

**"I am the
LORD."**



Lenten Devotionals

Lillie Ammann

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A Note from the Author

During Advent and Lent, I follow a seasonal Bible reading plan. I journal a short meditation and write a brief prayer on each day's reading. I publish the devotionals in a future year.

This booklet is being published in 2024 with my personal devotions from Lent 2023. The reading plan I chose last year was a collection of passages from both the Old Testament and New Testament. I hope you are blessed by these Scriptures, thoughts, and prayers during this holy season.

Thanks to my friends George and Pam Lampe, fellow parishioners at All Saints Anglican Church in San Antonio, for proofreading. All Saints is a wonderful church, and clergy and members have been very supportive of my devotionals through the years.

May His blessings abound in your time alone with the Lord.

Lillie Ammann

Ash Wednesday



Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread

alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written,

'He will command His angels concerning You';

and

'On their hands they will bear You up,

So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and

serve Him only.'" Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him. ~ Matthew 4:1-11

It's not likely that Satan will tempt us in the same ways he tempted Christ. He knows we couldn't do the things he suggested Jesus do. On the other hand, he tempts us with things that appeal to our fleshly desires, power, and glory/prestige/honor. Instead of enticing us to create bread after days of fasting, he will lure us with a box of donuts someone sets out on the table for all to help themselves. Instead of tempting us to throw ourselves off the pinnacle of a temple for angels to save us, he will tempt us with taking shortcuts to achieve a new position or win a prize. Instead of enticing us to rule all the kingdoms of the world, he lures us with a way for us to gain prestige and recognition—perhaps a less-than-honorable way. Notice Jesus answered every temptation with a quote from the Bible. Do we know Scripture well enough to counter the devil's enticing arguments? Are we strong enough in our faith, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to quote God's Word and turn away from sin? The devil had already tempted Eve and Adam with lies that appealed to their greatest weakness—the same great weakness we all have, the desire to have the knowledge that God has, the desire to be like God, the desire to be our own god. He tried to cause our Lord to sin. Our first parents listened to Satan's lies and were led into sin. Jesus responded to every temptation with the Word of God. I know which one I want to be like.

Eternal, almighty, everlasting God, You give us free will, but You already know what our choices will be. When we are confronted with the enemy of our souls, enable us by the Holy Spirit to lean into Your

Word to resist temptation. Remind us that the devil is the father of lies, and whatever he tells us in his attempts to get us to sin will be a lie. Your Word is truth, and we ask that You will embed it deeply in our hearts so we are armed against every attack of Satan. In the name of Jesus Christ, the perfect, sinless man and God. Amen.

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." ~ Jeremiah 31:31-34

The Israelites weren't able to keep the old covenant because it depended on their performance. They had a way that their sins were forgiven, by animal sacrifice, but there was no way to avoid sin. With the new covenant—Jesus—we have help to avoid sins. The Holy Spirit helps us to behave correctly, and when we do sin—if we repent—our sin is totally wiped away because the penalty has been paid by Jesus's death on the cross. We have direct access to the Father in prayer, the help of the Holy Spirit to serve as a conscience, and the forgiveness of sins by the death of the Son on the cross.

Thank You, Lord, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all part of the covenant. All of You help us to avoid sin, forgive us when we do sin, and are as close as opening our mouths to pray. Help us to live lives that bring You glory and honor. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Friday after Ash Wednesday

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
And before you were born I consecrated you;
I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."
Then I said, "Alas, Lord God!
Behold, I do not know how to speak,
Because I am a youth."
But the Lord said to me,
"Do not say, 'I am a youth,'
Because everywhere I send you, you shall go,
And all that I command you, you shall speak."
"Do not be afraid of them,
For I am with you to deliver you," declares the Lord.

Then the Lord stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me,

"Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.

"See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms,
To pluck up and to break down,
To destroy and to overthrow,
To build and to plant." ~ Jeremiah 1:5-10

Two things strike me about this passage. First, it is strong prolife message. God chose Jeremiah to be His prophet *BEFORE* He formed Jeremiah in the womb. Surely, if He had a plan for Jeremiah before he was even a fetus, He has plans for all of us. We are not clumps of cells, as the proabortion advocates claim. Each of us was a human being from the outset, and each baby conceived today is a human being made in the image of God. The second thing that captures my attention is this: Jeremiah argued his weaknesses, but the Lord told the prophet not to be concerned about his youth or his lack of knowledge of how to speak. The Lord Himself would be with Jeremiah and would give him the words to speak. If he did that for Jeremiah, he will do it for us. Several years ago, I had an experience that caught me by surprise. I had a *conversation* in which He told me that the book I was working on—indeed almost finished—was not to be a collection of essays, but it was to be a devotional book. I went through all the reasons why that didn't sound like a good idea to me. As if I had a better idea than the Lord! I didn't think I knew how to write devotionals, but God had been preparing me for years in writing these Lent and Advent devotionals that started as just my own devotions before I started publishing them, first on my blog, then as downloadable PDFs, and in recent years in paperback books. I would have to do major rewriting to make the essays of various lengths and formats into devotionals in a consistent length and style—yes, I would, the Lord agreed. I was not an eloquent writer—that was the plan, said the Father; this book was to be *Finding God in the Everyday*. Finally, I agreed to be obedient rather than argue with the Great I AM. Not long after that, I was contacted by a publisher asking if I had any novels featuring handicapped characters as my first novel *Stroke of Luck*. When I told her I wasn't writing fiction but working on a devotional book, she asked to see the first few devotionals, all I had ready at the time, and after reading them, she suggested I contact her when the manuscript was complete. That contact resulted in the publication of the book, which is still available. A lot of power in those few verses!

Father God, we want to be obedient to You, but our first response when called upon to do something for You is to look at our own weaknesses and forget that whenever You ask us to serve You, You are simply using us as a vessel. You work through us, but the result is not up to us—it's up to You. Thank You for using us to advance Your Kingdom and for revealing Your will to us. Our job is to be obedient. Help us to do that, no matter what You ask of us. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

"If you will return, O Israel," declares the Lord,
"Then you should return to Me.
And if you will put away your detested things from My presence,
And will not waver,
And you will swear, 'As the Lord lives,'
In truth, in justice and in righteousness;
Then the nations will bless themselves in Him,

And in Him they will glory."

For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem,

"Break up your fallow ground,
And do not sow among thorns.
"Circumcise yourselves to the Lord
And remove the foreskins of your heart,
Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,
Or else My wrath will go forth like fire
And burn with none to quench it,
Because of the evil of your deeds."

Declare in Judah and proclaim in Jerusalem, and say,
"Blow the trumpet in the land;
Cry aloud and say,
'Assemble yourselves, and let us go
Into the fortified cities.'
"Lift up a standard toward Zion!
Seek refuge, do not stand still,
For I am bringing evil from the north,
And great destruction.
"A lion has gone up from his thicket,
And a destroyer of nations has set out;
He has gone out from his place
To make your land a waste.
Your cities will be ruins
Without inhabitant.
"For this, put on sackcloth,
Lament and wail;
For the fierce anger of the Lord
Has not turned back from us." ~ Jeremiah 4:1-8

The prophet Jeremiah is sharing God's words of warning with Israel and Judah, telling them to turn from their wicked ways and return to Him. He warns of devastation that will occur if they continue to be unfaithful. God is a loving, wise, devoted husband to His people, but they are repeatedly unfaithful to Him. We like to think that if we had lived in those days, we would never have been unfaithful to God and turned to the pagan gods, the Baals and Asheroth. We may smugly say, "We don't worship idols. We know idols cannot save us." Then we ignore our family and loved ones to feed our addiction to our cell phones. Or we spend far too much time working for success and not nearly enough time parenting our children. Or we spend inordinate amounts of time and money on our appearance, because our beauty and the accolades and honor we receive because of it are more important than anything else in life. These may not be idols sitting on a shelf to be worshipped, but they are idols when they are more important to us than God. If we don't think we have idols, we can just skim through our calendars and our checkbooks to see where we spend our money and our time. The Lord our God should be the recipient of our time and money as well as our love, honor, and glory.

