

The Light of Christ

A bright, multi-colored starburst or nebula is centered in the middle of the cover. It has a core of yellow and white light, surrounded by concentric rings of orange, red, and finally a larger, more diffuse ring of blue and purple. The background is a deep black space filled with numerous small, distant stars and some faint, wispy clouds of cosmic dust.

Lenten Devotionals

by Lillie Ammann

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A Note from the Author

During Advent and Lent, I generally follow a 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 book is being published in 2021 with my personal devotions from Lent 2014. I hope you are blessed by these Scriptures, thoughts, and prayers during this holy season.

Thanks to my friends Alice Goodwin and George and Pam Lampe, fellow parishioners at All Saints Anglican Church in San Antonio, for proofreading.

May His blessings abound in your time alone with Him.

Lillie Ammann

February 2021

Ash Wednesday



ASH
WEDNESDAY

And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." And he strictly charged them to

tell no one about him. ~ Mark 8:27-30

Everyone who encountered Jesus wondered who He was, and many people thought He was a great prophet from the past. Yet Peter knew Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One. Today, so many people say Jesus was a great teacher or a good man or miraculous healer. Yet He was the Messiah, the Lord of lords, the God of gods, and King of Kings, our Savior and our Redeemer. During this Lenten season, may we remember His sacrifice and what it means to us.

Heavenly Father, renew my heart and spirit knowledge that Jesus, with You and the Holy Ghost, is the Lord of lords, the King of kings, and the God of gods. He is the Savior of the world and my personal Savior. As I go through this upcoming season of reflection and repentance, Lord, help me to recognize and repent of all the sin in my life. In His name I pray. Amen.

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." ~ Mark 8:31-38

Peter thought he knew better than Jesus. Because he couldn't understand God's plan for Jesus to suffer and be killed, he tried to hush Jesus when He talked about His coming

death. Yet Jesus rebuked Peter for looking through man's eyes, tempted by Satan, rather than trusting implicitly in Jesus. It's easy to look at Peter and condemn him, but how often are we arrogant enough to think we know best. "How could You let a little child suffer so?" we cry. "Why are You allowing that family to go through such misery?" we ask. We need to remember that it's not our place to question God. Just as Peter didn't understand the big picture of God's plan for salvation, we don't understand the big picture of God's plan for the lives of His people.

Lord, God, although I don't understand, I can trust that Your eternal plan is perfect and pure. What I see as evil, You plan for good. Above all, Lord, help me to revere You as the Creator and Ruler of the Universe. I am sinning against You when I think in my human ignorance that I know better than the Holy, Omniscient, Omnipresent Lord of the Universe. Forgive me, Father, and lead me in the path of truth. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Friday after Ash Wednesday

A voice cries:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

A voice says, "Cry!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"
All flesh is grass,
and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades
when the breath of the Lord blows on it;
surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God will stand forever. ~ Isaiah 40:3-8

The pathway for the Lord is rough everywhere in the world, including in our own hearts. We have to ask God's help to smooth the way, giving us true repentance and

understanding of His Word. We have to slow down enough in our busy lives to let God work in our hearts to prepare us for the coming Easter.

Heavenly Father, this Lent smooth out the rough places in my heart and create a smooth pathway for Your Word that stands forever. Open my eyes and ears to see and hear and understand. Most of all, let Your Word work in my life to show Your eternal glory to people who are like grass that withers away. May I always stand on Your Word. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Ghost, now and forever. Amen.

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ~ Hebrews 12:2-3

In our self-centeredness and sin, we prefer not to suffer at all. We want people to like us, not dislike or mock us. Yet Jesus endured hostility—even hate that killed Him—and looked ahead to His glory rather than complaining about the pain of torture and the shame of the cross. He wants us to follow His example.

Lord, my God, let me follow the example of Jesus. Let me willingly and joyfully sacrifice to become closer to You. Let me ignore the disregard of the world. Point my eyes toward Heaven and You and away from the things of the earth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The First Sunday in Lent

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him



all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. ~ Colossians 1:13-20

Sometimes we forget that we dwell in God's Kingdom, not by our own merit, but solely by His grace. Jesus gave His life on the cross for our redemption and the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus alone reconciles us to the Lord, and He shed His precious blood to do it. He alone is worthy of all praise and honor and glory for He is the Creator, the beginning, preeminent, and He holds all things together.

