (like you—yes you!) walk this walk today and we walk alongside them. And good disciples will walk in the future and they will be inspired by us. (shocking, I know).

So, as we conclude this holy season, and take the final steps into the light and New Life of Easter, take note of who has walked along side you and give thanks. I am thankful for all who wrote reflections. Perhaps one of these reflections touched your heart—many touched mine. And beyond these reflections, perhaps you became aware of a spiritual sibling in another way. Perhaps someone unexpected prayed for you. Perhaps you made a new friend one Sunday. Perhaps you finally realized that you aren’t alone.

This is the night, this is the day, and this is the time, when all who believe are restored. And let us rejoice and give thanks for all who walk this way with us. Amen

APRIL 1

BY SUZIE WEBB

Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.

Psalm 133:1

“Imagine all the people living life in peace...

Nothing does this momma’s heart more good than seeing my children getting along and loving and caring for each other. When my three were growing up there could be moments (a lot!) when they would bicker, fight and scream at each other. But those moments when they were talking and having fun together were the moments I treasure.

Now that they are grown and we’ve added three more kids (won’t they always be kids?), their spouses/significant others and grandkids, it has become a challenge to get everyone together at one time. When we do manage it, my heart fills with joy watching how they all love each other and genuinely enjoy being together.

In these chaotic days of divisiveness, fear and anger, God’s heart must hurt. After all he created us to love each other. What joy He must feel when sees those times when people are love and care for each other regardless of their differences. Speaking for myself, I do not know how to achieve world peace, but I can do my best every day to love, serve and pray for those in my corner of the world. If we all started with our corners, I believe that we could make the world a more peaceful place and make God smile a little more.

You may say I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one. I hope someday you’ll join us and the world will be as one.” ~ John Lennon

Lord make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. Amen.

Isaiah 66: 1-4 Psalm 133 John 3:25-30

APRIL 3

BY LISA STUTZMAN-GRAVES

“For the poor will always be with you, but you will not always have me.”

Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always. Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

I have often heard it said, that on their death bed, many proclaim they wish they had spent more time with their loved ones. That they had taken that trip, spent that money. I got very intentional to live life this way over 25 years ago when an unexpected death hit me hard. I realized then how fragile life truly is. The financially conservative in all of us probably would react like Judas about the perfume, but Jesus is pointing us to look at the bigger picture, love and time. Mary was literally pouring her love, time and the most valuable item she had on hand as a gift to Jesus. Fast forward to the past couple of years and caring for my elderly parents. As tough as it got, I felt like God was continually filling my love well for them. Because of this love well and time with them, I have very few regrets. As much as we would all like to be together on Earth forever, our true home for forever isn’t here on Earth. I have created an altar in my home of various items from nature, a pinecone, rocks, bird feathers and more. This altar is to remind me “To be still and know that I am God”. In this mindful state, I find it easier to stay focused on giving love and time, as Mary did with Jesus.

“We are all just walking each other home.” Ram Dass

John 12:1-11 Hebrews 9: 11-15 Psalm 36:5-15 Isaiah 42:1-9

APRIL 4

BY SEARCY FOX MORELL

Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going."
John 12:35

"While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light." After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.

John 12:36

One of my favorite children's Christian songs is "This Little Light of Mine". The verses in the middle explain different ways "your light" could be blown out: hide it under a bushel: NO. . . Don't let Satan blow it out, I'm going to let it shine." I love singing this song at Camp Bratton Green and watching everyone's hand gestures and reactions to "hiding" or "losing" their light. Without the "light" in the song, we would be in darkness. Similarly, have you ever lost power on a stormy night and scrambled around to find a light of some kind? Yes, phones are so easy to grab and flip on the flashlight. But for the split second you realize you are in the darkness and cannot see, it's a pretty frightening moment.

