

# **Jesus Paid the Price for Our Sins**



**Devotionals for Lent 2018**

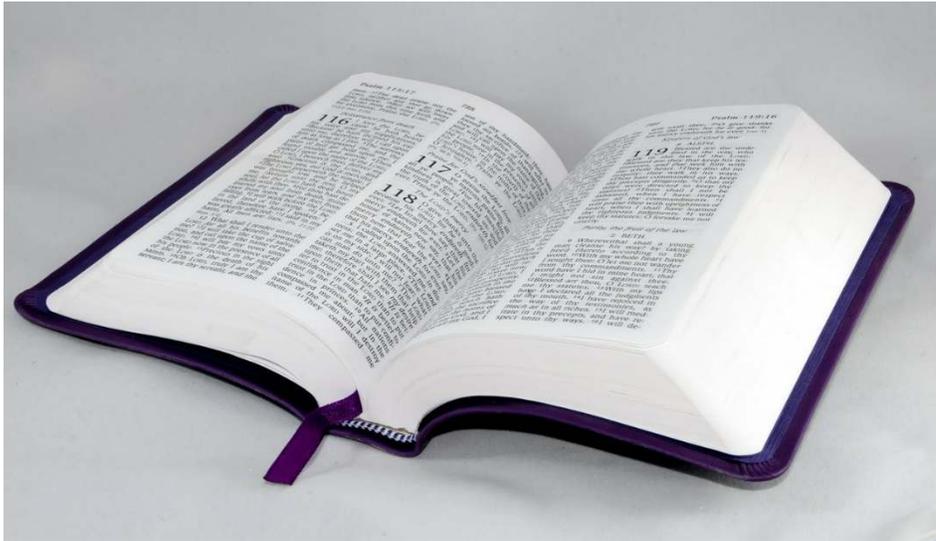
**by**

**Lillie Ammann**

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Proofreader: Alice Goodwin

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## Ash Wednesday, February 14, 2018

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” ~ Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

As a child, I wondered about those ash crosses on the foreheads of Catholic children on Ash Wednesday. After all, Jesus Himself said to give alms, pray, and fast in secret. Weren't these kids wearing the crosses of ash to show their piety? Many years later, as an adult, I joined a liturgical church, and every Ash Wednesday, I go to church for the Imposition of Ashes. But I don't do it to show my piousness—I do it to remind myself of my sinfulness and my need for repentance. Those of us who follow this ancient practice—or most of us, at least—aren't hypocrites wearing the mark of our Lord to be honored by men. In fact, in our society today, in many circles, we're more apt to be ridiculed than to be praised. But ridicule or praise—it's not man's opinion that matters, but God's. During Lent, we are called to examine our hearts, repent of our sins, and re-dedicate our lives to Christ. Wearing the sign of the cross on our foreheads can help us remember and focus on that.

*Lord God, as we begin this season of Lent, show me my secret sins. Reveal the things I need to repent of, and give me the desire and the will to change them. Let the sign of the cross on my forehead be a reminder to me. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*



## **Thursday After Ash Wednesday, February 15, 2018**

But He warned them and instructed *them* not to tell this to anyone, saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.”

And He was saying to *them* all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? ~ Luke 9:21-25

Jesus took up His cross voluntarily, but we are often reluctant to pick up our crosses. We’d much prefer an easy life—no sickness, pain, grief, or worries. But Jesus tells us we save our lives by losing them for His sake. Whatever we gain in this life—wealth, comfort, happiness, health—is not worth losing ourselves. This world isn’t our home, and this life isn’t our primary existence. We were created for heaven and eternity, and we get there through the cross—accepting Jesus’ sacrifice and picking up our own crosses.

*Father, forgive me for not wanting to carry any cross You have given me. Empower me by the Holy Spirit to pick up my cross and carry it—to save my life. Give me the strength and courage I need to face whatever challenges I encounter. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## **Friday after Ash Wednesday, February 16, 2018**

Then the disciples of John came to Him [Jesus], asking, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. ~ Matthew 9:14-15

The bridegroom isn’t physically with us, although the Holy Spirit is always with us. But Jesus said that when He was no longer here in human form, “then they will fast.” Many Christian traditions include fasting (abstaining from food or something they enjoy) as part of Lent. Christians often give up meat on Fridays or desserts or some form of entertainment every day of Lent. Although we may feel terribly deprived, the sacrifices we make are small compared to what Jesus did for us on the cross. Yet the purpose of fasting is not to feel deprived or to focus on what we’re giving up, but to focus on God, to spend time in prayer, to draw nearer to our Lord. We can go through the motions of fasting and miss the spiritual blessing if we focus on the fasting instead of on the Savior.

*Lord God, draw me to You through my Lenten fast. Focus my mind and heart on You and not on ritual. Speak to me through the Holy Spirit and let me hear and respond. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Saturday after Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2018

After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me." And he left everything behind, and got up and *began* to follow Him.

And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other *people* who were reclining *at the table* with them. The Pharisees and their scribes *began* grumbling at His disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?" And Jesus answered and said to them, "*It is* not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." ~ Luke 5:27-32

We can read this and think we're not as bad as tax collectors. While we may not like the IRS today, tax collectors in ancient Israel were far different. They didn't follow the law to make the people pay their justly due taxes; they extorted money from their own people and collected taxes for the hated Romans. We're law-abiding, and we're not traitors to our people. Are we really among the tax collectors and sinners that were so shocking for Jesus to dine with? Well, yes, we are. And so were the scribes and Pharisees if they had but admitted it. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. "There is no one who does good, not even one." (Psalm 14:3) Praise God that Jesus came to call us to repentance, and when we repent He forgives our sins and washes us clean in His precious blood.