Heavenly Father, I thank You that Jesus has rescued me from the domain of darkness and transferred me to His Kingdom. I am unworthy, but You are merciful. You sent us Your Son, created in Your image and Creator of all things. He holds everything together, Lord, even the sinews of my body. This is beyond my comprehension, but I thank You for all Jesus has done and continues to do, reconciling all things to You. Give me a grateful heart, Lord, and the desire and will to walk in the paths in which You lead me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Monday after the First Sunday in Lent

And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "'If you can!' All things are possible for one who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer." ~ Mark 9:14-29

We all want to have a strong faith, but often we find ourselves doubting. We aren't likely to be called on to cast out demons, but we fall short when we are called on to demonstrate our faith in other ways. If Jesus Himself needed prayer to cast out the demon, how much more do we need prayer to do what we need to do. Rather than doubting or trying to do things in our own power, let's call on God in prayer.

Heavenly Father, although I want to have a strong faith, how often do I doubt. Yet Your Word tells us that all things are possible to those who believe. You can turn the most degenerate sinner into Your loving follower, heal the worst illness, solve the unsolvable problem. Lord, I believe – please help my unbelief! In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Ghost, now and forever. Amen.

Tuesday after the First Sunday in Lent

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.

And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me." ~ Mark 9:30-37

Like the disciples, sometimes we want to keep silent about what we are doing or thinking because we want recognition and appreciation. We like people to say good things about us and look at us with respect and admiration. But God's Word and Jesus' example point to another way. God wants us to put ourselves last and serve others first. Our sinful natures entice us to put ourselves first, but that's not God's way.

Heavenly Father, You said that I must be a servant, last of all. I must serve the children, the weak and poor, the ones we call the least in this world. When I receive and care for those people, I have received and cared for Jesus. Help me to do good to those who need it the most. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Wednesday after the First Sunday in Lent

Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

And see if there be any grievous way in me,

and lead me in the way everlasting! ~ Psalm 139:23-24

We want to hide our sins from ourselves as well as from God. Of course, we know we can't hide anything from God, but it seems that sometimes we think if we can just hide our evil thoughts and actions from ourselves, they aren't real. But whether we acknowledge them or not, our sins are very real to God. He forgives us when we repent, but it pains Him when we sin.

Lord God, I ask You to search my heart and my mind for the hidden sins. Show me where I have gone astray from Your Word, and guide me back onto Your path of righteousness. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Ghost, forever and ever. Amen.

Thursday after the First Sunday in Lent

And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." ~ Mark 10:2-12

Divorce has become an acceptable sin. Jesus' words remind us that God created marriage as a sacred institution in which a husband and wife become one. Divorce tears apart His holy creation. Almost equally acceptable in today's society is sexual relations outside of marriage. Couples "live together" without benefit of matrimony, and we look away. Couples other than one man and one woman demand the right to marry. Yet in God's holy eyes, all sin is abominable. He does not give us permission to ignore any of His Word. We don't get to choose which laws to obey and which to break. God requires total obedience. Praise and glory to Him that on the many occasions we fall short, He is

faithful to forgive us if we sincerely repent. The Blood of Jesus wipes away all our iniquity and imputes the righteousness of Jesus to us.

Thank You, Lord, for Your grace, Your mercy, and Your love for each one of Your sinful, rebellious children. Do not let me take advantage of Your grace, Lord. Guide me in Your righteous paths so I do Your will. When I do go astray, let me never excuse my sin or congratulate myself that what I have done is only a small sin, not nearly as bad as those sins committed by other people. Give me a repentant and grateful heart when I miss the mark, no matter how small. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday after the First Sunday in Lent

And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them. ~ Mark 10:13-16

In our sophisticated society, being as a child is considered a bad thing. We want to be mature and responsible. Even children often try to look and act older than they are. They want to grow up right away, and often parents allow them to dress beyond their age and participate in activities that aren't childlike. Yet, God's Word tells us that all of us must be as children to enter the Kingdom of God.

Lord, make me child-like in my faith – completely in awe of Your power, glory, mercy, and love; filled with love for You; and totally accepting and believing Your Word and doing Your will. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Ghost, now and forever. Amen.

Saturday after the First Sunday in Lent

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned

and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.
Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.
Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.
O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. ~ Psalm 51:1-17

We each stand before God as a sinful person. Although we may not have committed murder and adultery as David did, in God's holy eyes there are no degrees of sin. Any time we violate His holy laws, we sin. And whenever we become angry at a loved one or hurt the feelings of a friend, we sin against God. Any time we put something else —

even something good — ahead of Him in our lives, we sin. He is merciful to sinners who acknowledge their sins and repent.

