

The Parables of Jesus



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 booklet is being published in 2022 with my personal devotions from Lent 2021. The readings were excellent for meditation on the words of Jesus. However, readings for specific days such as Ash Wednesday are not related to the liturgical day. 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.

These devotionals are available in a paperback book, with all profits donated to Love for the Least, "sharing the compassion of Christ with an unreached world."

<https://lovefortheleast.org>.

The devotionals are also available as a PDF download at no charge.

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

Lillie Ammann

February 2022

Ash Wednesday

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." ~ Matthew 9:9-13



None of us is righteous, no not one. We are all sick and in need of a physician, yet the self-righteous Pharisees didn't understand that. Jesus calls those who recognize they are sinners, those who know they need a physician, those who are willing to answer the call of Jesus: "Follow me."

Lord, I like to think I am righteous, but at heart I am a sinner desperately in need of a physician. Thank You that Jesus came as the Great Physician to heal me and all sinners who earnestly repent. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved." ~ Matthew 9:14-17

We sinners need new hearts; our old ones cannot be patched up. Stop-gap measures are of no effect; we must allow Jesus to replace our old garments with new ones rather than sticking on patches of new cloth on old clothes. We must allow Him to replace our hard hearts with new hearts, hearts filled with His love and will.

Heavenly Father, make me a new heart, a heart filled with love for You and others, a pure heart, desiring only to love You and do Your will. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday after Ash Wednesday

"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation." ~ Matthew 12:43-45

Once we have been cleansed of sin, we may think we are safe. We have been saved by grace, and the Holy Spirit will help us to continue to do right and not sin. However, if we are not

careful, we can fall into even greater sin. We can become so complacent that we are saved that we fall back into our old ways, and even worse. Repentance for our sin must be continuous if we want to continue to be forgiven and cleansed from sin. Thanks be to God that He always forgives us and cleanses us when we repent.

Lord, You have washed me clean of my sins as Jesus cast demons out during His ministry on earth. Yet as Jesus warned of the return of demons greater in number and evil, sin can once again inhabit my heart and soul. Continually cleanse my heart and guide me by the Holy Spirit to walk in Your ways. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

~ Matthew 7:24-27

The values of the world form a foundation of sand. We may think that success, wealth, and prestige are important in our life, but when crisis comes, as it inevitably will, those may all be lost. But if we build our lives on the Word of God, we are on a strong foundation, and no matter what happens to us, we will not be destroyed.

Lord God, You have told me how to have a strong life that will withstand any storm—build my life on Your Word. The wisdom of the world gives false security; when the storms come, as they always do, I can survive only if Your Word is my foundation. Build a strong foundation for me, Father, through constant study of Your Word. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

First Sunday in Lent



Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, “‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him 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, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” Jesus said to him, “Again 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 I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him. ~ Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus could have used His power as the Son of God, a member of Holy Trinity, to put an immediate end to Satan's temptation. But instead, He used the Word of God, quoting Scripture to resist Satan. The devil doesn't usually tempt us so blatantly as He tempted Jesus. He gives us rationalizations of why it's acceptable to do something that we know is wrong. He puts us in situations that tempt us with the thing that appeals to our worldly desires. Often, we give in before we realize what's happening. God's Word is the most effective way to resist Satan's temptations. And we can call on Scripture only if we study it often and regularly and know it well.

Lord, Jesus was God Incarnate, yet rather than using His omnipotent power to resist Satan, He used Scripture. Help me to know Your Word and hide it in my heart so that when temptation comes, I can say to Satan, "It is written ..." In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

Monday after the First Sunday in Lent

"Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." ~ Matthew 6:31-34

Especially as Americans, we tend to consider self-sufficiency a virtue. We want to provide for ourselves and not depend on anyone else, and we prefer to have our provisions lined up for days, weeks, and months ahead. However, Jesus tells us not to be concerned about tomorrow, and not even to worry about today. God knows what we need, and He will provide for us if we seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. He doesn't say to see to our needs first—go to work and make sure we earn enough to provide food and shelter and clothes, then focus on God. No, He tells us to focus on God first, and everything else we need will be provided.