*Father God, it's so easy for me to compare myself to other people rather than to Your holy standard. I may look good compared to criminals, but in Your eyes, I am equally guilty. Pierce my heart with sorrow for my sins, forgive me for the evil I have done and the good I have not done, and turn me to You, Lord. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## The First Sunday in Lent, February 18, 2018



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

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

And

'On *their* hands they will bear You up, So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'"

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

Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and *began* to minister to Him. ~ Matthew 4:1-11

Imagine going forty days without food! At that point, most of us would easily be tempted by the devil's tricks. After all, as God, Jesus could turn stones into bread. Yet Jesus reminded Satan of what the Word of God says. He resisted the temptation to ease His hunger pangs, and He resisted the temptation to demonstrate His power or to trade His heavenly glory for earthly glory. May we be strong enough to withstand temptation!

*Lord, I won't be on a total fast for the entirety of Lent, yet it is all too easy for me to yield to Satan's temptations in many ways. Empower me by the Holy Spirit to respond with, "Go, Satan!" Give me a hunger for Your Word so I know exactly what to tell the devil: "It is written..." In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Monday after Lent 1, February 29, 2018

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even* the least of *them*, you did it to Me.’

“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” ~ Matthew 25:31-46

Even Christians often think that we are doing good if we aren’t doing bad. But Jesus tells us that He will judge us by what we do for others. He doesn’t separate people by whether they didn’t steal or kill, but by what they did for other people, specifically for the weak and vulnerable. The unborn, the poor, the sick, the prisoners, the addicts—these are the people Jesus expects us to feed, clothe, visit, and help. Not only does He expect us to serve these people, the “least,” but He tells us that when we serve them, we serve Him!

*Lord God, show me the people You want me to help today. Lead me to those in need, pain, and weakness, and guide me to serve them as if serving Jesus, for You tell me in Your Word that is exactly what I am doing. Thank You for the blessing of serving Jesus. In His name. Amen.*

## Tuesday after Lent 1, February 20, 2018

“And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

“Pray, then, in this way:

‘Our Father who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

‘Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

‘Give us this day our daily bread.

‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]’

For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. ~ Matthew 6:7-15

This passage includes the simple yet profound Lord’s Prayer. Jesus teaches us how we are to pray—praise God, look forward to His Kingdom where His will rules, and ask for His daily provision, for forgiveness as we forgive others, and for protection from sin and evil. Asking for our daily bread is a stretch for us. We aren’t to ask for provision for this week or for the kids’ college or our retirement, but for this day. As foreign as that is, what is really shocking in this passage is the words of Jesus on forgiveness. We are to pray that God will forgive us as we forgive those who hurt us—in many cases, we wouldn’t get much forgiveness if that were the case. We are far less willing to forgive than the Lord is, yet Jesus goes on to say that God will forgive us if we forgive others but will not forgive us if we don’t forgive others. We want to hold onto our hurts, but if we don’t forgive, we aren’t forgiven. Without forgiveness, we are still slaves to sin, and Jesus’ atoning work on the cross doesn’t save us.

*Lord God, it’s so easy to hold onto hurts and offenses, feeling that the persons who hurt me don’t deserve forgiveness. But I don’t deserve forgiveness, either, and yet if I will forgive others, You will forgive me. Jesus died to cleanse me of my sins, but I can’t harbor any unforgiveness in my heart. Please show me where I have failed to forgive and give me a forgiving heart. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## **Wednesday after Lent 1, February 21, 2018**

As the crowds were increasing, He began to say, "This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. The Queen of the South will rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here." ~ Luke 11:29-32

Rather than believing Jesus on the basis of His word, His listeners wanted a sign. He told them the only sign they would see would be the sign of Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days, and Jesus would be in the grave for three days. The people of Nineveh repented when they heard Jonah, but Jesus is greater than Jonah or any other prophet before Him. He is not a prophet inspired by God; He *is* God Incarnate.

*Lord God, Your people treated Jesus as badly as all the prophets. May I always love and serve Jesus. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Thursday after Lent 1, February 22, 2018

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” ~ Matthew 7:7-12

When we knock on the door, Jesus stands just on the other side and eagerly opens the door. If we seek Him, we will find Him. We shouldn't be afraid to ask anything of the Lord. He has performed miracles in my life and the lives of others I know. He doesn't always answer us in the exact way we hope or expect, but He always give us what is best for us. We see from our small perspective of here and now; God sees from the limitless perspective of everywhere and forever. We can trust Him to respond to us in a perfect way, even if it's far different than what we envision.

*Father God, thank You for answering my prayers and for the many miracles You have performed in my life. Help me to remember that You always give the perfect answer, even when the answer You give isn't what I think is best. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Friday after Lent 1, February 23, 2018

“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell. Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.” ~ Matthew 5:20-26

We can look like we’re righteous, but the scribes and Pharisees appeared righteous in their society, too. They were certainly self-righteous and thought they were more righteous than other people. Yet their righteousness was all show; the Pharisees performed the rituals and followed rules, but their hearts were not pure. Jesus says that even insulting our brother is as bad as murder. Most of us would never murder anyone, but we have hateful thoughts toward other people. In the eyes of a holy God, we are sinning.

*Father God, forgive me for outward righteousness and inward sinfulness. Turn my heart to You; let me forgive others when they hurt me, and don’t let me hurt other people. Give me a clean heart. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Saturday after Lent 1, February 24, 2018

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” ~ Matthew 5:43-48

Most of us have a hard time loving our enemies. They’re our enemies because they have done something to hurt us or because they don’t like us for some reason—perhaps we have offended them. Even if we show them love, they may not reciprocate. There’s nothing in these words of Jesus that says anything about the response to our love. Our enemies can continue to hate us and to do evil toward us. Yet Jesus told us to love and pray for those who persecute us. It probably won’t change them, but it will certainly change us. If we can’t see our way clear to loving our enemies, we can pray for them. And it’s really hard to hate someone when you’re asking God to bless them.