Lord God, please forgive us when we put anything ahead of You in our lives. Convict us by the Holy Spirit when we are sinning this way and lead us back to the narrow road that leads to Heaven. You are worthy of our time and money and worship. We love You and are sorry for when we put anyone or anything ahead of You. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

First Sunday in Lent

With what shall I come to the Lord
And bow myself before the God on high?
Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings,
With yearling calves?
Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams,
In ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He has told you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice, to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God? ~ Micah 6:6-8



We humans like rules and protocols, especially if they are showy and dramatic. In Old Testament days, that might be sacrificing hundreds of animals or in Jesus's time the Pharisees believed that they needed to follow more than 600 laws. In our time, we may think God will approve of us if we attend a megachurch and follow a charismatic leader. But through the prophet Micah, the Lord tells us He wants us "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with [our] God." Nothing about huge sacrifices or observing 600 arcane laws or identifying with someone rich and famous. Do justice—be fair; do what's right. Love kindness—treat others with gentleness and decency. Walk humbly with your God—love the Lord; put God first and others above yourself. To be saved, we must give our hearts to the Lord and accept Jesus as our Savior. But to please Him after we're saved, be fair, kind, and humble.

Father God who loves us, inspire us to please You by doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with You. Remind us that You don't ask for grand gestures and great shows, and help us to live as You want us to. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

Monday after the First Sunday in Lent

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. ~ Hebrews 4:15-16

I know this is a fact, but it's so hard to comprehend. How can Jesus be both fully man and fully God? And how can He be sinless, never giving in to temptation of any kind? Maybe those questions will be answered in Heaven, but in the meantime, they are mysteries we aren't

intended to understand. We still see in the mirror darkly, but then we will see face to face. Jesus's holiness and His understanding of our lack of holiness on our own mean we can draw near to the throne of grace. Imagine a throne of grace. A throne usually means strength and power, not mercy and grace. But, praise God, Jesus has a throne of grace.

Thank You, Father, that through Jesus, we have access to the throne of grace. In spite of our sinfulness, You love us with an everlasting love, and You shower us with grace and mercy and love. Help us love as You love and live as You will. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Tuesday after the First Sunday in Lent

"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." ~ Jeremiah 31:33

The Lord speaks of a new covenant "after those days." Those days are the days of chastisement for God's people, the days of exile, the days of separation of God because of the sin of the people. This whole chapter is filled with wonderful words of promise and joy from the Lord: "I have loved you with an everlasting love (v3)." "For I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow (v13)." "There is hope for your future (v17)." "For I satisfy the weary ones and refresh everyone who languishes (v25)." After chapters of Jeremiah's prophesying the chastisement, the punishment when God's people ignored His call for repentance, now he says in spite of their (and our!) rebellion and sin, God will write His law on our hearts, and we will listen to Him and follow His law. Then in that great day of the new heaven and the new earth, we will be God's people and He will be our God.

Thank You, Lord, that no matter how much we rebel and sin against You, if we repent and turn back, You will welcome us back and shower Your everlasting love and Your eternal mercy and grace on us. You can be disappointed in us, even angry with us, for our sin. You can punish us with the consequences of our bad behavior. Yet You continue to love us, and You will bring us back to you. We do not deserve that, Father, but we thank You so much for Your generous compassion. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Wednesday after the First Sunday in Lent

"Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward. Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent you all My servants the prophets, daily rising early and sending them. Yet they did not listen to Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck; they did more evil than their fathers.

"You shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you; and you shall call to them, but they will not answer you. You shall say to them, 'This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the Lord their God or accept correction; truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth.

'Cut off your hair and cast it away,
And take up a lamentation on the bare heights;

For the Lord has rejected and forsaken
The generation of His wrath.'

For the sons of Judah have done that which is evil in My sight," declares the Lord, "they have set their detestable things in the house which is called by My name, to defile it."

Jeremiah 7:24-30

God has warned the Israelites and begged them to get rid of idols, to quit worshipping the Baals, to worship Him as the one true God. Yet they ignored warning after warning. They thought the Lord would continue to show mercy, and they would suffer no consequences for their sins. Now they are even polluting the temple, the house called by God's name. We can look at these sinful people and pridefully think we are so much better than they are. But are we? How many times have we ignored warnings (whether they be words spoken directly to us or words in the Bible or physical signs of the damage we are doing)? We have good intentions, but the temptation is just too great. We give in—just this once, we think—and our sin continues. Maybe we haven't committed a major sin over and over again, but we have idols in our life. Is it more important to attend a business conference or go to church? Do we fail to tithe because we're saving for a new car? Do we stay home and watch TV or clean house when help is called for at church? Going to a conference over the weekend and missing one church service doesn't make you a great sinner. But looking for excuses to miss church and thinking you're too busy working to worship God in His house may mean that your job—and the money and prestige you gain from it—is an idol in your life. During Lent, as we spend more time in prayer and contemplation, when we examine ourselves and repent of the things that are not of God, is a good time to look at our calendars and checkbooks and see whether God or things of God get enough time and money or if there is anything else that takes a larger part of our life than the Lord.

Holy, eternal, merciful God, as we seek a holy Lent, please let us look into our lives and eliminate any idols that we find. If we have made our job an idol, we will reduce the extra time we spend outside working hours, especially during times we should be in church. If our appearance is an idol, we will spend less time and money on clothes, beauty treatments, and products to enhance our looks. Whatever we find that we put before You, we will change. We ask the help of the Holy Spirit to reveal the idols in our lives and to help put them in their proper place—perhaps still very important, but less important than the Lord. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thursday after the First Sunday in Lent

And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
Nor faint when you are reproved by Him;
For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines,
And He scourges every son whom He receives."

It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers

to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. ~ Hebrews 12:5-11

We all want people we see as notorious sinners punished for their evil ways. But we are convinced that we're not like those people—we're good for the most part. But in God's eyes, our sins separate us from Him just as much as the notorious criminal. We know God is love and would like to think that He loves us so much He won't discipline us. But that love is the reason He disciplines us. His discipline demonstrates that we are His beloved children.

Father God, no one likes to be disciplined, but we thank You that You convict us of our sin and let us bear the consequences of the wrong we do. But if we repent, You also forgive us and lead us in the paths of righteousness. We want to do right, Lord; we want to do Your will. Please guide us by the Holy Spirit to do so. In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Friday after the First Sunday in Lent

"You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you:

'This people honors Me with their lips,

But their heart is far away from Me.

'But in vain do they worship Me,

Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'" ~ Matthew 15:7-9

Jesus spoke these words to the Pharisees, who were well-known for being self-righteous and legalistic. But they could apply to many false prophets through the centuries, including today. Many mainstream churches teach beliefs that are not Biblical. They are following the secular culture, the precepts of men, rather than the doctrines of God from the Bible. Years ago, when a mainstream denomination consecrated as bishop a man living openly with his male partner, I saw a television interview with one of the leaders who concurred in this decision. The interviewer asked him, "How do you respond to critics who say that the Bible condemns homosexuality?" The clergyman responded, "We wrote the Bible. We can change it if we want to." Now that is a definite case of religious leaders teaching as doctrine a precept of men. The Bible is breathed out by God, as it tells us. Every word is truth, and not one jot or tittle, as the Bible says, can be changed. That is clearly a blatant example that most of us would run away from. But there are many other more subtle heresies that we want to believe. The prosperity Gospel is very appealing. Doesn't it sound great that if we just name it and claim it, it (whatever "it" we want) is ours? But that's not what the Bible says. We have to know the Word well enough ourselves to realize when the doctrines being taught are precepts of men or the Word of God.