Lord, it's so easy to worry about the future, both personally and nationally. Yet Jesus reminds us of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field—if You care for them, I know You care for me. Lead me to seek You and Your Kingdom first and not worry about the future, knowing I and the ones I love are secure in Your care. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday after the First Sunday in Lent

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! See, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" ~ Matthew 23:37-39

Jesus longs to gather us under His wings as a mother hen, yet instead of running to the shelter, we try to take care of ourselves. We don't like to admit that we are vulnerable, that we need care and protection, but when we run to Jesus instead of depending on our own strength, we are protected, safe, and stronger than ever.

Heavenly Father, You are always ready to gather me and all Your children under Your wings, but I resist and try to be independent. Remind me constantly that I can do nothing without You. Give me rest under Your sheltering wings. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

Wednesday after the First Sunday in Lent

He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened." All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world." ~ Matthew 13:33-35

I read a lot of Christian fiction, and some Christians say it's better to read only the Bible or maybe the Bible and nonfiction Christian books. This passage reminds us that Jesus Himself told stories – parables. We often understand and remember stories better than sermons. Christian fiction is a genre in which a Christian message is shared in the form of a story. After all, a story, like the parables of Jesus, may be just a sermon told in an entertaining way.

Lord, Jesus spoke in parables to share what had been hidden since the foundation of the world. Your truth is available to all who are willing to listen to Your voice and read and study to understand Your Word. Give me the desire to know Your Word and Your truth and lead me in understanding. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

Thursday after the First Sunday in Lent

And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.' But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen." ~ Matthew 22:1-14

When I first heard this parable, I couldn't understand why the king would be so cruel as to cast into outer darkness a man who was not properly dressed. Maybe the man was too poor to afford a wedding garment. Then I learned that in those days the host provided wedding garments for his invited guests. It was a terrible insult for the man not to bother to put on the wedding garment his host had provided. Jesus freely offers forgiveness of sins and eternal life

to those who follow Him. But anyone who rejects the magnificent gift will be treated as the guest who rejected the gift of the wedding garment.

Heavenly Father, open my heart to receive You and clothe me with Your righteousness that I may be worthy to join You in that Great Feast when You come again in glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday after the First Sunday in Lent

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.” ~ Matthew 13:44-46

The Kingdom of Heaven is such a treasure that when we discover it, our natural reaction should be to do whatever it takes to attain it. Giving up earthly treasures to attain the heavenly treasure is no sacrifice because the heavenly treasure is infinitely more valuable.

Lord, You are the treasure I seek. Let me give up everything earthly and seek only You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday after the First Sunday in Lent

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” ~ Matthew 13:47-50

Many people today claim God won't turn anyone away and that there are many roads to God. Churches in mainstream denominations are filled with people who don't really believe the Bible, people who profess their faith on Sunday morning then live in the world as if they've never been to church. This passage reminds us that even if we are all together in church, there will be an accounting, and the bad fish, the unfaithful Christians, will be separated from the rest and thrown into the fiery furnace.

Heavenly Father, cleanse my heart and lead me to do Your will and manifest Your love in the world and, in the end, join You in Heaven for eternity rather than be cast into the fiery furnace. In the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Second Sunday in Lent

And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly. ~ Matthew 15:21-28



This Canaanite woman was desperate to get help for her daughter. She begged Jesus, but He told her He had come only to the lost sheep of Israel and that it was not right to throw the children's bread to the dogs. The woman reminded him that even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table. She was willing to beg for crumbs to get help for her daughter. Jesus commended her for her faith and healed her daughter immediately. How often do we ask for something then give up when it seems that our prayer isn't answered? God wants us to be persistent in prayer like the Canaanite woman.

Heavenly Father, how easy it is to give up in discouragement when prayer isn't answered immediately. Give me the faith of the Canaanite woman that I will persist in calling upon You in faith. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Monday after the Second Sunday in Lent

Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." ~ Mark 4:1-9

This parable demonstrates the many ways that the Word of God fails to take root or fails to grow. So many obstacles to faith – the Word may be carried away before it even makes it into the ground. Sometimes the Word gets planted, but it's too shallow and withers away. Sometimes the Word is choked out by cares and tribulation. Yet when God's Word takes root and grows and produces, what a difference it makes! Those of us who are blessed to have the Word rooted in our hearts will never be the same. Thanks be to God.