Throughout the scriptures for today, the common theme is "light" and taking refuge through Jesus. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the light. He is the light we need in the darkness. Without the light of the world, it would be a scary, dark place. We wouldn't know where we were going without Jesus leading along the way. This is why we must continue to let our light shine bright and not let anyone "blow it out". The Lenten season can be a time of darkness and sadness; however, we need to remember the "light" at the end of the journey...Easter. The light at the end of this Lenten journey is Jesus.

Lord, help me to find you in the darkness of my life. Help me to reach out in the dark times and feel your hand and see your light. Amen.

Isaiah 49:1-7 Psalm 71:1-14 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 John 12:20-36

APRIL 5

BY BECKY HERREN

*God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change
Though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though the waters roar and foam
Though the mountains tremble with its tumult.*

Psalm 46

Where do you go when troubles come your way? And I might add that as we live in this world, troubles WILL come.

The message of the Gospel is simply that God is closer to us than we have ever known; more loving, more willing to help us than we can imagine. Jesus declared that God is worthy of our trust and Jesus lived and died trusting God.

One of the certainties of our faith is that the future into which we journey is filled with God. It is NOT empty! I believe that God gives us confidence and hope as we trust in Him!

For the past two years, I have prayed each day Psalm 91 and I KNOW that my family and I are dwelling in the shelter of the MOST HIGH. I have hope in the future of my family and I know that my God is with us. I do not know what your particular trouble is; I do not know if you are worried about your health, or your children, or your future, or your marriage, or your job. But I do know that an essential part of our faith is to believe that you are not alone in your trouble and that the future is not hopeless. In his loving kindness, God is with you!

Whatever you will come up against, remember God is faithful to all his promises. You do not need to be afraid or to worry but you do need to trust God. My friend Jan Hogue gave me a copy of the following which I have taken with me for the last two years. It says: *“Be strong; Be courageous; Do not be afraid; Do not be discouraged; For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”* Joshua 1:1

MAUNDY THURSDAY

APRIL 6

BY LANEY CRAMPTON

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

I was six years old when I first remember kneeling at the rail to be blessed while my mother and father received communion. With Mama on one side and Mrs. Rowe, a loud dowager of the church, on the other, Mrs. Rowe said audibly to a friend on her other side, "That's an ugly hat Mary has on!" Later, my mother told me that receiving communion is not the place to comment on hats or anything else, but a time to truly be with God in silence. That answer held me in good stead for a few years. As I grew, I came to have a fuller understanding of Paul's Letter to the Corinthians describing Jesus' words at the Last Supper.

The breaking of bread and the drinking of wine were important parts of the Passover celebration about Israel's deliverance from Egypt. At the Last Supper, held on Maundy Thursday in Holy Week, Jesus took this familiar Passover tradition and added to it the meanings connected with His own death for us.

We hear these words repeated each Sunday during Eucharist (also called Holy Communion or the Last Supper). They are edged on my heart and provide that time and space to prepare myself in healing meditation to truly know that Jesus died for my sins. My mother's gentle admonition that communion is a time to "be with God in silence" has a much richer meaning to me than it did when I was six.

Dear Lord, as we prepare to enter the mystery of these last three days of Holy Week, we ask you to shine on our hearts and minds with the hope of Christ's passion, his death and his resurrection. In His name. Amen.

Exodus 12:1-4, 5-10

Psalms 116:1-2, 12-19

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

GOOD FRIDAY

APRIL 7

BY ERIC EATON

“This is the new covenant I will make with my people on that day, says the LORD: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.” Then he says, “I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds.” And when sins have been forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifices. And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God’s house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ’s blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.”