Heavenly Father, open our eyes to any heresy we may be tempted to believe. Lead us to study Your Word so we know the truth and cannot be misled by false teachers. Permeate our hearts and minds with the Gospel so that we easily recognize and reject anything that is not of You. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

Saturday after the First Sunday in Lent

Have You completely rejected Judah?
Or have You loathed Zion?
Why have You stricken us so that we are beyond healing?
We waited for peace, but nothing good came;
And for a time of healing, but behold, terror!
We know our wickedness, O Lord,
The iniquity of our fathers, for we have sinned against You.
Do not despise us, for Your own name's sake;
Do not disgrace the throne of Your glory;
Remember and do not annul Your covenant with us.
Are there any among the idols of the nations who give rain?
Or can the heavens grant showers?
Is it not You, O Lord our God?
Therefore we hope in You,
For You are the one who has done all these things. ~Jeremiah 14:19-22

Israel was in the midst of a terrible drought, and the prophet Jeremiah called on God for relief. The Lord was withholding rain to punish the people for their manifold sins and iniquities. Jeremiah acknowledges their wickedness, but He reminds God of His covenant with the Jewish people. He recognizes that no one but God has the power to control the rain, and He points out that while the people do not deserve God's favor in this, God's glory is on the line. If He doesn't come through for the Israelites, He will appear powerless and weak to the peoples in the surrounding areas. If God won't do it for the people, Jeremiah implies, then do it for the Lord's own reputation. But we know that God gives His many gifts, including rain in season so crops can grow and people can eat, totally from His grace – we do not merit anything He does for us. In fact, we deserve the opposite, but even though God doesn't always give His gifts in the way and the timing that we want, His ways and thoughts are higher than our ways and thoughts. If He allows us to suffer for a time with a drought or hunger as in so many parts of the world now, He has a reason, and He will save us when the time is right. When we are faced with tribulation, though, do we whine and complain continuously? Or do we, like Jeremiah, acknowledge our sins and wickedness, let God know we realize we do not deserve His help, but we call on His mercy and grace and ask that He solve our problem for His glory?

Heavenly Father, please let us learn from Jeremiah and when faced with difficulties tell You how we are suffering. You already know, of course, but You want us to come to You with our requests and not take Your knowledge and Your goodness for granted. Then instead of whining and complaining about whatever the problem is, lead us by the Holy Spirit to acknowledge our sins and unworthiness and to ask for Your grace and mercy. We want everyone to see Your glory, to know that we have done nothing on our own, but You have come to our rescue out of Your loving compassion. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Second Sunday in Lent



"Therefore behold, I am going to make them know—
This time I will make them know
My power and My might;
And they shall know that My name is the Lord." ~ Jeremiah
16:21

Throughout the Old Testament, God says He will do something and then ends with "they shall know that I am the Lord." When He exerts His mighty power, it should be clear to anyone that someone greater than wooden or metal idols carved by men caused the happening – good or bad. Yet obviously the nations still continued to ignore the Creator, the omnipotent, omniscient, all-powerful, all-seeing God of power and might and glory. We don't see how God can put up with His Chosen People, who are

stiff-necked, stubborn, and rebellious. And then the nations are much worse – glorifying every form of sexual immorality, participating in child sacrifice, every person living for himself or herself. We see here perhaps a sign of impatience in the Lord's statement: "This time I will make them know." How many times have they failed to respond? Too numerous to count. And here we are centuries later and the description of the iniquities of the nations back then sounds like our own country, indeed our whole world today. God shows Himself and His power over and over and over again, and people continue to ignore Him and live sinfully and selfishly. We can't do much about the world in general, but we can choose to live for the Lord, and we can choose to bear witness to His truth to those around us. If everyone who claims to be a follower of Christ did this, the Gospel would be spread everywhere. Are we doing our part?

Lord God, we look around us at the secular culture and see the same things that were happening in the days of the exile of the Israelites. You reveal Yourself in Your creation and through Your prophets and teachers, yet many ignore and many are actively hostile to You and Christianity. Help us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to live a life that brings honor to You and spreads the Gospel to those around us. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Monday after the Second Sunday in Lent

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. ~
Hebrews 10:19-25

Earlier in this chapter, we read that after Jesus sacrificed Himself for our sins – a once-for-all sacrifice sufficient for all the sins of the world – Jesus took His place at the right hand of the Father. It is that holy place, the throne room of the Father and Son, that we can draw near with faith, knowing that our hearts and bodies were washed clean so we can stand before God cleansed and free of sin. Before Jesus, only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place, and then only once a year and after a ritual cleansing. The ordinary believer could not talk to God. But Jesus has torn the veil that separated the Most Holy Place in the temple and opened the throne room to all who have accepted the sacrifice of Jesus as atonement for our sins and believe in Him as our Lord and Savior. How amazing is that! We can talk directly to our Creator, to our Savior, to the High and Mighty Sovereign of the Universe. Let us not take it for granted and let us not use that freedom to ask for what we want. Instead, let us take every opportunity to spend time with the Lord praising Him and thanking Him for all His blessings.

Abba, Father, thank You that I can come to You anytime and talk to You. Even though You are hearing prayers of millions or billions of people, You hear mine as if it were the only one being spoken in the whole universe. I want to praise You, Lord, for Your power and might and glory and love and mercy and grace and so much more. I want to thank You for blessings of food and shelter and friends and family and church and so much more. Remind me, Lord, when I get distracted with my complaints and my desires instead of interceding for others. Please guide my prayers so that they please You. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

Tuesday after the Second Sunday in Lent

Your words were found and I ate them,
And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart;
For I have been called by Your name,
O Lord God of hosts. ~ Jeremiah 15:16

Jeremiah says he ate God's words and they became a joy and delight of his heart. Eating God's words reminds me of the collect for the second Sunday in Advent, which asks God to grant us to "hear {Scriptures}, read, mark, learn, and *inwardly digest* them." If we take the Word of God into our systems and bury it deep in our hearts, we will be able to call on it for guidance on how to act in any situation, comfort when we need it, and joy and delight all the time. The only way we can do this is to regularly read and study Scripture. If we haven't made a practice of regular Bible study, there's no better time to start than now.

Lord God, thank You for Your Word. Lead us to spend time in the Bible daily. Help us to read and to study and to learn Your Word. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Wednesday after the Second Sunday in Lent

"The heart is more deceitful than all else
And is desperately sick;
Who can understand it?
I, the Lord, search the heart,
I test the mind,
Even to give to each man according to his ways,

According to the results of his deeds." ~ Jeremiah 17: 9-10

Culture tells us to "follow our hearts." But God says that our hearts are deceitful and sick; we cannot understand them. God searches our hearts and gives to each of us according to what He finds. Even in Christian circles, we hear people say, "I messed up, but God knows my heart," as a justification for wrongdoing. We downplay sin with words like "messed up" or "made a mistake" and imply that our hearts are pure, when in fact, the opposite is true. Our deceitful hearts are why we need a Savior, and thanks be to God, we have a Savior who has paid the price for all the evil in our hearts.

Thank You, Lord, for washing us clean of sin and attributing Christ's righteousness to us if we only accept Him as our Savior. We acknowledge that we can do no good on our own. Our only hope is in Jesus, in Whose name we pray. Amen.