Lord, I repent of my sin, and like David in the Psalm, ask You to cleanse me and blot out my iniquities. Create a clean heart within me, Holy God, from my sacrifice of this broken and contrite heart. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Second Sunday in Lent



Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. ~ Philippians 2:6-12

Jesus humbled Himself to leave His glory in Heaven and come to earth for our sake. It's impossible for us to realize the magnitude of His actions because we cannot imagine the magnitude of His glory as Lord in Heaven. Fully God and fully man, in His humanity He suffered death on the cross, carrying out the Father's will in spite of the cost to Himself. The day will come, though, when every knee will bow to Him and every tongue will confess that He is Lord, to the glory of His Father. Now is the time to bow and confess His Lordship.

Thank You, Lord, that I do not have to wait until Jesus' return to know that He is Lord. I bow to Him and confess His Lordship. Help me to live my life to His and Your glory. In His name. Amen.

Monday after the Second Sunday in Lent

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the

Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.” ~ Mark 10:32-34

Jesus knew what was coming. He described it to His disciples, and His human nature must have dreaded it. He knew what He would suffer, the pain of the torture, the drawn-out agony of death on the cross. Even more, He knew that for the time on the cross when He took our sin upon Himself, He would be separated from God the Father – the only time throughout eternity that He was apart from the Father and His love. That must have been infinitely worse than the physical wounds He suffered, and He knew ahead of time what would happen. Yet He followed through. He willingly accepted everything that God had planned because He loved us so much that He gladly took upon Himself everything that should have fallen on us.

Lord, how can I appreciate that sacrifice as much as it deserves? How can I express my gratitude for that much love? Only by loving You, Lord – in all Your persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Only by making You first in my life. Only by serving You and telling others about You and Your great love. And I can do those things by the power of the Holy Ghost. I can do nothing on my own, Lord. I give my life to You. Do with me as You will. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Ghost, now and forever, world without end. Amen.

Tuesday after the Second Sunday in Lent

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” ~ Mark 10:35-45

Two thousand years after Jesus taught His disciples that anyone who wishes to be great in God's Kingdom must serve others, the world still puts people with money or power first. We should give honor and respect to the people who volunteer in homeless shelters, mow the grass for a single mother, call the homebound and sick, teach Sunday School, or serve in countless other ways. And we should strive to be more like them.

Lord, empower me by the Holy Spirit to judge others by their actions, not their positions. Lead me to give more attention to serving others than to acquiring recognition for myself. Open my eyes to the needs around me and show me what I can do to serve Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday after the Second Sunday in Lent

And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up; he is calling you." And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way. ~ Mark 10:46-52

Bartimaeus didn't hesitate to call for Jesus even though the crowd shushed him. He asked Jesus to have mercy on him. He knew Jesus could heal him, but he didn't take for granted that He would. He begged for mercy, and when he received it, he immediately began following Jesus. What a contrast to "name it and claim it" and the prosperity gospel.

Lord, give me a deep appreciation of the mercy I have received from You and Jesus, and let my grateful love lead me to follow Jesus as my Lord and Savior. In His name. Amen.

Thursday after the Second Sunday in Lent

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you

doing, untying the colt?” And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. And those who went before 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!”

And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. ~ Mark 11:1-11

God’s plan is so amazing, detailed down to having the colt tied up and ready for Jesus’ disciples to find and bring to Him. Sometimes when we read the Bible, we fail to see the fine details—God overlooked nothing. In the same way, He overlooks nothing in meeting our needs. He doesn’t always give us what we want or even what we think we need, but He gives us what He knows in His infinite wisdom that we need.

Heavenly Father, take away my worry over what I think are the needs and problems in my life – You have the solution ready in Your perfect timing. Though I tend to want solutions on my own timetable, if I have faith, You will answer on Your timetable. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

Friday after the Second Sunday in Lent

And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. And he was teaching them and saying 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 den of robbers.” And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching. ~ Mark 11:15-18

We hear so often about Jesus’ love and peace and mercy that we sometimes forget that He wasn’t a weak man who never raised his voice. When he found the temple being treated like a marketplace, he demonstrated holy anger in the face of evil. He loved sinners, but He stood up against sin.

