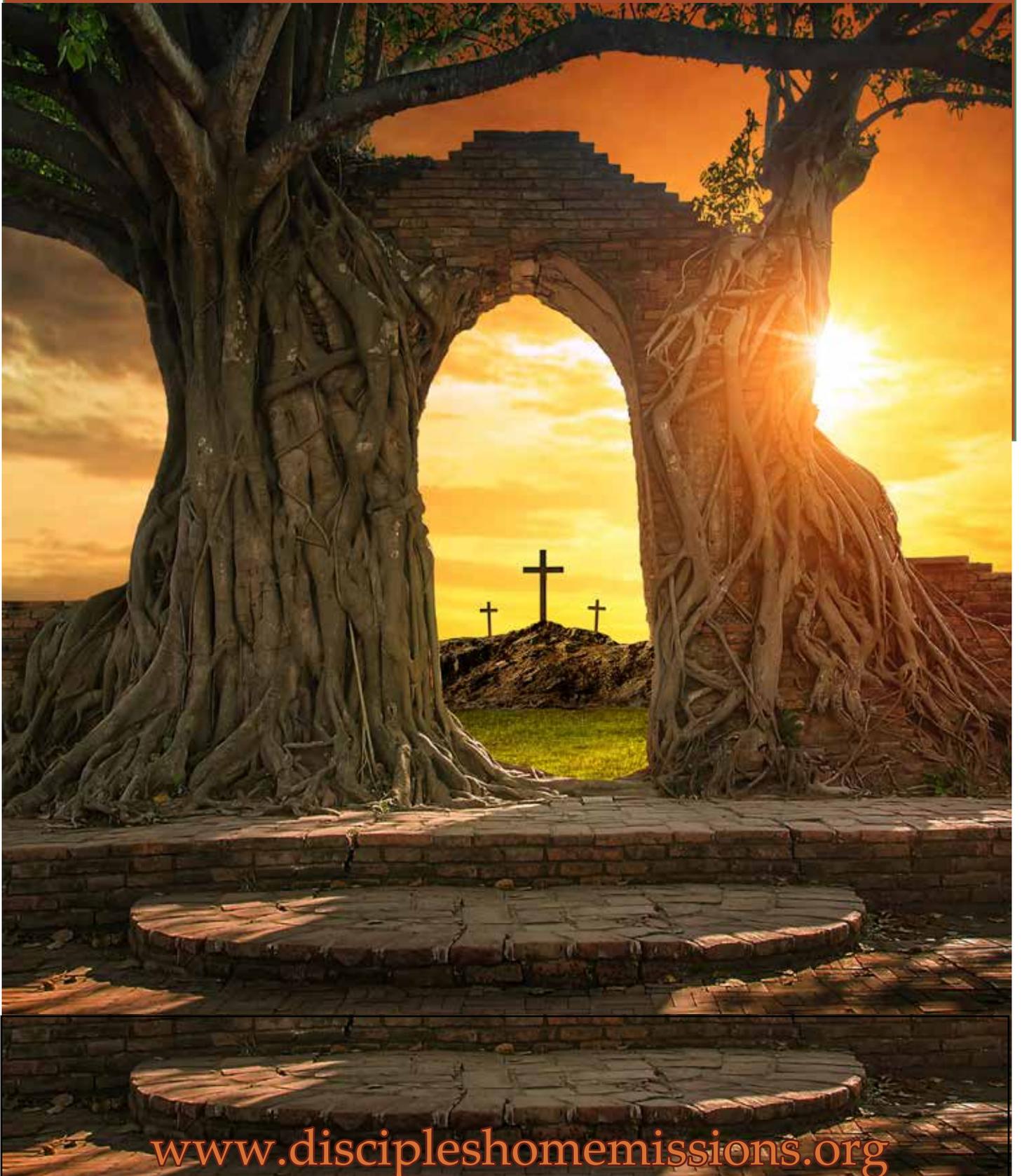


2019 Lent Resource



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Daily Readings for Lent 2019

Ash Wednesday, March 6 – Easter, April 21

Wednesday March 6, 2019 Ash Wednesday	Thursday March 7, 2019	Friday March 8, 2019	Saturday March 9, 2019
<i>Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12</i>	<i>Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16</i>	<i>Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16</i>	<i>Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16</i>
<i>Psalm 51:1-17</i>	<i>Exodus 5:10-23</i>	<i>Exodus 6:1-13</i>	<i>Ecclesiastes 3:1-8</i>
<i>2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10</i>	<i>Acts 7:30-34</i>	<i>Acts 7:35-42</i>	<i>John 12:27-36</i>
<i>Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21</i>			