Thursday after the Second Sunday in Lent

On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? ~ Romans 9:20-21

Why do we think we know better than God, the omnipotent Creator? Oh, we easily recite that God's ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts higher than our thoughts. We acknowledge that His ways are perfect even when we don't understand. But do our actions always align with our words? Probably not. God chooses to heal one person but leaves another to suffer pain or sickness or disability. We don't want to admit it, but generally we think we deserve the healing, not necessarily in place of the other person, but certainly along with them. When we face financial hardships, do we rejoice in suffering, as the Word tells us? Or do we question God and wonder why God doesn't provide us with a financial cushion? We are the clay, and the Lord is the potter. Whatever He molds us into is exactly right – even though the world, the flesh, and the devil try to convince us that we deserve more or different or better.

Lord, omnipotent, holy God, help us to willingly accept that whatever vessel You have molded us into is perfect. Whatever hardships You allow us to experience have a purpose that we may not understand, but You know. By the power of the Holy Spirit, let our actions match our words. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Friday after the Second Sunday in Lent

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. ~ Isaiah 9:6-7

This is one of my favorite passages in Scripture, and I love to hear this section of Handel's *Messiah* sung by a great choir. These majestic words accompanied by the incredible music is awe-inspiring. Sometimes, though, I need to slow down to read and meditate on the words – the promise of the Messiah, the Christ, and His reign of peace, justice, and righteousness forever and ever, amen! And how will this come about? By the zeal of the Lord of hosts. I am fascinated by the use of the word *zeal* in this passage. Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word *qinah* as "ardor, zeal, jealousy" Some synonyms in English for zeal are ardor, devotion, eagerness, fanaticism, fervor, gusto, intensity, passion, sincerity, spirit, urgency, verve, and zest. We know God has the power to do anything, but rather than saying His power and might will accomplish this, Scripture says His zeal – His ardor, fervor, passion, urgency, spirit – will establish the eternal reign of Christ. He loves us so much that He is eager, intense, even fanatical to bring us into His eternal kingdom.

Holy Father, almighty, everlasting, and zealous God, we do not deserve Your zeal for our eternal life. But thank You that You love us so much that You are eager and passionate about bringing us into Your Kingdom. We don't know when that will be, but we are ready. Maranatha, Lord Jesus!

Saturday after the Second Sunday in Lent

As for the prophets:

My heart is broken within me,
All my bones tremble;
I have become like a drunken man,
Even like a man overcome with wine,
Because of the Lord
And because of His holy words.
For the land is full of adulterers;
For the land mourns because of the curse.
The pastures of the wilderness have dried up.
Their course also is evil
And their might is not right.
"For both prophet and priest are polluted;
Even in My house I have found their wickedness," declares the Lord.

...

Thus says the Lord of hosts,
"Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you.
They are leading you into futility;
They speak a vision of their own imagination,
Not from the mouth of the Lord.
"They keep saying to those who despise Me,
'The Lord has said, "You will have peace";'
And as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart,
They say, 'Calamity will not come upon you.' ~ Jeremiah 23:9-11, 16-17

The Lord was denouncing the false prophets who claim to speak for God, but who are speaking only what the people want to hear. While Jeremiah was prophesying about the sins

of the people and God's coming punishment, the false prophets were prophesying peace. We still have many false prophets today. The "prosperity Gospel" is prevalent and popular. Just follow some charismatic preacher and God will give you everything you want. You will be prosperous and healthy and successful. These preachers certainly become wealthy from the tithes and offerings of their followers and the books and paid appearances they sell. Jeremiah, who is God's true prophet, warns the people not to listen to these false prophets. God has never promised us a life of ease and worldly treasures and success. Jesus warned us we would have tribulation in the world, but the good news is that He has overcome the world.

Heavenly Father, we don't like to think that we can be misled by false prophets, but Scripture warns us to be very careful not to be led astray. Keep us in Your Word, because we must know the Scripture to be able to discern if what we hear from preachers and teachers aligns with the Bible. Help us to listen, not to what we want to hear, but to Your truth. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Third Sunday in Lent

Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets." However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God. ~ 2 Kings 17:13-14

Years of prophets and seers warning Israel and Judah to turn from their wicked ways had accomplished nothing. Rather than turning away from sin, the people "stiffened their neck." We could understand if the people sinned because they didn't know any better. But they did know, yet they continued to turn from the Lord and worship the Asherah and the Baals. We wonder why they didn't respond to the prophets. God had given them a good land and countless blessings, but they didn't want to follow His rules. However, we only have to look around us to see the same things happening today. The Jews sacrificed their children to Molech; in the United States we sacrifice our babies to Planned Parenthood and the abortion industry. The people of Israel and Judah engaged in sexual immorality; in the US, we say boys can be girls and vice-versa, men can marry men and women can marry women, and little children can participate in sexually explicit story hours. They called good evil and evil good; so do we. Oh, we say, we don't do those things—it's those other people. But what have we done to turn the country around? Do we stand up for truth in a culture filled with lies? Do we work to change the laws that allow for small children to have their bodies mutilated so they can correct the mistake they claim God made in creating them male or female? Do we speak up when people protest perceived discrimination by destroying property and attacking innocent people? When others are calling evil good, are we courageous and faithful enough to call it what it is?



Lord, we like to think we are better than God's long-ago people who ignored His prophets, who overlooked all His blessings and acted just like the evil people they were supposed to drive from the land God gave them. But You know that we are no better. Our sins may be different, but they are just as sinful. Please help us to follow You faithfully, to stand up for Your truth even when it is difficult, and to never give in to evil. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Monday after the Third Sunday in Lent

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies. ~ John 11:25

Praise God that we will be resurrected just as Jesus was. With Him, we will have eternal life. We look forward to eternity in Heaven with Jesus, but His Word tells us that the abundant life begins here on earth. It's "already, but not yet." Christ's kingdom exists and all believers are part of it. But it is not like it will be at the end of time when we will all be together in the new earth.

Thank You, Lord, that we are already part of Your Kingdom and that we are already experiencing eternal life, albeit not yet fully fulfilled. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Tuesday after the Third Sunday in Lent

Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the captives of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans. For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them up and not overthrow them, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the Lord; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.
~ Jeremiah 24:4-7

Even as God is giving Jeremiah's prophecies of the captivity to come, He also reveals that the punishment will not last forever. He will bring back those captives who are "good" — the ones who remember the Lord and love Him. If they turn from their sin and return to God with their whole hearts, He will not only return them to the land He has given them, but He will also give them a heart to know Him, and they will be His people and He will be their God. He knows that they are not capable of doing His will on their own. So centuries before the Gospel of grace from Christ, God forgives the sins of His people and enables them to live a righteous life. How much more does He do for us who have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior. We tend to think of the God of the Old Testament being a cruel and demanding King while the God of the New Testament is loving and compassionate. There is only one God; it is the same Lord in the New Testament as it is in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, in the life and death and resurrection of Christ, He offers a new covenant. However, the nature and character of God does not change — He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Thank You, Lord, that You never change. Even when You exiled Your people because of their unfaithfulness to You, You already had a plan in place to return them to the Promised Land. Now that Jesus has come to earth and died for our sins, You offer a new covenant, but everything in the New

Testament is a continuation and is built upon the Old Testament. Help us to understand and appreciate that. In the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday after the Third Sunday in Lent

"But as for you, do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers or your sorcerers who speak to you, saying, 'You will not serve the king of Babylon.' For they prophesy a lie to you in order to remove you far from your land; and I will drive you out and you will perish." ~ Jeremiah 27:9-10

Jeremiah prophesies what the Lord tells him; he begins his prophecies with these words: "Thus says the Lord." But the people don't want to hear prophecies of captivity and slavery. They don't want to believe that the rest of the vessels from the temple will be taken away to Babylon. Even when Jeremiah puts a yoke on his own neck as God instructs him to do, a false prophet breaks the yoke and assures the people that Jeremiah is the liar. When the people hear two conflicting prophecies from individuals claiming to speak for God, they choose to listen to the one prophesying what they want to hear: there will be no captivity, no slavery, no looting of the temple. There's a lot of the same thing going on today as well. Think of the megachurches led by charismatic leaders preaching a prosperity Gospel. Our sinful nature wants to believe that following Jesus will make us healthy, wealthy, and wise. We don't want to hear that we have to sacrifice and love our enemies and love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. So how do we know who is speaking the truth? We have no excuse for believing false teachers – we have God's Word. If what we are being told is not in line with Scripture, then it isn't true. Whoever is telling us is a false teacher. Perhaps they are mistaken; perhaps they are deliberately deceiving people for their own success. Whatever the reason, they are speaking lies.