Heavenly Father, give me the ability to recognize and fight against evil while loving those who are doing the evil. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

Saturday after the Second Sunday in Lent

And Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” ~ Mark 11:22-26

It’s easy to take this passage out of context and think God’s Word is saying that anything we pray for and believe we will receive is ours. But we can’t ignore other Scriptures that tell us our prayers have to be in God’s will. He’s not a celestial puppet to whom we pray and magically get what we want. He is the Creator, God Almighty, the High and Mighty Ruler of the Universe. He will always do what He knows is best for us, not what we think is best. If our will aligns with His, we may see our prayers being answered the way we desire. God has healed me in answer to prayer on several occasions. But if our wills don’t align with His, His answer is different. Perhaps healing will not come until we’re in Heaven. Perhaps He will give us something that we never imagined that turns out to be better than what we desired. Perhaps He will allow us to go through a trial or experience a loss or a failure so that we grow in the knowledge and love of Him. And perhaps we have not forgiven someone who has caused us hurt. Right after saying He will answer our prayers, He tells us that if we don’t forgive others, He won’t forgive us. In order for our prayers to be answered, our wills have to be in alignment with His.

Lord, order my will so it perfectly matches Yours. Help me to forgive those who hurt me, as I desperately need Your forgiveness. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

The Third Sunday in Lent

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ~ Ephesians 5:1-2

We tend to look up to celebrities, sports figures, and worldly successes. We want to “be like Mike” or some other person we admire. But Paul tells us to be imitators of God, to walk in love like Jesus did. How much better to be like Jesus than to be like any mortal person.



Third Sunday
in
Lent

Lord, I want to be an imitator of You. Take away my desire to be like people who are worldly successes but who do not have the love of Christ in them. Christ loved us and gave Himself as a sacrifice for us, for me. He is the One I should imitate. Lead me to show His love to the world. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Monday after the Third Sunday in Lent

And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, and they said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?" Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me." And they discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But shall we say, 'From man'?"—they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet. So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things." ~ Mark 11:27-33

The chief priests, scribes, and elders had to know that John's authority was from Heaven and even more that Jesus' authority was from Heaven. Not only did Jesus' authority come from God the Father, but Jesus and the Father are one. When He walked the earth as a man, Jesus was truly a man, having given up all the glory and majesty He was due in Heaven.

Heavenly Father, as Jesus submitted His will and authority to You, let me submit my will to You. I have no power of my own. I can lean only on You. Remind me that I can't add one minute to my life or one hair to my head. All power is Yours. I yield to Your power and Your control of my life. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Tuesday after the Third Sunday in Lent

And he began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower, and leased it to tenants and went into another country. When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully. And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed. He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' And they took him and killed him and

threw him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. Have you not read this Scripture:

“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

And they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them. So they left him and went away. ~ Mark 12:1-12

All of us killed Jesus. Although we weren't there in Jerusalem crying out “His blood be on my hands,” yet we often sin, and sin is the reason for His death. If we – all of mankind – could control ourselves and stay away from sin, there would have been no need for Jesus to die for all sin – past, present, and future. Praise God, Jesus did sacrifice Himself for us.

Lord, Forgive me for killing Your Son. Forgive me for all the times I put other things – even good things – before You. Help me through the Holy Spirit to put You first in every circumstance. Thank You that You forgive my sins and wash them away when I repent and ask for Your forgiveness. Thank You, Lord, for loving me so much. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday after the Third Sunday in Lent

And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. And they came and said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?” But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, “Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” And they brought one. And he said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” They said to him, “Caesar's.” Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” And they marveled at him. ~ Mark 12:13-17

How I grumble about paying taxes, always trying to give the least to the government and keep the most for myself. But God's Word, Jesus Himself, tells us to pay the government what is due in taxes. Although I often disagree with what the government does with the money it collects from its citizens, that's a different issue. I can exercise my constitutional rights to try to convince legislators to vote for or against certain measures, and I can vote for or against candidates who support the issues I do or do not support. However, I am always obligated to pay my taxes.

Father God, help me to pay taxes – to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's – with a cheerful spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

Thursday after the Third Sunday in Lent

And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife.”

Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong.” ~ Mark 12:18-27

The religious leaders of His day continually tried to trap Jesus with their cunning questions. Yet He always gave them a truthful answer that did not fall into their traps. Today Christians argue over what will happen in the end times – there are pre-trib and post-trib and who-knows-what-else advocates. But all we have to know is that Jesus will come again, and we will be forever in Heaven with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

Heavenly Father, I don't need to know exactly when and how Jesus comes again. All that matters is that I will be with You eternally. Thank You, Lord, for that promise. Let me always be ready for that great day. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday after the Third Sunday in Lent

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's

neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions. ~ Mark 12:28-34

We know well the two greatest commandments. Many of us hear them read in church on Sunday mornings, and we have read them in Scriptures many times. But do we live by those commandments? Not always, unfortunately. Sometimes we put other things ahead of the Lord in our lives, and even more often we are concerned about our own needs rather than the needs of our neighbors.

Let me always put You first, Lord, above everything and anything – in my time and in my devotion and love. And let me always love my neighbor as myself, putting the needs of others before my own needs. This I ask in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Saturday after the Third Sunday in Lent

And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, “How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared,

“The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet.”

David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?” And the great throng heard him gladly.

And in his teaching he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.” ~ Mark 12:35-40

God is the great I AM, and so is Jesus His Son. King David himself called Christ Lord, yet Jesus is the Son of David. The glorious Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Ghost – has always been and will always be. Jesus is full of power and might, yet He walked humbly as a man on the earth. The religious hypocrites of Jesus’ time and also of our day like to be recognized and honored, but Jesus, Who deserved honor above all the earth, ate with sinners and the downtrodden.

Heavenly Father, cleanse my heart so I am more like You and less like the religious hypocrites. I ask in the name of Jesus. Amen.

The Fourth Sunday in Lent



Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.” One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so

many?” Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.” So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. ~ John 6:5-13

When we look at all the need in the world, we may wonder how we do anything to relieve any of the pain. Daily, we receive solicitations from many fine Christian organizations asking for money to support their missions. Sometimes we get discouraged because we can't give all we would like, and what little we can give seems like nothing in the face of the needs. Yet, one small lad offered his five barley loaves and two small fish, and Jesus turned that offering into a feast to feed five thousand people and still have leftovers. God can take the little we have to offer and turn it into a bounty.

Remind me, Father, that You can take my small contribution and multiply it many times to fulfill Your plans. Help me to choose wisely the charities to whom I entrust my contributions and to remember to offer my prayers as well as my financial support. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Monday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.” ~ Mark 12:41-44

We want to be generous in our giving, but sometimes we worry about meeting our own needs. Surely, we think, God wants us to take care of ourselves and our families first. But we have nothing that didn't come from God, and He commended the poor widow for putting everything she had to live on in the "collection plate." We aren't likely to have so little that our offering would deplete our resources, but maybe we need to give a little more sacrificially.

Heavenly Father, Jesus showed me that I should be a generous giver – to give of what I have instead of hoarding what You have entrusted to me. Lead me in my giving to give both generously and cheerfully. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?" And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains. ~ Mark 13:1-8

If we look at the world around us, we can see so many signs that Jesus mentioned. It seems like it should be near the end of time, and God's Word tells us to be ready at any time, for even Jesus doesn't know the day or hour. But the words Jesus spoke to His disciples remind us that wars and rumors of wars and earthquakes and famines are not signs that the end has come. They are only the birth pangs of the coming end.

Almighty God, Lord of all Creation, remind me that I must be ready for the Lord's return, but that doesn't exempt me from helping to alleviate the pain and suffering that exist in the world today. Give me a heart of compassion and love, Father, to do all I can to show Your love to Your children. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

“But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ~ Mark 13:9-13

Why do so many of us think that our lives should be easy if we are Christians? God's Word tells us the opposite—Jesus said we would be hated because of His name. But, joy of joy, He also said that if we endure to the end, we will be saved. Many Christians around the world are being persecuted for their faith today. May we pray for them, stand with them, and give them financial support.

Lord, help me to be willing to endure hatred and persecution for Your sake. Motivate me to pray and give for the persecuted church and my fellow Christians who are suffering around the world. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

Thursday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

And then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand. ~ Mark 13:21-23

There are false Christs everywhere. Some people look to politicians for their salvation. Others worship entertainers or athletes or socially and financially prominent people. Whether or not these people claim to be saviors, many people look to them for salvation. Let us always remember that there is only one Savior, Jesus Christ, the Lord.

Lord, keep my eyes fixed on Jesus. Let me recognize the false prophets and the false Christs and cling to the one true God – You, the Lord, the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Friday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then

he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ~ Mark 13:24-31

Jesus is coming again in power and glory. He will gather those who believe in Him from heaven and earth and take us to spend eternity with Him. We know some of the signs He is coming, but we don't know when it will happen. It will be on God's perfect timetable—we must be ready whenever it is. And we must recognize that His Word stands forever; no matter how long it takes, if the Lord says something will happen, it will happen.