Lord, open my ears to hear, my eyes to see, and my heart to receive the truth of Your Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday after the Second Sunday in Lent

And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come." ~ Mark 4:26-29

Farmers know when to plant their crops, how to protect them from severe weather, and what to do at harvest time. Scientists have researched and know much about the cycle of growth and how to create hybrids, so the new plant has more of the best qualities of the original plants and fewer of the less desirable qualities. However, no one but God understands fully how a seed turns into an ear of corn – one more example of the might, power, wisdom, and creativity of the Lord God. Even more important than the growth of food from seeds is the growth of the Kingdom of God. By our own actions, we cannot produce the fruit of believers in the Kingdom, but we can plant seeds that God grows into new disciples.

Heavenly Father, I don't understand how seeds grow into plants and produce food for us to eat. I don't understand how Your Kingdom grows, but I do understand that the seed has to be scattered before it grows, and the seed of Your Word has to be scattered before it grows into Your Kingdom. Help me to live my life in such a way that it is seed for Your Kingdom. Empower me by the Holy Spirit to speak the words others need to hear. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Wednesday after the Second Sunday in Lent

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' So the last will be first, and the first last." ~ Matthew 20:1-16

Paying the workers who worked only an hour the same as the workers who worked all day just doesn't seem fair. If I were one of the first workers, I would probably be unhappy with the situation. But, of course, the vineyard owner did exactly as he and the worker agreed when the worker was hired. Most of us, though, would begrudge the latecomers earning the same as we did. But when I think of my unsaved loved ones, I am glad they have a chance to earn the

same as me. There is only one “payment” in God’s currency – salvation, eternal life in Heaven with the Lord, all sins forgiven. What a blessing if I and others have been planting seeds for years, and finally at the end of his life, a loved one sees the truth and accepts Jesus as His Savior. Even if he has lived a notoriously sinful life, once he believes, he is on his way to Heaven. How sad it would be if a dying person gave his life to God and God said, “Too late.” Even though turning to God early in life is ideal, praise God that it’s never too late as long as there is life.

Lord, I love that Jesus searches for the lost sheep and rejoices over the one more than the ninety-nine who weren’t lost. But when I read this parable, I realize that someone who accepts the Lord moments before the end receives the same reward as those of us who have loved and served Him all our lives. That doesn’t seem fair, just as it doesn’t seem fair that the master paid all the laborers the same, whether they worked all day or one hour. Help me not begrudge Your generosity. Help me to rejoice that the sinner who is saved on his deathbed will enjoy life in Heaven with You for eternity just as I will. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

Thursday after the Second Sunday in Lent

He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’” ~ Matthew 13:24-30

A few verses later in this chapter, the disciples asked Jesus to explain this parable. He told them the field is the world; the weeds are the sons of the evil one; the good seeds/wheat are the sons of the kingdom. The enemy, of course, is the enemy of our souls, the devil. The weed darnel that grows in Israel looks very much like wheat in the early stages. Only when the ear appears (brown for wheat and black for darnel) can they be easily differentiated. Then it is easy to recognize them, as it will be easy for the angels to separate the true sons of the kingdom from the sons of the enemy at the end of time.

Lord, You tell us that all of us will be gathered into the harvest when You return. The wheat—those who love You and follow You—will join You in Heaven forever. The weeds—those who do not accept Jesus with their whole heart and mind and soul—will be thrown into outer darkness. Touch my heart, Lord, and make me Yours forever. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Friday after the Second Sunday in Lent

And he said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden

plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." ~ Mark 4:30-32

Mustard seeds are very tiny, yet the plants from them grow quite large. Although mustard plants aren't as large as trees, they are many times the size of the seeds from which they grow, and they grow quickly. Jesus started his ministry by calling twelve disciples, yet now His followers include billions of people around the world. There is still room for the Kingdom to grow, however, as less than one-third of the people in the world are Christian. When Jesus gave His Great Commission, He called on us to go into all the world and spread His Gospel.

Thank You, Lord, for the growth of Your Kingdom, and especially thank You that I am part of it. Help me to spread Your Gospel to others so they too become part of Your eternal Kingdom. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior.

Saturday after the Second Sunday in Lent

There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." ~ Luke 13:1-5

People wanted to know if violent death was punishment for sin. Jesus answered that those who had suffered these tragedies weren't any worse sinners than anyone else, but He warned that unless His listeners repented, they would perish tragically. At first reading, Jesus seems to be saying the tragedies the people were discussing were punishment for sins. However, upon reflection, it seems that Jesus is saying that all of us are subject to tragedies at any time. We will perish permanently if we have not repented of our sins. If a tower falls, everyone in its path will die a physical death. But some will go on to be cast into the lake of fire and eternal death, whereas those who have repented of their sins will go to Heaven with Jesus and eternal life.