Holy Lord God, we glorify You and give You praise and honor because we can know the truth, and Jesus told us that the truth will set us free. God's people believed false prophets because they thought they would stay free, but instead they were captured and enslaved. We may not be captured and carried off to a foreign land as slaves, but we will become enslaved to sin. Save us from slavery to sin, Lord. Give us discernment; guide us to study and learn Your Word so we will recognize the truth and identify lies and false teachings. We ask this in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thursday after the Third Sunday in Lent

"For thus says the Lord, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.' ~ Jeremiah 29:10-13

Jeremiah sent a letter from Jerusalem to the exiles in Babylon. He told them the exile would be long, seventy years in fact. But the exiles were to build homes and plant crops and marry and have children. They should look after the welfare of the city of their captivity. They would be prepared when God returned them home. And through Jeremiah, God promised they would

go home to Jerusalem. He told them of the plans He had for their future welfare. Most of all, He told them if they called on Him and prayed to Him, He will listen. He promised they would find Him if they sought Him with all their hearts. We are exiles in a strange land, temporary sojourners on earth, and God will take us to our eternal home, perhaps in seventy years, maybe less or maybe more. But as long as we dwell here in the world that is not our home, God has plans for each of us, for our welfare, for a future with a hope. If we turn to the Lord and pray to Him, He will listen to us. If we search for Him with our whole hearts, we will find Him. There is no greater treasure we can seek. Praise God that He stands ready to hear our prayers, ready to make us His sons and daughters.

Abba Father, we are calling on You. We are praying to You, and we know that You are listening. Lord, we are seeking You with our whole hearts. There is nothing we desire more on this earth than You. There is nothing of greater value; there is nothing else worth seeking as much as You. We praise You that You have promised that we will find You when we seek You with our whole hearts. You are the God of majesty and might and power, and You are the God of mercy and grace and love. We honor You and give You glory. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Friday after the Third Sunday in Lent

"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." ~ Jeremiah 31:33-34

Jeremiah made this prophecy to Israel during its captivity, but we can take it as a promise to us when the Kingdom of God is finally fulfilled. Those who have loved the Lord and accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior in this life will be part of God's Kingdom. We will be His people and He will be our God. We will no longer live in a body that is sinful because of the Fall. God will forgive all the sins we have committed and the iniquity we have done, and we will know Him. Maranatha, Lord Jesus!

Lord God, we look forward to the day when we are Your people and You are our God, the day we will no longer be in a body of sin and when our iniquities have been forgiven. Guide us by the Holy Spirit to live as Your children in Your kingdom today and eventually lead us into that kingdom that shall have no end. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Saturday after the Third Sunday in Lent

And Jeremiah said, "The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle is coming to you, saying, "Buy for yourself my field which is at Anathoth, for you have the right of redemption to buy it.'" Then Hanamel my uncle's son came to me in the court of the guard according to the word of the Lord and said to me, 'Buy my field, please, that is at Anathoth, which is in the land of Benjamin; for you have the right of possession and the redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.' Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord.

"I bought the field which was at Anathoth from Hanamel my uncle's son, and I weighed out the silver for him, seventeen shekels of silver. I signed and sealed the deed, and called in witnesses, and weighed out the silver on the scales. Then I took the deeds of purchase, both the sealed copy containing the terms and conditions and the open copy; and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah. ...

"After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, then I prayed to the Lord, saying, 'Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You, who shows lovingkindness to thousands, but repays the iniquity of fathers into the bosom of their children after them, O great and mighty God. The Lord of hosts is His name; great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, giving to everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds. ...

'You brought Your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and with wonders, and with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm and with great terror; and gave them this land, which You swore to their forefathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey. They came in and took possession of it, but they did not obey Your voice or walk in Your law; they have done nothing of all that You commanded them to do; therefore You have made all this calamity come upon them. ...

"Now therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel concerning this city of which you say, 'It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine and by pestilence.' Behold, I will gather them out of all the lands to which I have driven them in My anger, in My wrath and in great indignation; and I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety. They shall be My people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and for the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me. I will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul. For thus says the Lord, 'Just as I brought all this great disaster on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them. Fields will be bought in this land of which you say, "It is a desolation, without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans." Men will buy fields for money, sign and seal deeds, and call in witnesses in the land of Benjamin, in the environs of Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the lowland and in the cities of the Negev; for I will restore their fortunes,' declares the Lord." ~ Jeremiah 32:6-12, 16-19, 21-23, 36-44

As He has done at other times, God uses His prophet to demonstrate His plans. He told Jeremiah to buy a field, and Jeremiah did as he was told even though the city was under siege and no one was doing business because they knew the city would fall and they would be slaves of another nation. After he transacted the land purchase, he prayed, acknowledging all that God had done for His people and all the evil the people had done. He knew that God was allowing them to be captured because of the iniquity of the people. But God gave Jeremiah further prophecy: the people would not be slaves forever. They would not be under the yoke of their enemy forever. God would return them to the land that He gave them, and again property would be bought and sold in Israel. The fortunes of the people would be restored. God would forgive their sins and bring an end to their chastisement. Now we don't have to suffer the captivity and slavery as punishment before our sins are forgiven. Jesus suffered

death on the cross to save us from our just punishment, and He has already paid the price for our sins. All we have to do is accept His free gift.

Thank You, Lord, that Jesus has endured the punishment that is rightfully ours. You forgave the sins of the Israelites, but only after You chastised them. We are so blessed that we don't have to suffer punishment—Jesus has done that for us. Although there may be consequences of our sin, we will not be banished or beaten or hung on a cross. We give You praise and honor and glory for Your mercy and grace and love. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Fourth Sunday in Lent



"When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord your God so as to provoke Him to anger, I [Moses] call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. The Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord drives you. There you will serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him

with all your heart and all your soul. When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the Lord your God and listen to His voice. For the Lord your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them." ~ Deuteronomy 4:25-31

Moses spoke at length to the people of God before they entered the Promised Land, reminding them of all God has done for them bringing them out of slavery in Egypt. Then he warns them against making an idol or a graven image, but tells them if they stray and worship the idols of the lands they are in, they will finally seek the Lord again. When they search for God, they will find Him if they search with their whole heart. Much later, the prophet Jeremiah makes the same promise (Jeremiah 29:10-13). And what God did for the Jewish people under Moses and Jeremiah, He will do for us today. Many of us will stray from the Lord and worship other gods—probably not a carved figure, but things that are idolized today: money, prestige, education, entertainment, or any number of things that we put before the Lord. But, praise God, He will be waiting for our return, and we will find Him when we seek Him with our whole heart.