Sunday March 10, 2019	Monday March 11, 2019	Tuesday March 12, 2019	Wednesday March 13, 2019	Thursday March 14, 2019	Friday March 15, 2019	Saturday March 16, 2019
<i>Deuteronomy 26:1-11</i>	<i>Psalm 17</i>	<i>Psalm 17</i>	<i>Psalm 17</i>	<i>Psalm 27</i>	<i>Psalm 27</i>	<i>Psalm 27</i>
<i>Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16</i>	<i>1 Chronicles 21:1-17</i>	<i>Zechariah 3:1-10</i>	<i>Job 1:1-22</i>	<i>Genesis 13:1-7, 14-18</i>	<i>Genesis 14:17-24</i>	<i>Psalm 118:26-29</i>
<i>Romans 10:8b-13</i>	<i>1 John 2:1-6</i>	<i>2 Peter 2:4-21</i>	<i>Luke 21:34-22:6</i>	<i>Philippians 3:2-12</i>	<i>Philippians 3:17-20</i>	<i>Matthew 23:37-39</i>
<i>Luke 4:1-13</i>						

Sunday March 17, 2019	Monday March 18, 2019	Tuesday March 19, 2019	Wednesday March 20, 2019	Thursday March 21, 2019	Friday March 22, 2019	Saturday March 23, 2019
<i>Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18</i>	<i>Psalm 105:1-42;</i>	<i>Psalm 105:1-42</i>	<i>Psalm 105:1-42</i>	<i>Psalm 63:1-8</i>	<i>Psalm 63:1-8</i>	<i>Psalm 63:1-8</i>
<i>Psalm 27</i>	<i>Exodus 33:1-6</i>	<i>Numbers 14:10b-24</i>	<i>2 Chronicles 20:1-22</i>	<i>Daniel 3:19-30</i>	<i>Daniel 12:1-4</i>	<i>Isaiah 5:1-7</i>
<i>Philippians 3:17-4:1</i>	<i>Romans 4:1-12</i>	<i>1 Corinthians 10:1-13</i>	<i>Luke 13:22-31</i>	<i>Revelation 2:8-11</i>	<i>Revelation 3:1-6</i>	<i>Luke 6:43-45</i>
<i>Luke 13:31-35 or Luke 9:28-36, (37-43a)</i>						

Sunday March 24, 2019	Monday March 25, 2019	Tuesday March 26, 2019	Wednesday March 27, 2019	Thursday March 28, 2019	Friday March 29, 2019	Saturday March 30, 2019
<i>Isaiah 55:1-9</i>	<i>Isaiah 7:10-14</i>	<i>Psalm 39</i>	<i>Psalm 39</i>	<i>Psalm 32</i>	<i>Psalm 32</i>	<i>Psalm 32</i>
<i>Psalm 63:1-8</i>	<i>Psalm 45 or Psalm 40:5-10</i>	<i>Ezekiel 17:1-10</i>	<i>Numbers 13:17-27</i>	<i>Joshua 4:1-13</i>	<i>Joshua 4:14-24</i>	<i>Exodus 32:7-14</i>
<i>1 Corinthians 10:1-13</i>	<i>Hebrews 10:4-10</i>	<i>Romans 2:12-16</i>	<i>Luke 13:18-21</i>	<i>2 Corinthians 4:16-5:5</i>	<i>2 Corinthians 5:6-15</i>	<i>Luke 15:1-10</i>
<i>Luke 13:1-9</i>	<i>Luke 1:26-38</i>					

Sunday March 31, 2019	Monday April 1, 2019	Tuesday April 2, 2019	Wednesday April 3, 2019	Thursday April 4, 2019	Friday April 5, 2019	Saturday April 6, 2019
<i>Joshua 5:9-12</i>	<i>Psalms 53</i>	<i>Psalms 53</i>	<i>Psalms 53</i>	<i>Psalms 126</i>	<i>Psalms 126</i>	<i>Psalms 126</i>
<i>Psalms 32</i>	<i>Leviticus 23:26-41</i>	<i>Leviticus 25:1-19</i>	<i>2 Kings 4:1-7</i>	<i>Isaiah 43:1-7</i>	<i>Isaiah 43:8-15</i>	<i>Exodus 12:21-27</i>
<i>2 Corinthians 5:16-21</i>	<i>Revelation 19:1-8</i>	<i>Revelation 19:9-10</i>	<i>Luke 9:10-17</i>	<i>Philippians 2:19-24</i>	<i>Philippians 2:25-3:1</i>	<i>John 11:45-57</i>
<i>Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32</i>						

Sunday April 7, 2019	Monday April 8, 2019	Tuesday April 9, 2019	Wednesday April 10, 2019	Thursday April 11, 2019	Friday April 12, 2019	Saturday April 13, 2019
<i>Isaiah 43:16-21</i>	<i>Psalms 20</i>	<i>Psalms 20;</i>	<i>Psalms 20</i>	<i>Psalms 31:9-16</i>	<i>Psalms 31:9-16</i>	<i>Psalms 31:9-16</i>
<i>Psalms 126</i>	<i>Exodus 40:1-15</i>	<i>Judges 9:7-15</i>	<i>Habakkuk 3:2-15</i>	<i>Isaiah 53:10-12</i>	<i>Isaiah 54:9-10</i>	<i>Leviticus 23:1-8;</i>
<i>Philippians 3:4b-14</i>	<i>Hebrews 10:19-25</i>	<i>1 John 2:18-28</i>	<i>Luke 18:31-34</i>	<i>Hebrews 2:1-9</i>	<i>Hebrews 2:10-18</i>	<i>Luke 22:1-13</i>
<i>John 12:1-8</i>						