*Lord God, people have hurt me and been cruel to me, yet, when I pray for them, my unforgiveness melts away. Thank You that when I can’t love my enemy on my own power, Your Holy Spirit gives me the grace to turn anger and hostility to love. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## The Second Sunday in Lent, February 25, 2018

Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" When the disciples heard *this*, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. And Jesus came to *them* and touched them and said, "Get up, and do not be afraid." And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.



As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead." ~ Matthew 17:1-9

Peter, James, and John didn't know what to make of the Transfiguration, but Peter knew that it was good for them to be there. Anytime we are where the Lord is, it is good for us to be there. And since the Holy Spirit indwells all believers, wherever we are, there our Lord is also. Whether we are worshipping in church, reading the Bible and praying alone with the Lord, or shooting up a quick prayer in the middle of a busy day, it is good for us to be there.

*Thank You, Lord God, that through Your Holy Spirit, we are always in Your presence. Help me to always remember that it is good for me to be there. Your Word tells me to pray without ceasing, and I want to do that. But I need Your help to be attuned to You throughout the day. Let me feel Your presence. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Monday after Lent 2, February 26, 2018

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.” ~ Luke 6:36-38

Sometimes people consider Jesus’ admonition against judgment as a warning for us not to use godly discernment. According to the lexicon, the Greek word translated as “judge” has several meanings. The one most likely in this passage is “to pronounce judgment; to subject to censure.” But a sometimes-ignored meaning is “to pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong.” As Christians, we are *not* told not to differentiate between right and wrong; we are told not to pronounce our own condemnation on other people. We can and should make clear our belief that certain behaviors are sins. We should not condemn the person who commits those sins. After all, we’re all sinners, and in God’s eyes, a lustful thought is as sinful as sexual immorality, greed is as sinful as theft. God will condemn or pardon us according to how we condemn or pardon others. Thanks be to Him that He is merciful, therefore, we should be merciful.

*Lord, help me to be merciful as You are merciful. Let me always stand for Your truth, but let me do it with mercy and love. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Tuesday after Lent 2, February 27, 2018

Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say *things* and do not do *them*. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with *so much as* a finger. But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels *of their garments*. They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men. But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call *anyone* on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, *that is*, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. ~ Matthew 23:1-12

Just like the scribes and Pharisees, we tend to want to make ourselves seem more important than we are. We want people to respect and admire us and look up to us. But Jesus tells us to humble ourselves, and He gave us the perfect example of humility. Though He was God Incarnate, He washed the feet of His disciples.

*Father God, please give me true humility and make me more and more like Jesus. In His name. Amen.*

## Wednesday after Lent 2, February 28, 2018

As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve *disciples* aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify *Him*, and on the third day He will be raised up.”

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left.” But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They said to Him, “We are able.” He said to them, “My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.”

And hearing *this*, the ten became indignant with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” ~ Matthew 20:17-28

The other disciples were indignant that James and John, through their mother, wanted to be exalted in God’s Kingdom. But they probably wished the same thing for themselves, just as we are prone to want to be recognized and honored. It’s human nature—but it’s not Christ’s nature. He—the Word, the incarnate God—came to serve rather than to be served. And He served others to the point of death, a horrific death upon the cross. The One in whom all things hold together sacrificed Himself for our sakes. I’ve known and believed this for most of my seven-decade-long life, yet I still can’t fully comprehend it.

*Holy Triune God, there is no way I can thank You for my salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. All I can do is to live my life in gratitude and humility, serving others in small ways and showing Your love. Even that I can’t do on my own—I am totally dependent upon You for everything I do. Help me to do what I can’t do. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Thursday after Lent 2, March 1, 2018

“Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the *crumbs* which were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.’ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father’s house— for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ But he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’” ~ Luke 16:19-31

Interesting that the rich man isn’t named, but the poor man is. Likely no one knew the poor man’s name when he was lying at the rich man’s gate, but everyone knew and admired and perhaps envied the rich man. Also interesting that the rich man thought he deserved for Lazarus to leave Abraham’s bosom and come to the place of torment to provide comfort to the rich man. Jesus told us it was harder for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven. That doesn’t mean that money is evil or for men to have wealth is bad. But it seems that being rich gives people a sense of entitlement, a feeling that they deserve the blessings they have received, when, in fact, no one has anything that God hasn’t given them.

*Father God, I am not rich in our society, but by the standards of most of the world, I’m very wealthy. I’m not part of the wealthy, but that doesn’t mean I’m immune from thinking I deserve all the blessings You have given me. Remind me that I have nothing and am nothing on my own. You have given me all the resources I have, and I don’t deserve them. Give me a grateful and a generous heart to share what I have with others. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Friday after Lent 2, March 2, 2018

“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?” They said to Him, “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the *proper seasons*.”

Jesus said to them, “Did you never read in the Scriptures,  
‘The stone which the builders rejected,  
This became the chief corner *stone*;  
This came about from the Lord,  
And it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.”

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet. ~ Matthew 21:33-46

God sent the prophets to His people, but they rejected them and treated them badly. Then He sent Jesus, His only Son, but He was treated even worse than the prophets. Yet in spite of experiencing a horrible death at the hands of those He came to save, Jesus rose again and has become the chief cornerstone of His Church, His Body. In His death, He took on the sins of the world—past, present, and future. Each of us is one of the killers of Jesus, because it was our sins that put Him on that cross.