Almighty God, please keep us from straying and worshipping idols of any kind. Thank You, however, that if we do lose our way, You will be happy for our return. All we have to do is to seek You with our whole hearts and we will find You again. You love us so much that You forgive our waywardness and take us back as often as we stray. You are an amazing, forgiving, longsuffering, compassionate God, and we want to worship only You. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Monday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes. Then the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Micaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant saying, "Go, inquire of the Lord for me and the people and all Judah concerning the words of this book that has been found, for great is the wrath of the Lord that burns against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."

So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter); and they spoke to her. She said to them, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to me, thus says the Lord, "Behold, I bring evil on this place and on its inhabitants, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read. Because they have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods that they might provoke Me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore My wrath burns against this place, and it shall not be quenched.'" But to the king of Judah who sent you to inquire of the Lord thus shall you say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel, "Regarding the words which you have heard, because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you," declares the Lord. "Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes will not see all the evil which I will bring on this place.'"'" So they brought back word to the king. ~ 2 Kings 22:11-20

Today, it's hard to imagine the book of the law of the Lord being lost. However, in Old Testament times, there were no printing presses or copy machines. Everything had to be written out by hand on scrolls. Apparently, there was a scroll stored in the temple, but it had not been read for a long time. When the priests found it, they took it to the king of Judah, who tore his clothes in penitence and probably fear of what would happen. He knew the people hadn't been following the law, and he heard God's words of what He would do if His people didn't follow His commandments. He sent the priest and others to inquire of God. The prophetess they consulted reported that God was going to punish them just as the book said. They had forsaken the Lord and followed other gods. However, because the king of Judah humbled himself as soon as he heard the words of the Book, he would be spared from all the evil to come. The king would die peacefully before any of this happened. We have no excuse for not knowing God's Word. We have Bibles in our homes, Bibles online, Bibles on our phone. Do we humble ourselves when we are convicted of sin? Do we stand up for truth when society bombards us with lies? We can be punished with everyone else if we go along with the crowd, or we can be saved from evil if we humble ourselves before the Lord.

Lord God, forgive us when we don't stand up for Your truth. Pardon us when we follow the trends of the world rather than the words of Scripture. Guide us by the Holy Spirit to follow Your Words always, even if we are the only one who does so. When our time comes, let us die at peace with You. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

I waited patiently for the Lord;

And He inclined to me and heard my cry.
He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay,
And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.
He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God;
Many will see and fear
And will trust in the Lord. ~ Psalm 40:1-3

The psalmist “waited patiently” for the Lord, and the Lord heard him and set him on a rock and put a new song in his mouth. We all have to wait for God’s answer from time to time, but often we don’t wait very “patiently.” We want God to be on our time, while His timing is very different. One day is as a thousand years to Him, and a thousand years as a day. His timing is always perfect, even when it doesn’t seem that way to us. We’d like to say a prayer and have an answer immediately – like having a text conversation with someone who is on the phone at the same time we are. Sometimes that happens – I drop something on the floor and can’t see it. I say a prayer, and it’s instantly in my line of view. Other times the answer comes in days, weeks, months, or years. Yet however long it takes, God’s answer comes at the perfect time. May we wait “patiently” as the psalmist.

Holy God, we know Your timing is perfect and that You always answer prayer – no matter how long we have to wait. Help us to wait patiently, Lord, and not expect an instant response. Help us to remember that Your timing is perfect. Thank You for always answering prayer, even if the answer isn’t what we want to hear. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. ~ John 15:1-10

We fallen humans, especially those of us in this country, like to think we are independent. Frank Sinatra sang, “I did it my way!” and audiences loved it. Many were probably thinking these words applied to them – they did it their way (whatever “it” was to each person). But in God’s Kingdom, we cannot be independent. If we are not connected to Christ, living in Him and depending on Him, we will be discarded as useless trash. Unless we are a branch on the vine that is the Lord, we will bear no fruit. God intends for us to produce fruit for His Kingdom, not live just for ourselves. And if we do bear fruit, what happens? He prunes us so we bear even more fruit!

Lord, prune this branch of the vine, Your Son, so that I bear much fruit. I want people to look at me and see Jesus. I know there is a long way to go for that to happen regularly, Lord, but please continue to prune me and lead me by the Holy Spirit, so the few and small fruit I bear now will become abundant and beautiful. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thursday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me." ~ John 12:1-8

Imagine loving the Lord so much that you pour a pound of expensive perfume on His feet and then wipe His feet with Your hair! The nard poured out on Jesus came from a heart overflowing with so much love that she gave Him the best she had to offer. I have to ask myself if I always give God my best. Do I put Him first in every area of my life? Do I tithe and give generously for His Kingdom, or do I spend more on myself and what I think are my needs that are really wants? Do I put God first in the way I spend my time, or do I put my pleasure first? I want to be like Mary and pour my love out on Jesus like expensive perfume.

Almighty, everlasting God, fill my heart with so much love for You that I give You the very best I have. Let my love flow like the expensive perfume being poured out on the feet of the Savior. Thank You for loving me more than that. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Friday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ~ John 3:16-17

The first verse in this passage is probably the most famous verse in the entire Bible. People who can't quote any other Scripture know this verse. It's so familiar to us that it is easy to take it for granted. God sent His beloved Son, Who temporarily gave up His glory in Heaven, to come live among us. He died – not just died, but was killed in the most heinous, the most painful way you can imagine. Usually only the worst criminals were crucified. The cross was a symbol of shame and pain. Yet Jesus chose to do this. He freely acceded to His Father's plan for Jesus to be born as a tiny, helpless baby; live among sinful humans; accept persecution when it came; and give up His life to pay for the sins of all those sinful humans. Not only did He die, and by His death pay the penalty for our sin, but He also rose again to give us eternal

life. No matter how much we think we love, we humans cannot even imagine the love that God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) has for us.

Thank You, Lord, that Jesus paid the penalty for my sins—past, present, and future. Thank You that the Holy Spirit guides me and leads me on a path of becoming more like You. Thank You that when I pass from this life, it will be only a transition, not an ending. Jesus’s resurrection gave me eternal life, so I will live forever throughout eternity. My mind cannot totally grasp this, Lord, but I praise You and give You honor and glory for what You have done. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Saturday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD.’” ~ Exodus 6:6-8

How many times did God say to the Israelites, “You shall know that I am the Lord, your God?” Every time He did mighty miracles, they recognized Him as their Lord, but very soon they were worshipping idols and straying from God’s way. It’s easy to look back to the Old Testament and think we certainly wouldn’t have been like them. If we had seen God’s miracles, we would not have turned from Him. Yet we know from the Bible of countless miracles God has performed through thousands of years. We should never stray from His path based on all we know – and yet we do. We let cares and worries and worldly desires take the place in our lives that only God should take. We, the Church, are His people, and we must know that He is our God.

Almighty, miracle-working God, forgive us when we stray from Your teachings, when we put other things in the place that only You should occupy in our lives. Thank You that we are Your people. Help us to always know that You are our God. In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Fifth Sunday in Lent (Passion Sunday)

Then she said, “Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law.” But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if *anything but* death parts you and me.” ~ Ruth 1:15-17

Ruth was a Moabite woman, who married the son of Naomi, who, with her husband and sons, left Bethlehem for Moab during a time of famine. After Naomi’s husband and both of her sons died, she decided to return to her



homeland when she heard the famine was over. She didn't expect her daughters-in-law to go with her, but Ruth insisted. She recognized the Lord as her God and wanted to become part of His people. She was more committed to God than many of the Israelites, who were born into God's people.