Passion or Palm Sunday April 14, 2019	Monday April 15, 2019	Tuesday April 16, 2019	Wednesday April 17, 2019	Maundy Thursday April 18, 2019	Good Friday April 19, 2019	Holy Saturday April 20, 2019
<i>Psalms 118:1-2, 19-29</i>	<i>Isaiah 42:1-9</i>	<i>Isaiah 49:1-7</i>	<i>Isaiah 50:4-9a</i>	<i>Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14</i>	<i>Isaiah 52:13-53:12</i>	<i>Job 14:1-14 or Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24</i>
<i>Luke 19:28-40</i>	<i>Psalms 36:5-11</i>	<i>Psalms 71:1-14</i>	<i>Psalms 70</i>	<i>Psalms 116:1-2, 12-19</i>	<i>Psalms 22</i>	<i>Psalms 31:1-4, 15-16</i>
	<i>Hebrews 9:11-15</i>	<i>1 Corinthians 1:18-3</i>	<i>Hebrews 12:1-3</i>	<i>1 Corinthians 11:23-26</i>	<i>Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9</i>	<i>1 Peter 4:1-8</i>
	<i>John 12:1-11</i>	<i>1 John 12:20-36</i>	<i>John 13:21-32</i>	<i>John 13:1-17, 31b-35</i>	<i>John 18:1-19:42</i>	<i>Matthew 27:57-66 or John 19:38-42</i>

Easter Sunday April 21, 2019
<i>Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 65:17-25</i>
<i>Psalms 118:1-2, 14-24</i>
<i>1 Corinthians 15:19-26 or Acts 10:34-43</i>
<i>John 20:1-18 or Luke 24:1-12</i>

Daily Meditations

Wednesday March 6, 2019
Ash Wednesday

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near - a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them in ages to come.

Joel 2:1-2 NRSV



Preparation for Lent has always involved taking a long hard look at one's spiritual journey and preparing one's heart, mind, and spirit for the death and resurrection of Christ. I know this process well. What I have learned after many years of this process is that this always involves struggle, deep examination, and giving up something.

Some of us find it easy to give up something and deeply examine ourselves. Some of us find this difficult. Perhaps because it forces us to face some truths we have not faced before.

I never want to deal with the dark and gloomy thoughts

of the evils of the world. Here I am beginning to write this series of meditation late in the fall. The weather outside is cold and rainy. This passage of scripture paints a picture of doom and gloom, leaving little incentive and motivation for writing. What does one do when circumstances put a damper on things?

Prayer

Gracious God,

We petition you in prayer to walk with us on our journey throughout this season of Lent. Help us in our quest to be open to your leading.

Amen

Thursday, March 7, 2019

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust."

Psalm 91:1-2 – NRSV

Many parents have made assertions, in occasional conversations held with their children, concerning their expectations, "as long as you live under my roof." These pronouncements tend to focus on what is called forth in the performance and behavior of the children. Relating the demands to the fact that the child resides under the parent's roof declares a domain. We claim the right to make

conditions in our domains.

God has quite an expansive domain, which the psalmist describes as "the shelter of the 'Most High.'" Like earthly parents, God asserts authority and articulates expectations, but goes a bit further. We are told that we can expect something of the one in whose domain we reside. The psalm goes on to offer protection by angels and safety from lions and snakes. With God, expectations are reciprocated.

We are not unacquainted with providing for our children or others who may have occasion to spend time under our roofs. We would be well advised to think and to speak with as much clarity about what we will provide as we do regarding what we demand.

Prayer

Rapha God,

We celebrate the provision that we enjoy "under your roof." We realize that you have expectations for us, but they fall far short of what we can expect of you. Thank you, for doing the heavy lifting, in our relationship with you.

With Gratitude,

Amen

Friday, March 8, 2019

Because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent. For he will command his

angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot. Those who love me, I will deliver; I will protect those who know my name. When they call to me, I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honor them. With long life I will satisfy them and show them my salvation.

Psalm 91:9-16 NRSV

The word “promise” comes to mind as I read this passage of scripture. There are many promises made about God’s unfailing love and commitment to care for us especially during difficult times.

God has us covered through both huge catastrophes and small mundane things that seem unimportant. Why does God love us that much? What can we do or did we do to earn that much love?