Heavenly Father, if You judge me on my deeds, I will perish, for Your Word tells us the wages of sin is death. But when I repent and turn to You, the Blood of Jesus washes away my sin, and You grant me forgiveness and eternal life. Make me always penitent and grateful for Your grace and mercy. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Third Sunday in Lent



Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons," while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven. But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by

whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first." As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!" But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" ~ Luke 11:14-28

So often when we think of blessings, what comes to mind are things like good health, money and material possessions, family and friends, and fame or prestige. But Jesus tells us that we are blessed when we hear the Word of God and keep it. Rather than seeking after the so-called "blessings" of the world, we should be seeking the blessings of the Word.

Lord, may I be blessed by hearing the Word of God and keeping it. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with the Holy Ghost, now and forever, world without end. Amen.

Monday after the Third Sunday in Lent

"For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" ~ Matthew 25:14-30

The master's treatment of the third servant seems harsh. After all, the man protected what the master had given him. However, the master gave him the talent to invest, to use, to produce

something more, not to save. In the parable, the talents are units of money, but God gives us talents that are spiritual gifts, skills, abilities. He gives us these blessings for us to use for His glory. He doesn't want us to sit back and notice that others have more talents than we do and be intimidated to use what God has given us. It doesn't matter whether we have one talent or ten talents, God wants us to use what He has given us to produce fruit for His Kingdom.

Almighty God, I long to hear the words "Well done, good and faithful servant" from You. Guide me by the Holy Spirit to use all the talents You have given me to serve and glorify You. 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.

Tuesday after the Third Sunday in Lent

"What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him." ~ Matthew 21:28-32

Too often I find myself not doing what I said I would do, what I planned to do. Frequently it's because I think I can do more than I really can, and I can't finish all the things I planned. Usually this doesn't have serious consequences because I make the commitments to myself only. However, when it comes to doing God's will, it is serious. If I fall short in following the Lord, I am a hypocrite like the chief priests and elders that Jesus was talking to in the temple. Words without action mean nothing. It's only when I follow through with actions that my words have value.

Holy Lord God, I say I will do Your will, and I mean it—but I don't always follow through. Instead I fall into sin and disobedience. Lead me into the vineyard, Lord, to do Your work. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday after the Third Sunday in Lent

And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his

servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate."

~ Luke 15:11-24

This young man had a sense of entitlement—he was entitled to a share of his father's wealth, and he didn't want to wait for his father's death to receive it. He must have thought he had so much that he would never run out of money; instead, he was so extravagant and reckless that before long he was broke. In his poverty and hunger, he realized that he would be far better off as his father's servant and determined to admit his sin to his father and beg to be hired as a servant. However, in spite of how the son had acted, his father loved him so much that he welcomed him home with open arms. That is how our heavenly Father loves us. No matter how much we sin, if we repent and return to Him, He welcomes us with open arms and forgives whatever we have done.

Heavenly Father, I haven't squandered my inheritance in riotous living, but I have sinned against You and am no more worthy to be called Your child. Yet, like the father of the prodigal son, You welcome me with open arms and forgive my sins. Thank You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday after the Third Sunday in Lent

Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful." ~ Luke 12:41-46

In this parable, the servant apparently began performing his duties as he should. Only when he felt the master was delayed in returning did he start to drink and mistreat the servants under him. Many new Christians start off following Jesus carefully, but as time goes on, they become lax. They begin to think they have plenty of time before Jesus returns, and they start to behave differently, to misbehave. May we not be among those misbehaving servants! May we continue to serve the Lord fully until He returns in glory.

Lord God, Jesus will return at a time no one knows. Don't let me be lazy—give me the help of the Holy Spirit to be doing Your work always so that when the end comes, I am ready. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday after the Third Sunday in Lent

He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.' And the manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.' So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the

first, 'How much do you owe my master?' He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. ~ Luke 16:1-9

This parable is a bit confusing. Is Jesus telling us to be dishonest? I don't believe Jesus would commend dishonesty, but He does commend the fact that the steward was shrewd enough to figure out a way to protect his future after he lost his job. Jesus isn't telling us to be shrewd in the ways of the world but to be smart in the ways of the Kingdom to protect our future in Heaven. If we are building up treasures in Heaven, we will not be dishonest, but we can be smart and be prepared.