Lord, my God, thank You for making us Gentiles part of Your people. Anyone who accepts Jesus as Savior is part of Your people, regardless of where we were born or what ethnicity we are. Help us to always recognize You as God, the Lord of our lives. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

Monday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, "Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and say to them, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "Cursed is the man who does not heed the words of this covenant which I commanded your forefathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, 'Listen to My voice, and do according to all which I command you; so you shall be My people, and I will be your God,' in order to confirm the oath which I swore to your forefathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day.'"" Then I said, "Amen, O LORD." ~ Jeremiah 11:1-5

Speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, the Lord told the people of Israel that if they followed His commands, they would be His people and He would be their God. However, if they did not heed God's commandments, they would be cursed. Just like the Israelites, today people often feel like God's commands are burdensome and too hard to keep. We want to be free to do as we please and not be bound by laws and rules. But the choice is being God's people with Him as our God or being cursed. I know which I choose! Of course, none of us obey all of God's commandments all the time. We are flawed humans with sin in our DNA, but we need to do our best, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to live a life honoring God.

Holy God, forgive us when we fail to live up to Your standards. Guide us by the Holy Spirit so that we daily grow more and more like Jesus. We want to be part of Your people with You as our God. In the name of Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Tuesday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

"Yet even now," declares the LORD,
"Return to Me with all your heart,
And with fasting, weeping and mourning;
And rend your heart and not your garments."
Now return to the LORD your God,
For He is gracious and compassionate,
Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness
And relenting of evil. ~ Joel 2:12-13

God is always ready to take us back when we stray if we turn to Him in true penitence, with all our hearts, and sorrowing for our sins. We humans often have a hard time forgiving another person who wrongs us, but God is gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness (faithful love in action). He loves us and forgives us when we

don't deserve it, but we do need to repent – turn around. Stop our sinning and grieve for the sin that we have already committed. If we turn to Him with all our hearts, our loving Father will forgive us.

Gracious, compassionate Lord, thank You that You forgive us when we repent and turn to You. No matter what we have done, You love us and pour out Your mercy and compassion on us. As much as we love and appreciate Your compassion, Father, we ask that You lead us away from sin. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

Wednesday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

"Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel,
And that I am the LORD your God,
And there is no other;
And My people will never be put to shame. ~ Joel 2:27

God continually told the Israelites through His prophets that they were His people and He was their God. He was "in the midst" of them, and with Him among them, they would never be put to shame. These same words now apply to His universal Church. He is in the midst of us, and He is the Lord our God. The church will not be put to shame if we continue in His will. Unfortunately, many churches today are influenced more by culture than the Bible. They will be put to shame if they operate in sin. Such egregious sins as blessing abortion clinics and performing weddings for same-sex couples will bring shame to those institutions claiming to be God's Church. He is not in the midst of groups openly flaunting His Word.

Eternal holy God, lead Your people, the Church, in Your ways. Change the hearts of earthly leaders who turn institutions claiming to be Your church into sinful organizations no different from the surrounding culture. You are the Lord in the midst of the true Church. Keep it pure and holy and never let it be put to shame. In the holy name of Jesus, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Thursday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. ~ Ezekiel 36:22-24

God's prophet Ezekiel told His people that God was going to act to return them from the nations where they had been dispersed. However, He let them know, He was not doing it for their sakes but for His own sake. His name had been profaned by the way the Israelites lived. Probably people of other nations looked at His people being led into captivity, and instead of recognizing that it was punishment for their sin, thought God was not able to protect His people. When God allowed His people to be defeated in battle, pagans thought the battle was lost because God wasn't powerful enough to ensure victory for His people. Now, God said, He

was bringing His people home to show the nations that He was the holy, almighty God. How do our actions reflect on our Lord? Do people watch us and see that our God is mighty and holy? Or do our actions profane God's name?

Holy, powerful Lord, please forgive us when our actions bring shame to You. Guide us by the Holy Spirit to live so that our lives reflect Your holiness. Do not let us profane Your holy name. In the holy name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Friday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. ~

Ezekiel 36:25-28

God can and will cleanse us from the filthiness of our sin. He can and will take away our hardness of heart and give us His Spirit. If we have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior, He has given us His Holy Spirit to guide us in His will. He has given us Jesus, His Living Word, to show us how to live. He gives us wisdom and guidance through the Holy Bible. We are His people, and He is our God.

Thank You, Lord God, for cleansing us of our sins by the death and resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus told us before He ascended to Heaven that He would send us a Comforter who would remind us of everything Jesus taught. Open our hearts, Father, to receive and follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Make us all, Your Church, Your people, and be our God. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

Saturday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. ~ John 1:1-5

Jesus is the Word. When God spoke the world into being, it came into existence through the Son, Jesus, the Word. His Light shines in the darkness, yet look at the state of our world today. Obviously, the majority of the world does not see that Light. They remain in the darkness of sin and evil. May our eyes be always open to the Light and our ears and hearts always open to the Word.

Father, I know You are not slow in bringing the world into judgment and Your Kingdom into full fruition. Your written Word tells us that You are giving time for more people to turn to You. You do not want any of the creatures You made in Your own image to be lost and spend eternity in hell with Satan and his demons. Lead us to do all we can —by sharing the Gospel with others, by encouraging the church to evangelize more and more effectively, and by supporting missionaries who take the Gospel into

unreached parts of the world. Draw people to You so that the time will draw near for Jesus to return. Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Palm Sunday



As they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, and said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied *there*, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it *here*. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' you say, 'The Lord has need of it'; and immediately he will send it back here." They went away and

found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they untied it. Some of the bystanders were saying to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They spoke to them just as Jesus had told *them*, and they gave them permission. They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and He sat on it. And many spread their coats in the road, and others *spread* leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting:

"Hosanna!

BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David;

Hosanna in the highest!" ~ Mark 11:1-10

Oh, what a joyful and majestic entry into Jerusalem! None of this was a surprise to Jesus, of course. He had already arranged for the colt to be waiting for His disciples to pick up. The crowds shouted "Hosanna," and it looked like Jerusalem was welcoming someone of high rank and significance. Did they really believe that Jesus was the Messiah? Or were they just caught up in what they saw others doing? When people are in large crowds, they often do things they wouldn't otherwise do—whether good or bad. They honor a Lord or they destroy a business. Whatever the majority of the crowd is doing, others join in without due consideration. Later crowds reviled Jesus and called for His death. Were they the same crowds who welcomed Him so enthusiastically on His arrival? Maybe they really believed in His triumphal entry and got caught up in the crowd fever later in the week. Or maybe it was the reverse. The question for us is this: Do we ever let our words and actions be influenced by what "everyone" is doing? Do we deny Him or stay quiet and hide our beliefs if we're in a group of nonbelievers, perhaps hostile nonbelievers? Or do we have the courage and strength to, as the song goes, "stand up, stand up for Jesus" at all times and in all places?

Everlasting Lord, Who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, please give us the desire and the courage to stand up for You, to share our faith, no matter what anyone else says or does. Jesus told us to go into all the world and share the Gospel. We can't all go to far-away places, but You have still called us to witness for You. Help us to do so. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Monday in Holy Week

Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of

those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. And He *began* to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS'? But you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN." The chief priests and the scribes heard *this*, and *began* seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching. ~ Mark 11:15-18

People often think of Jesus as being a quiet, meek, and mild person. It is true that He was and is always loving, but that doesn't mean he was always passive. The money changers and those selling birds for sacrifice certainly didn't see Him as passive when He chased them out of the temple. They were desecrating the Lord's house, and He wouldn't allow that to continue. Jesus stood up to sin and evil — He called the Pharisees hypocrites, like whitewashed tombs, a brood of vipers, serpents. We don't have merchants desecrating a temple, but we have a world full of evil people doing evil things. Our government serves itself rather than the people. Doctors are damaging the future health and mutilating the bodies of young children who are confused about who God made them to be. Schools are indoctrinating students in non-Christian values. We are called to be like Jesus — to fight against evil wherever it may be found.