Heavenly Father, I look for the day Jesus will return in glory. We don't know the day or the hour, Lord, so we must be ever ready. Yet we can't give up living our lives for Your glory, expecting the Second Coming any minute. Thank You, that no matter how long or short the time is until Jesus comes again, Your Word stands – yesterday, today, and tomorrow – eternal, unfailing truth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.” ~ Mark 13:32-37

The Word warns us to be on the alert for the return of Jesus. Not even Jesus Himself knows the date or the time, He tells us. But we must stay alert, be prepared, so no matter when Jesus comes, we are not found sleeping but ready and waiting.

Keep me from complacency, Lord, from thinking that I have plenty of time. Guide me by the Holy Spirit to live my life as You want me to live it, knowing that at any minute Jesus may come through the clouds. Even if Jesus' return is a long way off, Lord, I don't have unlimited time. Tonight my soul may be demanded of me. Whenever that day comes, Lord, let me hear the words,

"Well done, thy good and faithful servant!" In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Ghost, now and forever, world without end. Amen.

Passion Sunday

Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.' Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?" Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.' But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. ~ John 8:46-59



Many people say that Jesus was a great teacher and healer but not God's Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Lord of lords and King of kings. Yet, Jesus Himself told us that He and the Father are One – that before Abraham was, He is. He cannot be a great teacher and healer without being the Son of God – otherwise He would be a liar, and He said He would be a liar if He said He didn't know His Father. Unlike His accusers, He was not a liar, but Truth itself.

Father God, I acknowledge Jesus as Your Son, my Lord and Savior. Thank You, Father, for sending Jesus to save me from my sins. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Monday after Passion Sunday

It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, for they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.”

And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they scolded her. But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.” ~ Mark 14:1-9

The woman in this story was incredibly extravagant. She poured an entire vial of perfume over Jesus, an act that shocked the others in the room. Would that people would be shocked by how extravagant we are in showing our love for the Lord! We don't have to use expensive perfume – we can show our love for Christ by doing good for His children and by giving our time, talents, and treasure for His work.

Heavenly Father, how extravagant the woman was with the costly perfume – a token of how extensive her love for Jesus. May I lavish my love on Him in doing His work, in showing His love to others, in giving of myself and all that I have to honor and worship Him. In His name. Amen.

Tuesday after Passion Sunday

He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.” ~ Mark 14:20-21

God planned for our salvation from the beginning of time. He knew Judas Iscariot would betray Jesus, yet He chose Judas as part of the inner circle, putting him in place to be Jesus' betrayer. We don't often think of the great sacrifice Jesus made by that action. Imagine choosing as one of your closest friends and confidants a man you knew would ultimately betray you. Yet that is exactly what Jesus did. He deliberately called Judas as one of the twelve disciples, knowing all the time what the end would be.

Lord, it's easy for me to condemn Judas for his betrayal, but how often do I betray my Lord by sins of omission and sins of commission. Forgive me, Lord, and guide me by the Holy Spirit into Your way. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday after Passion Sunday

And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same. ~ Mark 14:22-31

Jesus knew all of His disciples would give up in fear and despair, thinking that His arrest meant the end of His ministry and the failure of His mission. Peter was confident that he would never deny Jesus, but he was trusting in his own power. Before he and the other disciples received the Holy Ghost, they were not strong enough to stand firm for the Lord.

Lord, Peter denied that He would ever deny Christ, and, like him, I always want to acknowledge Jesus as my Lord and Savior. Forgive me for those times when I deny Him by my actions – when I fail to acknowledge Him as the Lord of my life. Help me to always put You – Father, Son, and Holy Ghost – first in my life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday after Passion Sunday

And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came and

found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.” ~ Mark 14:32-42

Jesus’ closest disciples couldn’t stay awake to watch with him one hour. They wanted to do what Jesus asked, but the weaknesses of their bodies overcame them. During Holy Week, beginning on Maundy Thursday, I have taken part in a vigil over the Blessed Sacrament. We were asked to spend one hour in the prayer room waiting with Jesus. I have prayed, read Scripture and hymns, and just sat silently in the presence of the Lord. Through the years, those hours have been some of the spiritually blessed times of my life.