Hebrews 10:16-25

Being mocked, beaten, spat on, forced to carry the instrument of your own death, stripped, and then brutally slain before your friends and own mother IS NOT how many of us would spend a Friday. Growing up, I always wondered why we called it “Good Friday” when much of the above has little to no traces of good about it. I used to stare up at the large crucifix in the church I grew up in with a mix of wonder and sadness (In the Roman faith, Jesus is generally shown on the cross at the height of His suffering, wounds and all). This particular cross was almost life-sized and the body of our Lord was bloodied with His head hung in sadness. I also remember across the way was a statue of the Blessed Virgin holding a plump, happy baby Jesus. I don’t remember when it all hit me, but I do remember feeling sad knowing that the same little child on my left would be the broken and dying man on my right. I wondered if my own mother would have been brave enough to stand there as Mary did, watching her son draw his last breath (Lord, give us the faith and strength of Mary).

We live in a broken, angry, sad, and struggling world. No matter where we turn, it seems little moments of happiness are wedged between acts of violence and evil we cannot comprehend. It can probably be debated for days, but the world is no different now than it was in the first century. The people at the foot of those crosses were used to little moments of happiness wedged in between acts of violence and evil they couldn’t comprehend (but had come to expect living in such a place). We try to run and hide from these moments of fear, like the Apostles. We get angry at things we can’t control and we lash out like Peter. We sometimes lose sight of the big picture and think only of ourselves (and lie three times). Then some of us, in times of overwhelming sadness and helplessness, merely stand to the side and weep like Mary. Like us, these people were broken humans wondering why, Lord, why?!

Yet..... We know what happened three days later. A wise Priest in Charge once said, “You can’t have Easter without Good Friday.” Jesus dying on the cross did not change the physical world all that much. He did not come to bring sword and spear, to chase out the Roman occupiers or the Pharisees. Christ did not walk the earth, performing miracles and healing people, to cause them to rise up and create an army. Jesus came to die, but while He was here, He showed us how to LIVE. To live in the face of all that is evil. To fight bad with acts of good: to heal the sick, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to protect the weak. He came here to show us that it’s ok to build more pews and less walls, to talk with people who don’t look like us or worship like us. He came to show us that while we may disagree, we can still find ways to move forward. He did not come to wipe out sin, He came to destroy the darkness of death. He came to set our souls free!

We don’t have to wait until Heaven to celebrate that freedom, either. Every time we gather as a church to box food, bake bread, send bottles of water, buy toys, serve food, baptize, or visit the sick, we lift people up from despair. Each time we set up tents or string a million lights from trees on campus to welcome the stranger, we brighten a dark world. And each time we kneel at the altar to receive the Eucharist, we force evil one more step back. Believing doesn’t mean our lives will be free from sadness and dark moments. Believing shows us, however, that the sun will rise and the storm will stop. After the crucifixion comes the resurrection. There is much to be done, Church!

Let us break bread together on our knees, lift high the Cross, and onward Christian soldiers. Easter is coming. Forever.

Thank you, Lord, for showing us how to live. That is truly good.

HOLY SATURDAY

APRIL 8

BY GREG CROTTY

*In You, O Lord, I put my trust; Let me never be ashamed; Deliver me in Your righteousness.
Bow down Your ear to me, Delivery me speedily; Be my rock of refuge, A fortress of defense to save me.
For You are my rock and my fortress; Therefore, for Your name's sake, Lead me and guide me.
Pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me, For You are my strength.*

Psalm 31:1-4

Sarah Young addresses trust in her daily devotional as a deposit in God's treasury, to be invested and used another day when most needed. Practicing trust in quiet days in preparation for life's storms is that which strengthens the fabric of all our lives. The trust that allows us to live above our circumstances even while in their midst. *Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:20-21)*

Trust can be difficult for many of us, especially those who find comfort in control. Letting go and letting God direct our affairs related to those things or people we hold most precious (Our Isaac), can be challenging. Perhaps Trust can be seen as a skill to be developed instead of inherent.

I pray we trust God more during this season and know He loves us, and His plan is flawless. I pray we loosen the grip of control and allow His plan to shape our lives. I pray the result of our trust is love, patience and compassion for others and that our communal trust helps make the world a safer and kinder place. Amen !