According to the scriptures, those who take refuge in God, will receive this unfailing love. It is not always easy to love God when we face uncertain times. It is more difficult to face uncertainty when we fail to trust God. Nor is it easy, when we face many obstacles or adverse situations.

It is in those difficult times that we question God’s love. We wonder if God cares. Does God even know what is going on in our lives? We can scarcely be that important. God’s love does not waver. God will still love us through our questioning, and doubt.

Prayer

*Almighty and Loving God,
Hear our prayer. Guide us
Lord so that we may not
stumble.*

Amen

Saturday, March 9, 2019

*For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under
heaven...*

Ecclesiastes 3:1 – NRSV

People have long found comfort in the belief that God has provided the world with such comprehensive order that every possible thing has a designated time. We each have a time to be born and an assigned time to die. Our weeping and our laughter are conveniently set in proper order. Even seeking and losing things are scheduled. While some applaud the conviction that God has directed a time for each thought or action, some ask a practical question. “Why does it matter that God has set a timetable that we seldom conform to.”

Certainly, it could be difficult to be in conformity in the things that are beyond our control. None of us had a decision to make about the day of our birth. Our killing, planting, throwing away stones, and embracing are often either early or late. What is more important than whether we do things at the appointed time is the awareness that there is an appointed time.

We spend our lives in pursuit of effectiveness and excellence. This can only be done if there is some standard to ascribe to. God has set that standard.



Without dictating every action or thought, God has provided order for all of creation. This includes each of us.

Prayer

God of Order,

*Bless us to know that you
understand our struggles to
achieve your expectations. We
take heart in knowing that we
have our entire lives to work
toward your divine order.*

Through Christ,

Amen

Sunday, March 10, 2019

*If you try my heart, if you visit
me by night, if you test me, you
will find no wickedness in me; my
mouth does not transgress. As
for what others do, by the word of
your lips, I have avoided the ways
of the violent. My steps have held
fast to your paths; my feet have not
slipped.*

Psalm 17:3-5 NRSV

Growing up, my parents taught me to be thankful for acts of love. Saying thank you was a way to show that. As a child I learned that there were many ways of showing gratitude or thanks. Showing thanks included, giving back to others or sharing what I had with others.

God is always giving to us and protecting us. Saying

thanks and being faithful is a way of being grateful. God's promise is kept, simply out of love for us. God makes many promises to us.

We often call these promises "our inheritance." It is also known as our birthright.

After wandering for many years, the Israelites came into the land which God had promised them. When they came into the land, they possessed it. I can only imagine how grateful they were that they had finally found a home to settle in. How fitting it was to offer back to God the first fruits of the land.

This passage of scripture is often used by believers to encourage us to tithe back to God. We are encouraged to give with a grateful heart. The ability to give also should bring joy.

Prayer

Good and Faithful God,

Thank you for your continued love that assures us that you are always providing for us. Even when we feel uncomfortable with what we see, we can be assured that you are with us.

With Gratefulness,

Amen



Monday, March 11, 2019

My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.

1 John 2:1 NLT

The writer of 1 John 2 claims victory, while acknowledging defeat. Ambitiously, the writer offers that this writing is done to prevent sinning. Clearly this is a goal that no writing could ever achieve. What would you say? What persuasion could I offer? No passage of scripture has ever driven sin from the world, or even from one person. The entirety of scripture, as reliable as it is, has not cleansed a single believer of sin.

Knowing the limitations of speaking or writing, in the quest to eliminate sin, the writer articulates a back up plan. In the case of the inevitable, that being the continuing of sin, an advocate pleads the case for all the world. Although all of us sinners might appreciate a lenient God, we should not fool ourselves in this regard.

There is no indication that the advocate calls for the ignoring of sin. God has made clear throughout time that sin has consequences. Instead, the advocate can be expected to act in full awareness of our sinfulness and its cost. Christ advocates for us to be informed, strengthened, and caused to diligently resist sin. When we are fully responsive to the equipping that results from such advocacy, the advocate has proven the willingness to pay the price for our sins.

Prayer

Good and Faithful God,

Thank you for your continued love that assures us that you are always providing for us. Even when we feel uncomfortable with what we see, we can be assured that you are with us.

Through Christ,

Amen

Tuesday, March 12, 2019

Hear me, Lord, my plea is just; listen to my cry.

Psalms 17:1 NIV

When people speak about a concern they have, they want to know that others are listening and understand. However, many people feel that others are not actually listening or care about their concerns. "Please listen to what I have to say!" "Did you hear me speaking?" Although these requests sound like simple requests, they are not. It does not matter how many times a request is made, spoken, or demanded, people hear what they want to hear. They trivialize the concerns of others. This seems to happen more often when they lack respect for the person.

People do not just want to be heard, because their words are important. They are not just speaking words; they are conveying their personal feelings and values. Hearing is connected to understanding. Understanding is connected to relationship. When you are in a relationship with someone you listen to them with your heart, and that informs their ability to

understand. When we talk with God we can be assured that we are heard.