Thank You, Lord, for the spiritual blessings I get from spending time with You. Forgive me for the times I fail to watch with Jesus and help me to do this, not only during Lent, but always. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Friday after Passion Sunday

And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard.” And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Rabbi!” And he kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him. But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. And Jesus said to them, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled.” And they all left him and fled.

And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked. ~ Mark 14:43-52

How ironic that Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss—a symbol of love. It’s hard to accept when someone we care for betrays us in some way. Yet none of us has ever had a betrayal as terrible as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Although He knew that Judas would betray Jesus, God used him for His good purposes to put Jesus to death in our place, for our sins, on our behalf.

Forgive me, Lord, for those times I betray You by my actions. Thank You for all that Jesus did for me. Guide me by the Holy Spirit to live a life of faithfulness and love. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Saturday after Passion Sunday

And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards received him with blows. ~ Mark 14:53-65

The priests, elders, and teachers condemned Jesus to die claiming to be righteous, protecting God and His people from blasphemy. However, more likely, they were protecting their own positions of power and prominence. We weren't among those with the power who condemned Jesus to die, yet our sins made His death necessary. Because of our sins, He hung on the cross, becoming sin Himself, separated from the love of the Father. He suffered and died for our sins and the sins of the whole world. What amazing love!

Thank You, Lord, for my salvation bought by the Blood of Jesus. Help me to live in such a way that Jesus suffers no more because of me. In His name. Amen.

Palm Sunday



Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus

Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. ~ Philippians 2:5-11

Jesus was God. He existed before time and will exist beyond time. He created the world and in Him everything is held together. He is the all-powerful, almighty, omnipotent, omniscient Ruler of the Universe. Yet for our sins, He became fully man, emptying Himself of His glory and majesty and power and becoming like us. He went through excruciating punishment and death for us. Yet the day will come when He is exalted in His rightful place, and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord.

Heavenly Father, thank You that Jesus was obedient, even unto death. Guide me by the Holy Spirit to be obedient in whatever You would have me to do. Jesus is Lord, and one day every knee will bow to Him and every tongue will confess His Lordship. In His name. Amen.

Monday in Holy Week

And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus." But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you mean." And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know this man of whom you speak." And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept. ~ Mark 14:66-72

Peter's denial of Christ shows how weak we are without the help of the Holy Spirit. Peter recognized Jesus as the Messiah; he loved Jesus and was sure he would be strong in the time of trial. Yet he denied Jesus not once, but three times in a short time period. When he realized what he had done, he wept.

Heavenly Father, it's easy for me to condemn Peter, but I deny Jesus, too – not verbally when I'm asked if I'm His follower, but in my actions when I don't do His will or show His love. Forgive me, Father; open my eyes to recognize and acknowledge my denials, and let me weep in remorse. Give me the help of the Holy Spirit to do Your will and show Your love. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, world without end. Amen.

Tuesday in Holy Week

And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." And the chief priests accused him of many things. And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. And he answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" And they cried out again, "Crucify him." And Pilate said to them, "Why? What evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him." So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. ~ Mark 15:1-15

The people didn't know what they were saying when they called for the release of Barabbas and the Crucifixion of Jesus. Never did and never will a greater injustice occur in the history of mankind. Yet Jesus didn't defend Himself. He was willing to accept the Father's plan for Him to be crucified and raised again from the dead. We will never be asked to carry the weight of the sins of the world on our shoulders, but we will be placed in situations where we can stand for Jesus – or not. May we accept God's plan for us.

Lord God, help me always to stand up for my faith and for You – Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Don't let me be swayed by the crowd – those calling loudly against Jesus or those, like Pilate, who went against his own beliefs to satisfy the mob. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday in Holy Week

And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him. ~ Mark 15:16-20

How Jesus must have suffered during his humiliation and his scourging. Yet He uttered not a word, and later He prayed for those who persecuted Him. He showed an example of perfect forgiveness. He forgave horrible atrocities, yet we often find it difficult to forgive relatively minor offenses that others have committed against us.

Lord, even though the things I have to forgive are much less serious than what You and Jesus forgave, empower me by the Holy Ghost to forgive when I need to. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

Maundy Thursday

And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. And it was the third hour when they crucified him. And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others;



he cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also reviled him. ~ Mark 15:21-32

How God the Father must have suffered with Christ, seeing His Beloved Son persecuted, mocked, and crucified. How Jesus must have suffered as He was tortured, humiliated, and murdered. As Jesus became sin to pay for our sins, both of them felt the separation—They Who are One, Who had never been separated. Without His sacrifice, God’s holiness and justice would have required that we burn forever in Hell. Yet for my sake—and the sake of the whole world—God the Father and God the Son both endured this punishment and sacrifice so that we and all believers can spend eternity in Heaven with Them.