Lord God, You aren't telling us to be dishonest here, I know. But You are reminding us that Your followers often don't plan ahead and prepare for the future. I don't want to just let things happen, Lord. Lead me to plan ahead for eternity by storing up treasures in Heaven. In the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, now and forever, world without end. Amen.

Saturday after the Third Sunday in Lent

Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?" ~ Matthew 21:33-42

The prophets God sent to Israel were ignored and often persecuted through the centuries. God's people turned to other gods just as the tenants in the parable refused to return the fruits of the vineyard to the owner. God sent His only Son who was put to death, just as the son in the parable was killed. Jesus' death opened salvation not only to God's Chosen People, the Jews, but to anyone who follows Jesus.

Heavenly Father, You sent prophet after prophet, and they were ignored. Then You sent Jesus Christ, Your only Son, and He was tortured and killed. Yet Jesus is the cornerstone of Your Kingdom. I can easily condemn the people who were present at Jesus' Crucifixion, but I continue to crucify Him every time I sin. Forgive me, Father, and keep me in Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Fourth Sunday in Lent

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. 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 would not buy enough bread 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. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" ~ John 6:1-14



This is one of the best-known of Jesus' miracles, perhaps because of the sheer size of the miracle, perhaps because we all want to be fed and cared for. The people who saw this miracle recognized Jesus as the Prophet that God had said He would raise up like Moses – one who would speak God's words and perform God's miracles. While feeding hungry people is a great feat, Jesus does more than that – He feeds those who believe in Him with His own body. He tells us that those who eat His flesh and drink His blood with never hunger or thirst. The miracles of forgiveness of sins and eternal life are far more amazing than feeding five thousand men.

Heavenly Father, give me the faith to know that You can and did feed five thousand people by the Sea of Galilee and You can and will feed my body and soul today. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Monday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." ~ Luke 18:9-14

It's easy for us to compare ourselves to others and think we're not such sinners. After all, we have not committed murder, though we've probably felt like it sometimes. We may not have committed adultery, but it's likely that we've had lustful thoughts. We may not have

committed armed robbery, but have we taken office supplies from our employers for personal use? And if we're thinking we're so much better than someone else, we are certainly guilty of exalting ourselves, of pride, of treating ourselves as idols. No matter how small our sins may seem to be, we are all sinners before a holy God, and He wants us to acknowledge our sinfulness and repent.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, be merciful to me, a sinner! Amen.

Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." ~ Luke 7:36-50

Once again, we see a self-righteous Pharisee look down on a "sinner" as he considers himself pure and holy. The woman didn't seem to care about what anyone else said or did. She was totally focused on showing her love and gratitude to the Lord for His grace and mercy. I want to be like the "sinner" who lavished her love on her Savior, heedless of the condemnation of others. I don't want to be like the "holier-than-thou" Pharisee, although, alas, I am like him too often.

Lord God, Thank You for forgiving my sins. I love You greatly for You have forgiven greatly. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

"Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table'? Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink'? Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'" ~ Luke 17:7-10

It seems contrary to our nature to want to be servants, never taking any credit or recognition for all the work we do. Often we want others to recognize and acknowledge all we do; we want to recline at the table and have someone else wait on us rather than waiting on the master after a long day of plowing. But we do not serve the Lord for our glory. We serve the Lord for **His** glory. We frequently read of popular and well-known Christian leaders failing because they thought their positions entitled them to put their own desires first, to seek their own fame, instead of working for the glory of the Lord. We may not be celebrity Christian leaders, but we can fail morally and spiritually if we don't do what is commanded, what is our duty.

Heavenly Father, why do I sometimes think that I've done enough—I deserve some thanks and some rest? I know I will receive my reward and my rest through eternity with You. Help me to continue to do my duty to You with love and joy and gratitude. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

"Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

~ Luke 15:25-32

I can't see myself in the role of the prodigal son. However, I can see myself in the role of the older brother. I can see myself resenting someone who had gone away and done wrong while I had stayed home and done my duty. Instead of seeing myself for who I am—an unworthy servant, a sinner—I can compare myself to others and think I'm not so bad. But to God, we are all the same. Every sin separates us from Him, whether it's the sin of the son who leaves his father and squanders his inheritance or the sin of the older brother who is selfish and self-righteous.