God hears even our faintest cry. Why, because God's love is unconditional. The Psalmist's plea is heard.

Prayer

Dear Lord,

We are heartened to be heard by you. You know what we experience, but sometimes, we need to voice it.

Amen

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives, and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the temple.

Luke 21:37-38 NIV

The word discipline has more than one meaning. Somehow, the meanings connect to each other. One understanding of discipline has to do with guidance and correction, particularly in child raising. Another describes an area of occupation or study. Jesus was able to engage both types by practicing a third form of discipline. He maintained a consistent pattern of intentional behavior, by going to a designated place to engage in spiritual discipline.

The text says that the people came each morning to hear what Jesus had to say. There is no mention of a "lesson plan" being distributed to indicate what would be addressed on a given day. It seems that Jesus, during the time on the hill, was able to prepare himself for the

next encounter.

Some mornings I am not ready for the people to come and hear me. Some of what I have to offer does not cause them to return. On such occasions, God has not failed to provide me with what I need. Instead, I have missed too many nights on the hill.

Prayer

Lord of the Mountaintop,

Help us to see mountaintop experiences as more than inspirational. Let us use our hills and mountains for preparation. Provide us also with the rest needed to be ready in the morning.

By Your Discipline,

Amen

Thursday, March 14, 2019

Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me! "Come," my heart says, "seek his face!" Your face, Lord, do I seek. Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. Do not cast me off, do not forsake me, O God of my salvation! If my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up.

Psalm 27:7-10 NRSV

I was watching television and began to laugh when I heard the name of a child for whom the mother was requesting a paternity test. I mentioned the name to a friend who said that she had heard worst. The child was named "Trouble." What kind of a name is that to be saddled with for life? Wow, perhaps that



mother needed to rest between giving birth and making that decision. The name sounded more like a label. People have strong biases against certain labels. Very likely the child's destiny, identity, and success in life will be limited by the name.

Having a name that negatively labels you can invite problems. When other people label us it often causes problems for us. For this reason, people will do whatever they need to do to get respect and to establish their names and their reputations.

It is good to know that God does not label us and does not listen to or care about what others think. God can see beyond what others see. We never have to earn God's love.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord for your unwavering love and understanding. Our identity is rooted in you.

Amen

Friday, March 15, 2019

The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people and keep the goods (spoils of battle) for yourself." But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand and sworn an oath to the

Lord God Most High, the Creator and Possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take anything that is yours, from a thread to a sandal strap, so you could not say, I (the King of Sodom) have made Abram rich."

Genesis 14:21-23 AMP

It is often said of Jesus that he "paid the price." Such sayings recognize the claim that Jesus willingly sacrificed himself for each of us. Our emphasis is often placed on his willingness as an act of non-resistant compliance to his calling. Another facet of willingness is awareness. Awareness can lead to favorable decisions and commitments and protect us from missteps.

We have all found ourselves on the wrong side of transactions in which we were found to be on the losing side. After the fact, we have become aware of better prices, jobs, or conditions. Some products or services have failed to meet our expectations, even if the "small print" is clear. Abram listened carefully, not only to the deceptive offer of the king of Sodom, but he anticipated an unspoken scenario.

The example of Abram teaches that we should carefully consider all known

possibilities, rather than eagerly assuming the most profitable outcome. This should guide us both in transactions and in relationships. In the alternative, we risk undesirable allegiances and unfruitful relationships.

Prayer

Equipping God,

Protect us from hasty decisions. Help us to "look behind the curtain," before committing our time, energy, or loyalty. Make clear to us that which is truly in our best interest and is faithful to you.

By Your Spirit,

Amen

Saturday, March 16, 2019

You are my God and I will praise you; you are my God and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

Psalms 118:28-29 NIV

As a Christian, I try very hard to do what is right. I also try to do things as well as I can. My results are often far from perfection. I disappoint myself and probably disappoint others.

A very good friend, who I know to be a faithful believer, often described a situation with the phrase "life got in my way." He said this when he was not successful in his efforts. He recognized that his failures were inevitable products of his human limitations. The events of his life and his responses produced results that sometimes

fell short of his expectations.

My friend did not put himself down as a failure because he knew that God knew his heart. God knows when you have given your best. God also knows when you have not.

Prayer

Divine Lord,

When we faithfully give our all, you honor our efforts. We are forever dependent on your divinity. Thank you, for your redemption.

By Your Power,

Amen

Sunday, March 17, 2019

Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not."

Luke 9:38-40 NRSV

We take pride in being Disciples of Christ, whether in upper case or lower case. We claim many privileges that flow from this identity. We expect healing, forgiveness, empowerment, inspiration, and salvation. These expectations are not idle supposition. They are representative of the many promises that God has made. We can count on those promises.