Thank You, God the Father. Thank You, Jesus the Son. God, the Holy Spirit, help me to live the life I was created for. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Good Friday



And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” And some of the bystanders hearing it said, “Behold, he is calling Elijah.” And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.” And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the

curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem. ~ Mark 15:33-41

When Jesus was crucified the wall that separated us from God, symbolized by the veil in the temple that separated the Holy of Holies, was torn in half. Now we have direct access to the throne of God. No longer do we need a mediator—we can pray directly to God in Jesus’ name, and He intercedes for us with the Father.

Lord God, let me live in a manner worthy of the marvelous truth that we can have a personal relationship with You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Holy Saturday

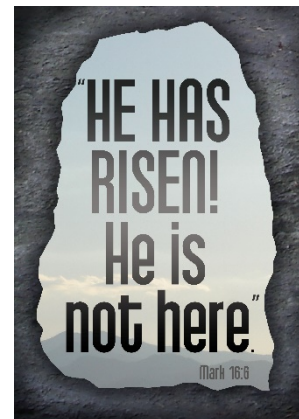
And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph. And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where he was laid. ~ Mark 15:42-47

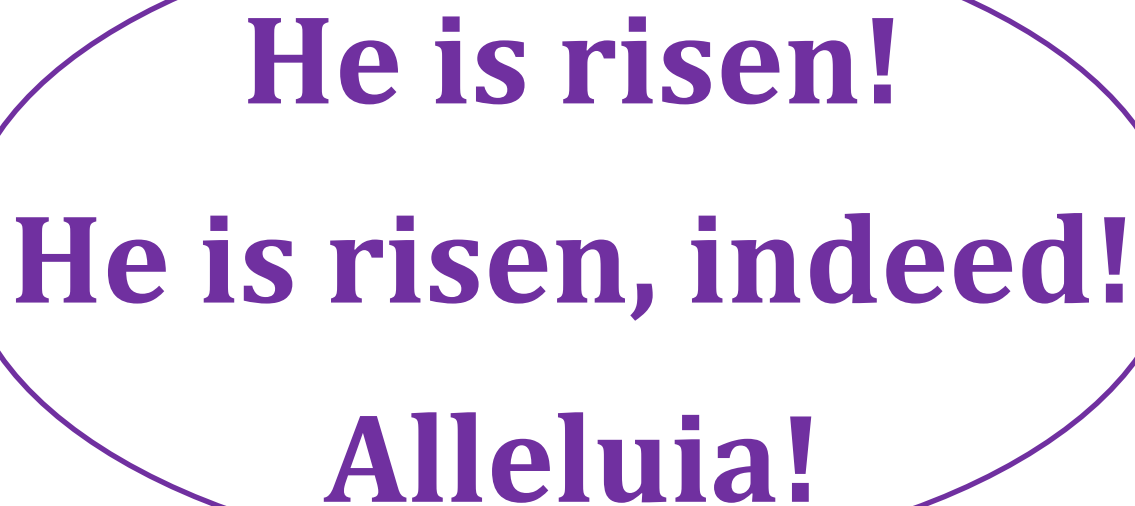
To the disciples and all who loved Jesus, this day must have been terrible. They knew Jesus had been killed and now was buried. They didn't understand His promise to rise again on the third day. They had lost all hope; they thought the end had come. But we have hope because we know the rest of the story – we know tomorrow is Easter. We know Jesus rose again.

Lord, as I reflect on the sorrow and solemnity of this time Jesus spent in the tomb, give me a sense of awe and overwhelming gratitude that Sunday is coming. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Easter Sunday

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. ~ Mark 16:1-8

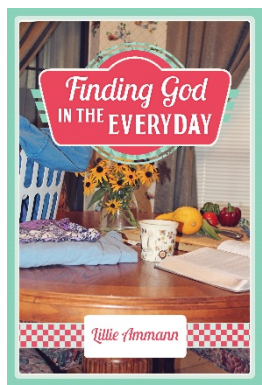




He is risen!
He is risen, indeed!
Alleluia!

Thank You, Lord, for Easter, the Resurrection of Jesus, and thereby eternal life for all who believe. He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

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