*Lord God, forgive me for my part in Jesus’ death. He took on my sins and died for them. He would have done that if I was the only sinner in the world, and my sins were the only ones that needed to be atoned for. I can point fingers at the Romans who crucified Him and the Jews who condemned Him, but my sins caused Him to die. Empower me by the Holy Spirit to live for Him. In His name. Amen.*

## Saturday after Lent 2, March 3, 2018

Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. Both the Pharisees and the scribes *began* to grumble, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

And He said, “A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.’ So he divided his wealth between them. And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving *anything* to him. But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.”’ So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion *for him*, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ And they began to celebrate.

“Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. And he summoned one of the servants and *began* inquiring what these things could be. 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 became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and *began* pleading with him. But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and *yet* you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.’ And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and *has begun* to live, and *was* lost and has been found.’” ~ Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

We are all so familiar with the story of the Prodigal Son that’s it’s easy to take it for granted. But I am struck by the response of the older son, the one who stayed home to work with his father while his younger brother was off squandering half of his father’s estate—while

his father was still alive. Unfortunately, I see myself in this self-righteous, jealous son. After all, he had been faithful and loyal to his father, had done all the right things—and now his wastrel brother was getting all the attention and being showered with love and gifts from their father. Instead of resentment, he should have felt joy that his brother was safely in home. The evil person who repents on his deathbed will be in Heaven with Jesus, with rejoicing from all the heavenly host for his salvation, late as it was. He won't have to pay for all his evil deeds because Jesus' atonement on the cross paid for them all, just as His death paid for every bit of evil I have done in my life. Even though I've been a Christian my entire life, the person who waited until moments before he was headed for hell to turn his life to God will be right beside me throughout eternity. That gives me hope for people in my life who have still not accepted Jesus—they can still be saved.

*Thank You, Lord, that as long as there is breath, there is hope for salvation. Give me a heart for the unsaved and fill me with Your words and actions to share Your Gospel with those who need to hear it. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## The Third Sunday in Lent, March 4, 2019



So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw." He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am *He*."

At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do You speak with her?" So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men, "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I *have* done; this is not the Christ, is it?" They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." So the disciples were saying to one another, "No one

brought Him *anything* to eat, did he?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work. Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and *then* comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this *case* the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor."

From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I *have* done." So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. Many more believed because of His word; and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world." ~ John 4:5-42

For Jesus to talk to the Samaritan woman was out of the ordinary, as Jews and Samaritans didn't associate with each other. Even more surprising to her, He knew about her immoral lifestyle. Instead of denying her sin, she ran and told the people of the town about Jesus. They came out to the well to hear what He had to say, and Jesus stayed there for two days. As a result, many of the townspeople became believers. If we were taking the Gospel to an unfriendly community, most of us would look for someone who led a more moral life, someone who had the respect of the people, someone with influence. But Jesus worked through this sinful, outcast woman, as He often works through the least likely people to accomplish His purposes.

*Thank You, Lord, that You use sinners, outcasts, weak people. That means You can use me. I can tell my story of knowing You and impact other people, even though I am not influential. Use me, Lord, as You see fit. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Monday after Lent 3, March 5, 2018

And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, *in the land* of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." And all *the people* in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, He went His way. ~ Luke 4:24-30

A doctor friend once asked me, "Do you know what it takes for a doctor to be an expert?" When I said I didn't know, he told me, "Go fifty miles down the road." Even professionals seem to have more respect for peers from elsewhere than for people they know well. The people in his hometown knew Jesus as the son of the carpenter, and they couldn't imagine that He was a prophet. Yet He was not only a prophet but God Incarnate, the Savior of the World.

*Lord, may I always recognize Jesus as part of the Triune God, my Lord, and my Savior. In His name. Amen.*

## Tuesday after Lent 3, March 6, 2018

Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he had begun to settle *them*, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. But since he did not have *the means* to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. So the slave fell *to the ground* and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and *began* to choke *him*, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ So his fellow slave fell *to the ground* and *began* to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’ And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.” ~ Matthew 18:21-35

We’re always glad that God’s capacity to forgive us is infinite. Seventy times seven doesn’t begin to cover how many times God forgives us—over and over and over again. Yet when someone repeatedly hurts us, we don’t want to keep forgiving. Often we don’t even want to forgive one time. I know of a family situation in which one person was badly hurt by her siblings. Although they had not intended to hurt her and begged her forgiveness, she refused—she was convinced that the hurt was unforgivable. Thanks be to God that He never finds anything we do unforgivable.

*Lord God, help me to pattern the way I forgive after Jesus, who when He was unjustly hanging on the cross for our sins, forgave those who put Him there. I want to be that forgiving, but I can’t do it under my own power. So please help me. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Wednesday after Lent 3, March 7, 2018

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” ~ Matthew 5:17-19

Some Christians think the New Testament made the Old Testament obsolete, but Jesus Himself said He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (the Old Testament). God’s Law is unchanged—a holy God demands holiness in His people. The difference is that our holiness comes from Jesus. We can’t keep the Law in our own ability. The Blood of Jesus pays the price for our breaking of the Law. Our sin has been punished, and our debt paid in full—without anything from us. Jesus gave it all.

*Thank You, Lord God, that Jesus paid the price for my sins. Empower me by the Holy Spirit to honor and observe Your holy law. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Thursday after Lent 3, March 8, 2018

And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute; when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed. But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.” Others, to test *Him*, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven. But He knew their thoughts and said to them, “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house *divided* against itself falls. 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 by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong *man*, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder. He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters. ~ Luke 11:14-23

It’s sobering to realize that if we are not with God, we are against him. There’s no neutral territory. In Revelation, Jesus said that He spits out of His mouth those who are lukewarm. Anyone who has a wishy-washy view of God—maybe He exists, or maybe He doesn’t; maybe He’s in control, or maybe He’s not—is the same as someone who denies Him.