In this text, the disciples of Jesus were called upon to participate in fulfilling God's promises. The man who approached Jesus was surprised to find his disciples unable to



cast the demon out of his son. Jesus, too, was alarmed that they were ill prepared for the moment of need. He knew that he had taught them. He knew that the power to act was at their disposal. This proved to be one of many occasions that found the disciples earning chastisement from Jesus; "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you."

How often does Jesus have to scold me? How prepared are you to share in delivering the promises of God to the people of God? We accept the benefits of discipleship. When will God be able to depend on our faithful performance?

Prayer

Holy God,

We are honored to be included in your saving works. Continue to equip us, then hold us accountable for our part in kingdom building. May people everywhere know that help and deliverance are available from Jesus and his disciples.

In Jesus' Name

Amen

Monday, March 18, 2019

They asked and he brought them quail: He fed them well with the bread of Heaven. He broke the rock; It flowed like a river in the desert. For he remembered his Holy Promise given to his servant Abraham.

Psalm 105:40-42 NIV

Each of us knows someone whose faith is remarkable, by

comparison to others. These people often demonstrate their faith by the things that they say or do. They seemingly make no extreme effort to be so faithful. Faithfulness seems to come naturally to such believers. It does.

Scripture records many references to the faith of Abraham. Without fanfare, he trusted God's calling and responded accordingly. This was so, even when God called upon him to leave a home of comfort and security. He obediently set out toward an unknown destination, trusting God to show him the way.

Trusting God goes a long way in providing for our faithfulness. It proves to be a lot easier for us to be faithful when we believe that God is faithful. Our faithfulness flows naturally, as a response to a faithful God.

Prayer

God Our Source,

Instill in us the awareness of your faithfulness and the wisdom to trust you. Let our faithfulness be a response to your faithfulness.

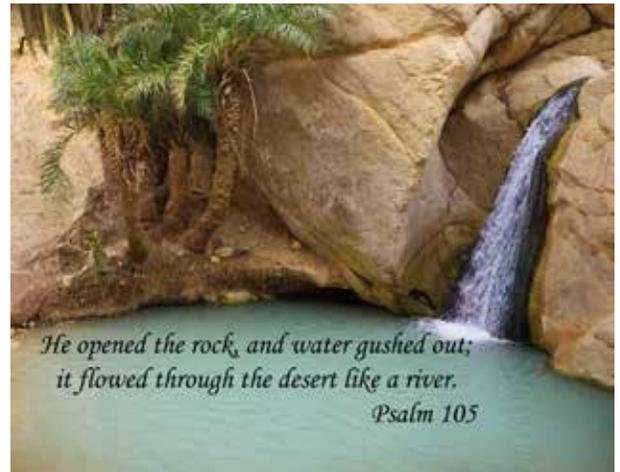
Gratefully,

Amen

Tuesday, March 19, 2019

He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed through the desert like a river. For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham, his servant.

Psalm 105:41-42



He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed through the desert like a river. Psalm 105

"I would do anything for you." This is a promise that many of us have made to someone that we love (or claim to love). Rather than trying to list the things that we would do for our loved one, we make this blanket statement. Seldom, does anyone's actual performance compare reasonably to this elaborate commitment. When challenged by real life situations, even keeping a lunch appointment seems too much to ask of us.

God has made promises that are as ambitious as ours, then exceeds our expectations in the keeping of the promises. We are faithful to the point of fatigue or distraction. God is faithful, PERIOD. If we claim to be willing to run through walls for someone, it is figurative. God will run through the wall or tear it down. The miracles of God are not meaningless displays of capacity. Instead, they are instances of God doing whatever it takes to keep promises or meet needs.

We live with the awareness that Jesus loves us enough to keep promises, even if it takes unimaginable actions to do so. A river flowing from a rock is just the beginning. Before he was finished, Jesus found it

necessary to conquer death, in order to be eternally available to us. He keeps his promises, no matter what.

Prayer

Faithful Lord,

Because you keep your promises, we are never without recourse. You have a response to anything that we encounter. Teach us to be more willing to extend ourselves, as we keep promises made to one another and to you.

With Promise,

Amen

Wednesday, March 20, 2019

Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside begging and pleading. Sir open the door for us." But he will answer, "I do not know you or where you come from." Then you will say, you ate and drank with us and taught us in our streets." But he will reply, "I do not know you or where you came from, away from me you evildoer." There will be weeping there and gnashing of the teeth especially when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets of God inside, and you yourselves thrown out.

Luke 13:25-28 NIV



As I read this passage, I was reminded of how people will sometimes want to flock together and join the crowds who move from one popular church to another. They seem to believe the advertising cliché which often claims that 1,000 (or whatever number) people can not be wrong. Even if the people that you follow are making good choices for themselves, it might not be best for you.

There is a cost to always following the crowd. We should be seeking to develop a personal relationship with Jesus. That relationship is unlike anyone else's relationship. It is based on who you are and who God calls you to be. Your strengths and shortcomings are factored in. You can never follow someone else and get to you.