Lord, I can identify with the older son. I wonder why someone has done wrong should be honored and welcomed. Forgive me for self-righteousness, for selfishness, for jealousy. Turn my heart to rejoice when sinners are blessed because they turn to You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

"Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye,

but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye. ~ Luke 6:37-42

Why is so hard to see our own faults and so easy to see the faults of everyone around us? We judge and condemn fellow Christians for not always living to their own standards. Yet we can excuse our own sins and justify our own failures. All of us sin and fail every day – many times every day. We need to focus on overcoming our own weaknesses and shortcomings instead of condemning the failures and weaknesses of our neighbors, our fellow believers. Jesus didn't condemn us as hypocrites for not living up to the standards of our beliefs. He condemned those who condemned others while overlooking their own sins.

Gracious, holy God, why do I find it so easy to see the speck in my brother's eye but so difficult to see the log in my own eye? Show me the log in my eye, Lord, and by the power of the Blood of the Lamb and the help of the Holy Spirit, guide me to remove the log from my eye that I may see clearly. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

"Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." ~ Matthew 18:23-35

We may be grateful for God's forgiveness, but we expect that He can forgive our sins. After all, we haven't done anything *that* bad. Yet when someone hurts us, we may think what that person has done is too bad to be forgiven. "You don't understand," we say if we're implored to forgive. "What he did to me was unforgivable. I'll never be able to forgive that." God has every right to answer, "Oh, but I do understand. What you have done, the sin you committed, is unforgivable. Yet, not only did We forgive you, but Jesus died to pay the price for every sin you ever have or ever will commit. There's nothing that anyone has done to you that is equal to the sins that put my Son to a cruel and excruciating death."

Lord God, guide me by Your Holy Spirit to forgive those who hurt me. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, who reigns with You and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Fifth Sunday in Lent (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

The Jews Jesus was talking to could not make sense of His claim that “before Abraham was, I am.” Our whole perspective is based on linear time: Abraham lived long before Jesus came to earth, so Jesus could not possibly have seen Him. Yet God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – sees all time from beginning to end in the present. As incomprehensible as this is to us, God sees the creation of the earth the same as the latest disaster we hear on today’s news and the coming new Jerusalem simultaneously. Jesus promises us that if we keep His Word, we will not taste death. That is hard for people to believe, because we know only physical death at the end of our sojourn on earth. Jesus is talking about spiritual death that will happen to people who choose not to follow Jesus at the end of time but will never happen to those of us who give our lives to Christ.

Lord, empower me by the Holy Spirit to keep Your Word so that I spend eternity in Heaven with You. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Monday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

And he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” ~ Luke 21:29-36

That day – the day of Jesus’ return – will come for everyone. However, those who aren’t ready will suffer. Those who are prepared will enter a joyous life with our Lord. Some people who

will go to destruction will be people who have chosen it; they deliberately reject Jesus and choose to believe that they can live the life they want, no matter how far from the life Christ wants us to live, without repercussions. Others will not have actively and deliberately rejected Jesus. They may have procrastinated on accepting Jesus as Lord, thinking they had plenty of time to do that and wanting to “enjoy” their own selfish desires in the meantime. Some will have accepted Jesus at some point in their life, but they have strayed from the path. No matter which group they fall into, they will be taken by surprise when the Lord comes, and it will be too late for them to change their mind. Those of us who love the Lord must pay attention, so we don't let ourselves to be led astray, so we aren't taken by surprise and aren't ready for Christ's return.

Maranatha, come quickly, Lord, Jesus, and may You find me ready to stand before You. Amen.

Tuesday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” ~ Luke 12:16-21

Many people, even Christians, are shortsighted when it comes to life on earth and life in heaven. Everyone knows we will all die, and we intellectually acknowledge this fact. However, often we pay more attention to planning for comfort and safety in our earthly life than to preparing for eternal life. Our plans amount to nothing when God determines we have reached the end of our life. All the things we have accumulated – money, possessions, prestige, accomplishments – go to someone else or vanish away. The only things that remain are the treasures we have stored up in heaven. Rather than being focused on the things we see in our immediate vision, our eyes should always be focused beyond to the things to come after we pass from this earth.

Almighty God, may I never lay up treasure for myself but always be rich toward You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept, But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he answered, ‘Truly, I

say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. ~ Matthew 25:1-13

I doubt the ten virgins expected the bridegroom to be so late. The wise ones, though, took extra oil to be ready at whatever time he appeared. The foolish ones depended on the bridegroom arriving long before they ran out of oil. Likewise, we don't know when Jesus will return. The foolish ones may think He will come much later. Plenty of time, they think, to give their lives to Him. Plenty of time to follow Jesus and give up their evil ways. Yet, He may appear at any time, and those who aren't ready will be shut out, just as the virgins who arrived too late because they had to go buy oil.