*Lord God, I want to always be with You, never against You. Strengthen me when I am weak in my faith, and overcome my doubts with faith. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Friday after Lent 3, March 9, 2018

One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, “What commandment is the foremost of all?” Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; 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.” The scribe said to Him, “Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that He is One, and there is no one else 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 himself, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions. ~ Mark 12:28-34

Most of us can recite the Summary of the Law. We know that if we love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and also love our neighbors as ourselves, there is no need for commandments, rules, laws. We will do everything we’re supposed to and won’t do those things we shouldn’t out of love for God and others. But knowing and practicing are two different things. It’s easy to state these two overarching statements—it’s not so easy to live by them. We need the guidance of the Holy Spirit—we will never be perfect, but the Spirit will help us love God and man more.

*Lord God, I want to love You with everything I have. I want to love others as myself. But so often I fall far short on both. I put other things ahead of serving You. I put my own comfort above the needs of others. Please forgive me, and empower me by the Holy Spirit to be filled with love and act accordingly. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## **Saturday after Lent 3, March 20, 2018**

And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." ~ Luke 18:9-14

It's so easy to compare ourselves to other people and see ourselves as much more righteous. Elsewhere Jesus told us to take the log out of our own eye so we could see the speck in our brother's eye. We tend to judge ourselves by our intentions and others by their results. Yet even our best is filthy rags in view of the pure holiness of God. He wants us to acknowledge our sinfulness, to repent, to humble ourselves.

*Lord, please forgive me for my pride and self-righteousness. In the presence of Your holiness, I cannot lift my eyes. God, be merciful to me, the sinner! In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## The Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 11, 2018

As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Jesus answered, "*It was neither that* this man sinned, nor his parents; but *it was* so that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came *back* seeing. Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?" Others were saying, "This is he," *still* others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one." So they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight." They said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know."



They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind. Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet."

The Jews then did not believe *it* of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight, and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?" His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." So they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear *it* again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do

you?” They reviled him and said, “You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from.” The man answered and said to them, “Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.” They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?” So they put him out.

Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you.” And he said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped Him. And Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.” Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, “We are not blind too, are we?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains. ~ John 9:1-41

There’s a saying: None is so blind as he who will not see. The Pharisees thought they saw—and knew—everything, but Jesus said they were blind. Jesus didn’t fit their preconceived idea of the Messiah, so they could not recognize Him. Spiritual blindness didn’t end with the Pharisees. We can fail to see the works of God in front of us because they aren’t what we expect.

*God, open my eyes so I see Your truth. Don’t let me be blinded by lies, deceptions, and preconceived ideas. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Monday after Lent 4, March 12, 2018

After the two days He went forth from there into Galilee. For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast.

Therefore He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and was imploring *Him* to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. So Jesus said to him, “Unless you *people* see signs and wonders, you *simply* will not believe.” The royal official said to Him, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” Jesus said to him, “Go; your son lives.” The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started off. As he was now going down, *his* slaves met him, saying that his son was living. So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. Then they said to him, “Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.” So the father knew that *it was* at that hour in which Jesus said to him, “Your son lives”; and he himself believed and his whole household. This is again a second sign that Jesus performed when He had come out of Judea into Galilee. ~ John 4:43-54

Jesus told the royal official that his son would live, and the official took Him at His word. He didn't ask for proof or even any additional assurance. Jesus had said it—so it was so. And, of course, his faith was well-placed. We can always count on what Jesus says, what God says. We tend to question, doubt, wonder, when the correct response is to believe.

*Lord God, help me to believe without doubts and questions. If You or Your Word says something, it is true. I can believe without doubt because I know it is true. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Tuesday after Lent 4, March 13, 2018

After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep *gate* a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.] A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying *there*, and knew that he had already been a long time *in that condition*, He said to him, “Do you wish to get well?” The sick man answered Him, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.” Jesus said to him, “Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.” Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and *began* to walk.

Now it was the Sabbath on that day. So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.” But he answered them, “He who made me well was the one who said to me, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk.’” They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Pick up *your pallet* and walk’?” But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in *that* place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.” The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. ~ John 5:1-16

Jesus healed a man who had been crippled for nearly four decades—and the religious Jews were offended that it happened on the Sabbath. Are we blinded by habit, rules, or anything else? Do we miss the beauty of God’s work in our lives because we’re locked into tradition or expectations or prejudices?

*Lord God, open my eyes so I see the person behind every situation, and even more importantly, that I see You in every action. You are sovereign and in control, and I don’t want to fail to see everything You do. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Wednesday after Lent 4, March 14, 2018

But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless *it is* something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and *the Father* will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is *the* Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.

"I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ~ John 5:17-30

The Father gives the Son the power to raise the dead and judge in the resurrection, yet Jesus says He can't do anything on His own initiative. He does only the will of the Father. If even the Second Person of the Trinity can't do things on His own initiative, how much more do we have to rely on God. We have no power that is not given to us by our Creator and Lord.

*Thank You, Lord God, that we can rely on You because we can do nothing on our own initiative. Lead me in Your ways and keep me from trying to do what I cannot do. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Thursday after Lent 4, March 15, 2018

“If I *alone* testify about Myself, My testimony is not true. There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true.

You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.

But the testimony which I have is greater than *the testimony of* John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.

And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent.

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men; but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the *one and* only God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” ~ John 5:31-47

Scripture, the Law and the Prophets, foretold the coming of the Messiah. Jesus showed He was the Messiah by the works that the Father gave Him to do, yet the religious leaders and most of the people of Jesus’ time did not believe He was God Incarnate. Jesus Himself and the Word of God tell us that He is coming again to judge the living and the dead. Too many people today don’t believe that—or at least they live like they don’t believe it. They don’t expect judgment for the way they have lived their lives, yet that judgment is surely coming.