Unfortunately, many people just fail to get it. Our faith should not be based on what is popular. It must be based on your uniqueness and God's unique call for you.

Prayer

God of My Calling,

Help me Lord in my quest to seek an authentic relationship with you as the Alfa and Omega. Make of me someone unlike any other person. Derive from me service that is uniquely me.

In Hope,

Amen

Thursday, March 21, 2019

So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other

clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Daniel 3:22 NIV

It is not uncommon for a parent to say to a child, "this is going to hurt me more than you." Not many children have ever affirmed this to have proven true. The words, spoken in love, attest to the parent's experience of sharing in any pain that the child feels. Even if the child does not believe it, the parent is often more impacted by the circumstances that lead to this occasion and by whatever actions they are deeming regrettable.

The premise of the parent's declaration is that love is the basis for their actions and their resultant feelings. They do what seems necessary, but not without regret. Love is a sufficiently strong motivator to endure pain. In the case of the text, rage is the motivator. Though the king survives, soldiers loyal to the king are lost, as a result of the king's rage. It is frightening to know that some people can be as furious or hateful as we can be loving.

God's authority reaches into every situation. Where love prevails, God empowers the love. Where hatred is the driving force, God overcomes it. We are safe in the hands of a God who can preserve us regardless of the intentions of those who we are exposed to. Love is victorious and rules the day.

Prayer

God of Love,

Encircle us in your embrace. Provide for us when others seek to do us harm. Let the love that you feel for us secure us, even when our situations cause you pain.

In Christ,

Amen

Friday, March 22, 2019

You God are my God, earnestly I seek you; my whole being thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.

Psalm 63:1

Many of us know the feeling of being thirsty. When that feeling comes, we find that every move we make is toward getting our thirst met. It is also at these times that we become keenly aware of the value of fresh water. We may try different types of drinks, but we are not satisfied. We often find that there is no soft drink or fancy coffee that will quench our thirst like water.

Just like when we seek water for our thirstiness, we sometimes find ourselves seeking material things. Often, we seek to satisfy a hunger for an urge that has not become clear to us. When we obtain what we think we want, we often realize that it does not provide us with the satisfaction we thought it would provide. Then, the search is on again.

When we truly seek a relationship with Christ, we find that it is not as difficult as we think. However, many of

us look in wrong places. Lent gives us time to seek and reflect in ways that more fully open us to the unselfish love of Christ. The promise is that when you seek with your whole heart you will find a Savior that is willing to give everything for you, even life itself.

Prayer

Most Gracious and Forgiving Lord,

Remind us that when we seek you, in earnest, we will find you. Your arms are wide open and ready to receive us.

Amen

Saturday, March 23, 2019

O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

Psalm 63: 1-2 KJV

The psalmist compares the desire that we have for God to thirst. In so doing, the desire becomes something more than affection or an expression of preference. I have friends that I would rather spend time with than others, but this preference is not a physical, spiritual, or emotional requirement. Thirst is the urge to meet an actual bodily requirement. The failure to satisfy thirst leads to death.

The thirst in this psalm is heightened by being

where there is no source of satisfaction. The dry and thirsty land is either a desert or an area experiencing a drought. Our spiritual thirst is acutely exacerbated by corresponding spiritual drought. We may not recognize it but such thirst signals an emergency state.

The solution is announced as present in the sanctuary. We should look beyond the space that we call the sanctuary, to the condition that is sanctuary; the presence of God.

Prayer

Jehovah Jireh,

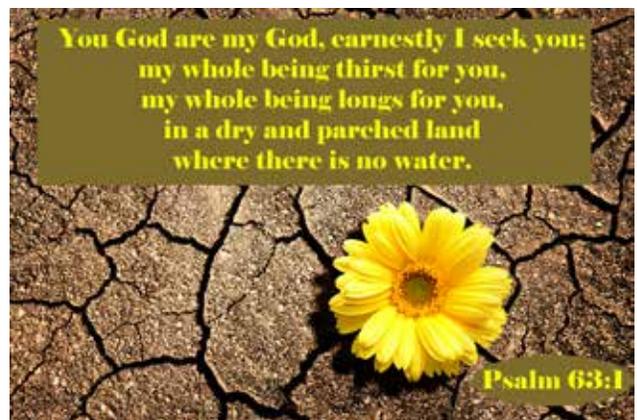
Provide us with all that our spirits and our bodies need. We are thirsty sometimes, because we have not partaken even when you were providing. Lead us to the still spiritual waters that will nourish our souls.

In Urgency,

Amen

Sunday, March 24, 2019

On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover. The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened



bread and roasted grain. The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate the produce of Canaan.