Father, give us the wisdom to know what we should stand for and against and the courage to take a stand. Teach us by the Holy Spirit who is desecrating the temple and follow You in driving them out. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Tuesday in Holy Week

While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining at the table, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; and she broke the vial and poured it over His head. But some were indignantly remarking to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted? For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they were scolding her. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me. She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her." ~ Mark 14:3-9

Last week we read of Mary pouring expensive perfume on Jesus's feet; now we learn of a woman pouring expensive perfume over Jesus's head. He chided those who complained and who said the money should be used for the poor. The poor, He reminded the people at the dinner, would always be here. This perfume, as expensive as it was, would not bring an end to poverty. He knew, though the others there may not have, that His death was very near — only a few days away. Jesus accepted this woman's outpouring of love as part of the preparation for His death; He said that she was anointing His body for burial. Sometimes people look at elaborate church buildings or items used in worship and wonder why so much money was spent on a building people use only a few times a week. We need to remember that the beauty is to honor the Lord, not for us to enjoy our surroundings. Nothing is too good for God. In fact, nothing we can do or create is good enough for the Lord, Whose glory is beyond our imaginings.

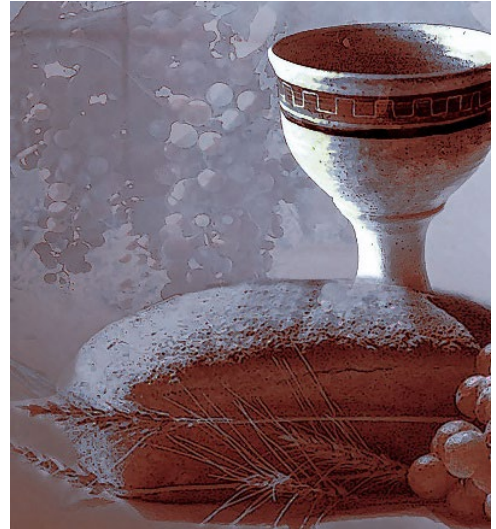
Lord God, You are worthy of all glory, laud, and honor. All the beauty we can create to worship You falls far short of Your majesty, but we want to give You the best we can to show our love and adoration. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Wednesday in Holy Week

While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." ~ Matthew 26:26-29

The night Jesus was arrested, He had shared a Passover meal with His disciples. At the end of the meal, He gave them bread and wine as described in these verses, telling them the bread was His body and the wine was His blood. We are all to eat of His body and drink of His blood because they were given for the forgiveness of our sins. The Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, the Eucharist are all names for this sacrament which we still observe in the church today.

Holy God, each time we take the sacrament of Jesus's body and blood, let us partake of the essence of Your Son so that we become more and more like Him every day. Free us from idle thoughts and inattention and help us to focus solemnly on this blessed act. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.



Maundy Thursday



**"UNLESS I WASH YOU, YOU
HAVE NO PART WITH ME."**

JOHN 13:8

Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.

Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." Peter said to Him, "Never shall You

wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."

So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.' From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me." ~ John 13:1-20

Many churches hold a foot-washing ceremony on Maundy Thursday, also known as Holy Thursday. Those whose feet are washed are often uncomfortable and embarrassed. Yet these ceremonies bear little resemblance to what Jesus did. The people who get their feet washed in church today will have taken a bath or shower, possibly put lotion or powder on their feet to make them soft and sweet-smelling, and then put on socks and shoes. Those feet, wearing shoes, stepped only on clean floors in buildings or paved streets and sidewalks. In the time of Jesus, people wore sandals and walked on dirty streets that may also have served as sewers. They didn't ride in clean, comfortable cars but walked or rode donkeys. Their feet really needed washing, because they were dirty – dirtier and smellier than any of us are likely to ever see or smell. Washing feet was the task of a lowly servant, yet our Lord and Savior lowered Himself to wash the feet of His disciples. Then He told them that He did it as an example, so they would go and do the same thing. Today's real-life foot-washing (not the symbolic foot-washing in a church service) may look like caring for a sick child or an elderly invalid. Perhaps it looks like filling in for a coworker who needs to take a day off to deal with a family problem. Maybe it looks like picking up groceries for a homebound neighbor. It could be something as simple as holding the door and letting others enter first. The foot-washing we are called to do is to serve God's people in whatever ways are before us.

O Lord God, Jesus was God, yet He did the job of the lowest of servants. Give us servants' hearts and open our eyes to see where You want us to serve. In the name of Jesus Christ, Who with You and the Holy Ghost, lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

Good Friday

They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed." And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch." And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell to the ground and *began* to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will." ~ Mark 14:32-36



Jesus chose to die for our sins, yet it was not easy for Him. The pain He endured hurt Him just as much as it would hurt you or me. He knew God could send an army of angels to save Him from all He was going to suffer. He prayed that He wouldn't have to go through with it – but then He said, "Not what I will, but what You will." We don't always do that. We like to tell God what we *need* – usually a want, not a need – and we think God should answer our prayer with whatever we asked for. He can do that, for sure, and He may do that, possibly, but our prayer should be for His will, not our own.

Father in Heaven, We do not want to take Your blessings for granted. Your thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and Your ways are higher than our ways. Please bring our wills into accord with Your will so that we will always pray in Your will. In the holy name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Holy Saturday

After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body. Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. ~ John 19:38-42

Both Joseph and Nicodemus were secret disciples because they were afraid they would lose their positions. But after Jesus's death, both came forward to receive the body, wrap it in linen wrappings with spices, and put it in the tomb. At a time when many of the followers of Jesus were frightened and in hiding, these two men found the courage to let their faith be known. Perhaps seeing that Jesus chose to die for the sins of others strengthened them. Whatever it was, something changed them. They saw the crucifixion; we have seen, in God's written Word and in the lives and writings of the followers of Jesus, His resurrection. May we always have the courage to show our faith to the world.

Almighty and everlasting God, give us the courage to show our faith in the way we live and share our faith in the way we speak. In Jesus's name. Amen.

Easter Sunday



Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know

that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."

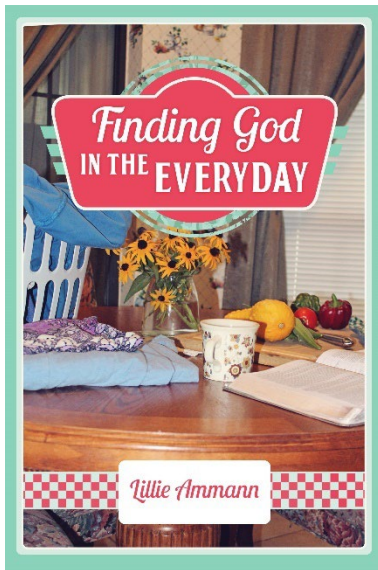
And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me."

Now while they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.' And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble." And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day.

But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." ~ Matthew 28:1-20



Other Devotionals by Lillie Ammann



Finding God in the Everyday

The faith and stories shared in these pages are not only inspiring, they are instructive. They are helpful. They are down-home. They are everyday. And they are otherworldly. Read and be blessed. Welcome to the life of knowing God in the miraculous, other-worldly, plain ol' life of every day.

~ Fr. Jerry Sherbourne

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Year	Lent	Advent
2023	From "Hosanna" to "It Is Finished"	---
2022	The Parables of Jesus	God Orchestrates History for Our Salvation
2021	The Light of Christ	The Promises of God
2020	The Grace of God	The Judgment of God
2019	Suffering and Salvation	The Glory of the Lord
2018	Jesus Paid the Price	Light of the World
2017	---	Coming of Jesus