*Lord God, I know that Jesus is coming again in glory. He will judge everyone—living and dead—and determine their eternal home. I believe that He is Your Son, and I confess my sins. He is my Lord and Savior, and I look forward to living in Heaven with You forever. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Friday after Lent 4, March 16, 2018

After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near.

But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret.

So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill? Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they? However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from." Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me." So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. ~ John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

Though the religious leaders of the day were trying to kill Jesus, no one touched him because it was not time. At the appointed time, Jesus would be arrested, condemned, and crucified, but it was in the Father's timing, not the timing of the people who carried out the deed. They thought they were in control, but the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus were all part of God's master plan from before the foundation of the world. He used evil men to carry out His will, evil men who thought it was all their plan.

*Lord, I acknowledge that You are sovereign, even over those who don't follow You. Your will is often surprising to us, and the way You carry it out is a mystery. But I don't need to understand—I just need to know that You are in control, and whatever You will is good. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Saturday after Lent 4, March 17, 2018

Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet." Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him. Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?" The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." The Pharisees then answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you? No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed." Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to them, "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?" They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee." [Everyone went to his home.] ~ John 7:40-53

Even the officers didn't seize Jesus because they recognized that there was never a man like Him before. Many people saw that Jesus was extraordinary, but they couldn't agree on who He was. They certainly didn't believe He was the Christ because He didn't fit their expectations. How often do we miss a blessing because it doesn't look like what we expect?

*Lord God, sometimes the things that have turned out to be the greatest blessings in my life have looked like problems. I've tried to avoid them, but thank You that You didn't let me. But perhaps I have missed other blessings and never known what I missed. Open my eyes to see the truth, even when it doesn't fit my expectations. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## The Fifth Sunday in Lent (Passion Sunday), March 18, 2018



Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. So the sisters sent *word* to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." But when Jesus heard *this*, He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days *longer* in the place where He was. Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." This He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep." The disciples then said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep. So Jesus then said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him." Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to *his* fellow disciples, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him."

So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning *their* brother. Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house. Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, *even* He who comes into the world."

When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and was coming to Him.

Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him. Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb

to weep there. Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her *also* weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?"

So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been *dead* four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me." When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him. ~ John 11:1-45

We usually remember Thomas for his doubts; we even call him Doubting Thomas. But when Jesus told the disciples He was going to Judea where Jesus' life was at risk, Thomas is the one who said, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him." Was he declaring his willingness to die for Jesus, or was he being sarcastic? Whatever his intent, he, along with the other disciples, did go to Judea with Jesus and were with Him when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. God was, as always, in complete control. It was not time for Jesus to die, so He went to Bethany and raised Lazarus without any interference.

*Father God, give me the willingness, courage, and endurance to walk with You wherever You lead. I want to be willing to live and die for You. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Monday after Passion Sunday, March 19, 2018

But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and *began* to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center *of the court*, they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?” They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him *be the* first to throw a stone at her.” Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they *began* to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center *of the court*. Straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.” ~ John 8:1-11

People, especially those who pick and choose what they believe in the Bible, love to quote this story to show God’s mercy. Rather, they like to quote this story without the last two sentences. They try to make a case that Jesus never condemned anyone or that he didn’t condemn adultery. However, they fail to acknowledge that He told her to go and sin no more. Praise God that He doesn’t condemn us—the weight of His condemnation would be too much for even the most righteous person. But the reason He doesn’t condemn us if we repent of our sins is that He Himself has paid the price for those sins.

*Lord God, thank You that You don’t condemn me for my many sins because Jesus paid the full price in His precious blood for everything I have done. All I have to do is say “Yes” to Him. Yes, yes, yes, Lord! Jesus is my Lord and Savior. In His name I pray. Amen.*

## Tuesday after Passion Sunday, March 20, 2018

Then He said again to them, “I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come.” So the Jews were saying, “Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come?’” And He was saying to them, “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins.” So they were saying to Him, “Who are You?” Jesus said to them, “What have I been saying to you *from* the beginning? I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world.” They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him. ~ John 8:21-30

The religious leaders were often offended when Jesus forgave sins and talked about being sent by His Father God. Yet they were also confused—what was He talking about? We have two thousand years of knowledge of who Christ is, yet how often are we confused and wonder what God is doing and why? Even if we can’t understand, even if it seems that God has abandoned us, even if we are lost and confused, God is still with us. *In us*, in fact. When we can’t understand, we can believe.

*Father God, sometimes I get confused and wonder why some things happen that I think shouldn't, and some things don't happen that I think should. Help me to understand that I don't need to understand. All I need to do is to believe that You are working all things for good to those who love You. You are with me—the Holy Spirit lives within me. Jesus died for me and is even now interceding for me next to You in Heaven. You are love, and You are good, and You are God. I trust You even when I don't understand. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Wednesday after Passion Sunday, March 21, 2018

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free?’”

Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are Abraham’s descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from *your* father.”

They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you are Abraham’s children, do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. You are doing the deeds of your father.” They said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.” Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. ~ John 8:31-42

In the US, we take pride in our freedom. Like the Jews who claimed they had never been enslaved, we proclaim liberty. But Jesus said that if we commit sin, we are slaves to sin. When I think about how often I sin, this is very bad news. But praise God—the Good News is that Jesus has set me free. I am no longer enslaved—I am free indeed. The precious Blood of Jesus has paid the price for my freedom.