Lord, I am watching for You. Make me ever ready, prepared with all the oil I need. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

Thursday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

"Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it. I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left." ~ Luke 17:26-36

The people around Noah probably laughed at him for building the ark. There was no sign of rain and seemingly no reason for this huge monstrosity being built on dry land. Certainly the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were evil and ridiculed the righteousness of Lot and his family. None of them expected what was about to happen. That is the way it will be when Jesus returns – those who aren't ready will be totally taken by surprise. Then it will be too late. Now is the time to prepare. The day is coming – we know not when, but we know it will assuredly be here. Those who weren't ready for the flood drowned. Those who weren't ready for the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. Those who are not ready for the return of Jesus will burn in the lake of fire.

Heavenly Father, I want to be among the chosen when Jesus returns. Guide me by the Holy Spirit so I will be taken and not left behind. And please guide my loved ones in the same way. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Friday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

"Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief

was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." ~ Luke 12:37-40

No one knows when Jesus will return, but if He finds us awake and waiting for Him, He will bless us. We will be rewarded for our faithfulness. But if we are not ready, we will not be blessed. We will not be rewarded. Instead, we will be punished for our failure to be ready. Whether we deliberately rejected salvation or whether we procrastinated or wavered in our faith won't matter. We are lost.

Maranatha, Lord Jesus! May You find me ready for You on Your return. Amen.

Saturday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." ~ Matthew 13:47-50

Many people believe that the people in the Church will be saved and the people outside the Church will be sent to the lake of fire. But in this parable, Jesus demonstrates that the good and evil will be caught in the same net—as those in the Church are together in the visible Body of Christ on earth. Yet as the fish in the net are separated into the bad and the good, the people of the Church will be sorted into the righteous and the unrighteous.

Lord, lead me to live my life here on earth so that at the end of time, You will sort me into the containers with the good. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Palm Sunday

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee." ~ Matthew 21:1-11



We often focus on the adulation of the crowds during the Triumphal Entry and the bloodthirstiness of the crowds on Good Friday, and that is important. But I am struck by the fact that God had planned everything so perfectly in advance that a donkey was waiting just

where God planned at just the right time. Everything about Jesus' persecution and death and resurrection was planned to the last detail long before they happened.

Lord, the crowds hailed Jesus when he entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday humbly riding on a donkey, yet soon they were calling for His death. May I honor and worship Him forever as the crowds did only for a short time. In His name. Amen.

Monday in Holy Week

So he told them this parable: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." ~ Luke 15:3-7

How amazing that Jesus loves each of us so much that He would leave the rest of the flock to go in search of the one who is lost. Jesus wants to save every sinner – whether the sin is pride or gluttony or murder or adultery or all of the above. He patiently comes searching to lead the wayward sheep home. He is grieved when He is rejected – He does not want any of His flock to perish. People often say a loving God wouldn't send someone to hell. However, what really happens is that the sinner who refuses to follow the Shepherd who comes looking for him sends himself to hell by rejecting the salvation that is freely offered to him.

Thank You, Lord, that You care for each of Your sheep as if we were Your only sheep. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

Tuesday in Holy Week

"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents." ~ Luke 15:8-10

Imagine – joy in heaven over a sinner who repents! The angels celebrate before God when one of His children turns from his wicked ways and repents of his sin. We may think someone is beyond redemption, but in God's eyes, no one is beyond redemption. If someone who has hurt us repents and turns to God, we may doubt their conversion. We may think they don't deserve forgiveness and salvation. We may think they cannot be redeemed. But God, Jesus, and the angels are joyous and celebrate the redemption.

Lord, You love each of us as if we were Your only child, Your only coin. That love is beyond my understanding, but I am eternally grateful for it. In the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Wednesday in Holy Week

And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs." ~ Luke 11:5-8

Even selfish sinners will respond to persistent requests simply to put a stop to the asking. We may say "no" one or two or three times, but eventually we give up and do what is asked so the person will go away and leave us alone. God doesn't give in out of a desire for us to go away, but He does respond to persistent prayers because He wants us to communicate with Him. He wants us to make our needs and desires known to Him. Even though He knows our thoughts, just as parents want their children to come to them when they have a need, our Lord wants us to come to Him. His timing may not be our timing – we may have to ask repeatedly until God answers, but we should never give up and should continue to express ourselves to Him in prayer.