*Thank You, Lord, that Jesus has set me free, and I am free indeed. Even though I commit sins often, Jesus has paid the price for my sins—past, present, and future. I am now free to serve You and do Your will. In the name of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Thursday after Passion Sunday, March 22, 2018

“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, and the prophets *also*; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.’ Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom 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’; and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and 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 born, I am.” Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple. ~ John 8:51-59

With God, time and space don’t exist. He is limitless. He identified Himself to Moses as I AM, and Jesus (the Second Person of the Trinity) said that before the birth of Abraham, “I am.” God always was, is now, and always will be. Even more significantly, He is always the same. We change all the time, but God is forever.

*Thank You, God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—that You are timeless, limitless, and changeless. I can’t comprehend the magnitude of You, Lord, and yet You want a close, personal relationship with every one of Your children, including me! I worship You now and always. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Friday after Passion Sunday, March 23, 2018

The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out *to be* God." Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp.

And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there. Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true." Many believed in Him there. ~ John 10:31-42

The Jewish religious leaders were so self-righteous that they couldn't see the truth that Jesus was the Messiah. They followed traditions and man-made laws more than they followed God. Do we get so attached to theology and traditions that we learn from others that we can't see the truth?

*Lord God, may I always be in Your Word, verifying that what I'm told conforms to the truth in Scripture. Jesus is coming soon. Let me be ready for His return and recognize the signs as they appear. In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

## **Saturday after Passion Sunday, March 24, 2018**

Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.

Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him *go on* like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.

Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples.

Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves. So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?" ~ John 11:45-56

The Jewish leaders knew that they could lose their power if enough people followed Jesus. They weren't interested in the truth, but only in their own position. How many people and leaders in the Church today are more interested in their own comfort, success, and power than in sharing God's Word? Churches that preach anything other than the truth of the Bible have put something else ahead of Jesus. May we always teach the truth, even if it is to our own detriment.

*Lord God, in today's politically correct society, it is becoming more difficult to be a Bible-believing Christian. We are called intolerant and some of us are losing our livelihoods if we stand against evil. Empower me by the Holy Spirit to always put You first, to proclaim the truth of the Bible, and to stand firm for my faith. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Palm Sunday, March 25, 2018

When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied *there* and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.” This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

“Say to the daughter of Zion,  
‘Behold your King is coming to you,  
Gentle, and mounted on a donkey,  
Even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them, and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats. Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting,

“Hosanna to the Son of David;  
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord;  
Hosanna in the highest!”

When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, “Who is this?” And the crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.” ~ Matthew 21:1-11

Jesus was welcomed as a prophet coming in the name of the Lord when He entered Jerusalem for Passover. Yet He was riding on a lowly donkey—the donkey and colt that were waiting for His disciples just when Jesus was ready for them. God had worked out every detail long before this day. He knew the crowd would turn on Him. He knew He would be tortured mercilessly and would die a violent and vicious death. That excruciating pain was nothing compared to the pain of the moment the Father turned His face from Him. Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world—sins so vile the Father couldn’t look at Him. Yet He chose to do this for us!

*Thank You for Your perfect plan of redemption. Thank You that You loved me so much that Jesus went through the horrific, incomprehensible experience of the Crucifixion to pay the price for my sins. That love is so far from the way I act that I can’t comprehend it. All I can do is love You and trust You and thank You. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*



## Monday in Holy Week, March 26, 2018

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

The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus. ~ John 12:1-11

Criminals sometimes kill witnesses to their nefarious deeds so the witnesses can't testify against them in court. In this case, the religious leaders wanted to kill a man raised from the dead so the miracle might be forgotten or disbelieved. We don't go around killing people who cause us problems, but we do use them, hurt them, ignore them to protect ourselves or make ourselves look good. Jesus told us we deserve hell for calling our brother a fool—we are no better than the criminals who kill witnesses or the chief priests who planned to kill Lazarus.

*Lord God, forgive me for hurting other people for my personal benefit. Let me put others before myself and never inflict anger or callous disregard on someone. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Tuesday in Holy Week, March 27, 2018

When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.” The disciples *began* looking at one another, at a loss *to know* of which one He was speaking. There was reclining on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, “Tell *us* who it is of whom He is speaking.” He, leaning back thus on Jesus’ bosom, said to Him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus then answered, “That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.” So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, *the son* of Simon Iscariot. After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, “What you do, do quickly.” Now no one of those reclining *at the table* knew for what purpose He had said this to him. For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, “Buy the things we have need of for the feast”; or else, that he should give something to the poor. So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately. Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’~ John 13:21-33

*After* Jesus gave Judas a morsel of bread, Satan entered into him. We know Judas had been under the influence of Satan for a long time—perhaps throughout the time he was with Jesus, because elsewhere in Scripture we are told that he was stealing from the treasury. However, John tells us that Jesus Himself specifically did something so Satan would entice Judas to betray his Lord. Jesus didn’t just sit back and let the devil be in control. He was in control the entire time, even when He was physically helpless and dying.

*Lord, I can’t express how in awe I am of the love You—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—have for me and for every one of Your children. To our human senses, it seems that the devil and an evil man orchestrated Jesus’ crucifixion, but You were in control of every step. Enable me to show my gratitude by living for You. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Wednesday in Holy Week, March 28, 2018

Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?" And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. From then on he *began* looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus.

Now on the first *day* of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is near; I *am* to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'" The disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.

Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining *at the table* with the twelve disciples. As they were eating, He said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me." Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?" And He answered, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. The Son of Man *is to go*, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus said to him, "You have said *it* yourself." ~ Matthew 26:14-25

Judas was so arrogant that as he was plotting to betray Jesus, he said, "Surely it is not I?" Of course, Jesus knew all along that Judas would betray Him, and Judas surely should have realized by now that Jesus knew everything. So why did he think he could pretend to be innocent? Yet how often do we do the same thing? We try to hide our evil thoughts and sinful actions from God, when we are fooling no one but ourselves. How much better it is to confess our sins, repent, and beg forgiveness.

*Lord God, You know everything I do and everything in my heart. When I sin in thought, word, or deed, may I never try to hide my sin. I want to confess it, turn away from it, and accept Your merciful forgiveness. Help me to do that. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Maundy Thursday, March 29, 2018



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

Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, *then wash* not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all *of you*." For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."

So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined *at the table* again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for *so* I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. ~ John 13:1-15

Today, our feet seldom get dirty. We wear shoes and socks most of the time, and even our shoes are usually shiny and clean. But in the time of Jesus, the streets weren't paved and there was no sewer system. The people wore sandals and walked through the muddy streets, stepping in sewage and animal waste. It was typical for a host to have a servant wash his guests' feet when they arrived because they would be filthy—and probably smelly, too. Washing of feet was a chore assigned to the lowliest of servants because it was nasty job. Yet Jesus Christ Himself, the Savior of the World, our Lord and Savior, humbled Himself to wash the feet of His disciples. And we are called to act just as humbly as He did.

*Almighty God, I want to serve You, but I'm more inclined to want to do so from a clean and comfortable office than on the streets. Yet You call us to serve the lowliest of Your people in the humblest of circumstances. Give me the will and the power to do so. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Good Friday, March 30, 2018

Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; and they *began* to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps *in the face*. Pilate came out again and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. *Pilate* said to them, "Behold, the Man!" So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out *to be* the Son of God."



Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was *even* more afraid; and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has *the* greater sin." As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out *to be* a king opposes Caesar."

Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!" So they cried out, "Away with *Him*, away with *Him*, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified.

They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS." Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin *and* in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and *also* the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, *to decide* whose it shall

be”; *this was* to fulfill the Scripture: “They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.” Therefore the soldiers did these things.

But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the *wife* of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then He said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” From that hour the disciple took her into his own *household*.

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, “I am thirsty.” A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon *a branch of hyssop* and brought it up to His mouth. Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away. So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. ~ John 19:1-35

This is the saddest day of the year—remembering the most horrific event in human history. Jesus—the pure, holy, sinless, perfect Son of God, Second Person of the Trinity, the incarnate God—became sin on the cross for us. He drank the sour wine of evil and took on all the vileness and degradation and sin of the world. Then He said, “It is finished.” Sin was conquered. Death was conquered. We can now be sanctified and declared righteous because Jesus paid the price. He became sin so we could become righteous. So we call today—the saddest day of the year on which the most horrific event in human history occurred—Good Friday because on that day Jesus gave us the right to become children of God and the ability to be deemed righteous. All we have to do is to say “yes” to Him—to accept Him into our hearts as our Lord and Savior.

*Lord God, what Christ suffered for us! The love that led to this sacrifice is beyond human comprehension. Empower me by the Holy Spirit to live for You. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Holy Saturday, March 31, 2018

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

Joseph and Nicodemus, rich and powerful men who followed Jesus secretly for fear of losing their power, had enough courage to see that Jesus was buried properly in a tomb. Apparently their love for the Lord was stronger than their fear, and even when it seemed that everything was lost, they ensured that Jesus was lovingly prepared and buried. Is our love stronger than our fear of ridicule or whatever we think may come to us if we acknowledge Jesus?

*Lord God, I love Jesus more than I fear the opinions of men. Let me always stand for Him. In His holy name. Amen.*

## Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018

Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. And behold, a severe earthquake had



occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.”

And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me.” ~ Matthew 28:1-10

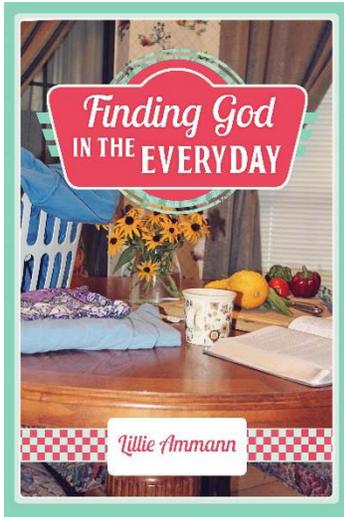
Jesus had told His followers that He would be killed and rise on the third day, but the concept was so foreign to them that they didn't expect it when it happened. We are no longer surprised and shocked by the resurrection, but may we never take it for granted!

*Lord God, I want to be as amazed and awed by the Resurrection as the disciples were. Never let me take for granted the amazing gift of eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**He is risen. He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

## ***Finding God in the Everyday***

by Lillie Ammann, author of *Forgive Us Our Trespasses*



We expect to find God in church and in our private devotions. But have you ever wondered where He is the rest of the time—especially when things go wrong? With humor and poignancy, author Lillie Ammann shares in these ninety devotionals how she finds God in the everyday experiences of her life.

*Finding God in the Everyday* is available in paperback and ebook formats through online stores or directly from the author.

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Lillie has written a refreshingly insightful book. This book is practical, inspiring, and highly readable. ~ Terry L. Sumerlin, Conference speaker

and author

Lillie Ammann shares stories from her life, showing great insight in how God has used these experiences to help her and others grow in their faith. This book will encourage everyone who reads it to look for God's hand in their daily lives. ~ Janet Kaderli, Christian author

I've been privileged to be Lillie Ammann's priest for 13 years. She's like an onion...lots of layers of wonderful experience, wit, humor, and talent. And God has used those layers in her devotional book. Read this and grow in Him Who is our Hope. ~ The Venerable Father CB "Chip" Harper++, Anglican Archdeacon Emeritus of San Antonio, Texas

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