Lord, I need this reminder to be persistent. When prayer isn't answered right away, it's so easy to think that You don't hear. Yet I have seen in my own life that You want us to continue to ask, to communicate with You persistently. Thank You for the answers to prayers early or late in my eyes, but in truth in Your perfect timing. Give me the strength and the wisdom to persist. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Maundy Thursday



And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.' And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" ~ Luke 18:1-8

Even an evil judge will give justice when it's to his advantage. God is just, but that doesn't mean always giving us what we want. Justice for those who have faith is the justice that belongs to Jesus, because we are not righteous on our own. By our faith, the righteousness of Jesus is attributed to us. When God gives us justice, it is based on Jesus' righteousness. However, those without faith find their justice is eternal punishment rather than eternal life in heaven. They may think that is cruel and unjust, but it is, in fact, justice for their lack of faith.

Thank You, Lord, that You are gracious and compassionate. If the unjust judge gave justice to the widow for her persistence, how much more will You give grace and mercy to us when we persist in our

requests. 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.

Good Friday

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise." ~ Luke 10:29-37



Most of us are compassionate at a distance. We read about starving children halfway around the world, and we will write a check to help. However, we're not always so quick to help the dirty homeless person begging on the street corner or the man we see staggering around drinking out of a bottle. Is it easier to be a neighbor to someone we don't have to deal with personally? Are we more comfortable helping with a credit card or a check than getting our hands dirty in coming to the aid of a person that may not seem deserving of our help? The Good Samaritan helped the man who had fallen among robbers and been injured. The kind stranger had to treat the man's wounds and pick him up from the ground. That's the kind of neighbor God wants us to be.

Heavenly Father, I want to be the good Samaritan, yet I find myself looking the other way—walking on the other side of the road—to avoid having to deal with pain and suffering. Turn my eyes and my feet to those in need that I may follow the example of Jesus, who served those who needed it most. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Holy Saturday

"There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from

there to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'" ~ Luke 16:19-31

The rich man enjoyed his sumptuous meals without a thought for Lazarus suffering at his gate and without a thought for his own eternal future. Even though he knew the Word of God from Moses and the Prophets, he ignored it until he was surprised to find himself suffering in Hades. If we don't want to be surprised by ending up in Hades, we must pay attention to the people in need around us and show God's love to them. We must look around us and look into our eternal future, but above all we must love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Lord God Almighty, You have told us what we must do to join Lazarus at Abraham's bosom: Love You with our heart and mind and soul and love our neighbors as ourselves. If we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and follow in His ways, we will spend eternity with You—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—in Heaven. Keep me always in Your paths, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Easter Sunday



Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be

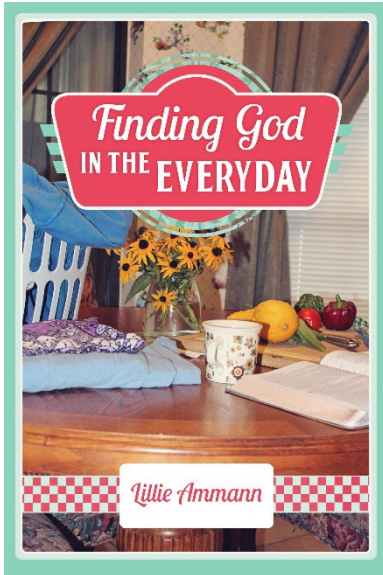
born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what

The Parables of Jesus

is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." ~ John 3:1-21

Today is Easter Sunday, Resurrection Day, the day Christ arose from the dead to give us eternal life. Christ is risen! Alleluia! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving me the opportunity to be born again of the Spirit. Thank You for Jesus' sacrifice for my sins. Thank You for Your grace and mercy. Lead me to always live as Your child. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, who died and rose again and ascended into Heaven. Amen.



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

A list of the titles of other published devotionals are listed below along with the year in which they were published.

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Year	Advent	Lent
2021	The Promises of God	The Light of Christ
2020	The Judgment of God	The Grace of God
2019	The Glory of the Lord	Suffering and Salvation
2018	Light of the World	Jesus Paid the Price
2017	Coming of Jesus	---