Joshua 5:10-12 NIV

The words "God will provide" or similar words are familiar to us all. I have often heard such words spoken among those of us who are believers. In this passage the Israelites had celebrated the Passover. With many celebrations, food and drink were present and plentiful. On this occasion, the food eaten was "manna." Manna, was a food from the land, that had been miraculously provided by God. This food was provided to sustain them when there was nothing else available.

The Israelites were wandering and had no way of producing food for themselves. When the time came that they could support themselves, God cut off the supply of manna.

God provides for all our needs, whether they are physical, physiological, emotional, or spiritual. God lovingly provides even when we do not know that we need it. God not only knows what we need, but when we need it.



Prayer

When we face challenges, help us Lord to remember that you will provide what we need, when we need it. Provide for us Lord God, that claim assurance of your love.

Amen

Monday, March 25, 2019

You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things.

Romans 2:1 NLT

This scripture and others like it call our attention to the risk we face, when it comes to bringing ourselves in the way of the judgement and assessment of others. The problem is that we seem to think that we CAN stand up to the scrutiny. Too many of us believe that we can be holy enough, smart enough, rich enough, or lucky enough to make it through. With that being the case, the warning of the text does not benefit us, as it is intended to.

There may also be an issue with the implied reason for judging or not judging. If we avoid judging for fear that we will not survive comparative judgement, we may believe ourselves to be authorized judges, based upon our generous self-assessments.

We should not judge because that job is taken. Our task is to live the best lives we can, and then submit ourselves to God's judgement.

Prayer

Divine Judge,

Examine each of us and render your judgement. We ask first for fairness, but ultimately, we know that we are dependent upon your mercy. Please grant us your generous favor.

In Humble Submission,

Amen

Tuesday, March 26, 2019

I said, "I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth while in the presence of the wicked." So I remained utterly silent, not even saying anything good. But my anguish increased; my heart grew hot within me. While I meditated, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue.

Psalm 39 1-3 NIV

As Christians we have always been told to watch what you say and to not speak in anger or use foul language. This behavior is not fitting to who we are. Christians do not do that, say that, or act ugly like that. God does not like ugly!

We are told what not to do, but sometimes, no one told us what to do or how to manage our anger or hurt. When we hold on to anger and hurt it festers and burns within us. That anger feels like a fire that burns within us. We are either consumed or the pressure builds to the point of combustion. We have failed ourselves, other believers, and sadly, God.

Praying and finding ways

to express our concerns to others before we reach the boiling point is important. Talking about it with a minister or trusted friend, who is also a believer, can be helpful. Thinking through appropriate responses and practice can also be helpful. Reflecting is something we can do during our personal or group study.

Lent is the perfect time for us to examine ourselves and to ask for forgiveness. We are not perfect, but we need to be perfectly willing to allow our lives to be shaped and guided by Jesus.

Prayer

Good and Perfect Lord,

You have called us to follow you and walk in your way. Guide us Lord, to walk humbly in the light of your perfect way.

Through Your Blessings,

Amen

Wednesday, March 27, 2019

Then Jesus asked, "What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds perched in its branches." Again he asked, "What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough."

Luke 13: 18-21 NIV

The text contains two comparatives which are presented to envision the kingdom of God. The first is a mustard seed. This tiny seed



grows to be a mighty tree. Having been at risk of being eaten by birds when planted, the tree grows and becomes the home of many birds. The second comparative is to a presumably small amount of yeast which is mixed into sixty pounds of flour. The resulting dough is fully permeated by the yeast.

Both examples are characterized by small beginnings. It is encouraging to know that even access to God's kingdom is not beyond reach for those who may have started small or found themselves falling behind the crowd at some point.

Both parables also make clear the unlimited potential vested in each of us. In the kingdom, we can make a difference, whether in housing many others or in impacting entire communities.

Prayer

Abundant God,

Use each of us to reach many others and to provide great benefit to our surroundings.

By Your Strength,

Amen

Thursday, March 28, 2019

I will instruct and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.

Psalm 32:8 NIV

When I was young, my parents always warned me about being sneaky. My friends and I acted differently when we thought no one could see us. I was a child, and I thought I could get away with something. Somehow, they would find out, or someone told on me. How they or some other adult found out, I will never know.

When I turned my life over to Christ, I was expected to do the right thing. There is no hope that I can hide my actions from God. God sees you no matter where you are or what you are doing. Sometimes these words were comforting, and at other times, these words were frightening.

As adults, we do not have someone looking over our shoulders telling us what to do and what not to. We are expected to discipline ourselves. As Christians, we are expected to humble ourselves and walk in the disciplined way that Christ modeled for us.

Prayer

Dear Lord,

Your word is my guiding light. Help me to allow it to guide me in my walk, my talk, and my thoughts.

In Obedience,

Amen

Friday, March 29, 2019

So, we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 NKJV

This is a text that is often quoted at funerals. It is presented in ways that imply or clearly state a desire to join God in heaven, rather than to continue to negotiate life on earth. It is not possible to deny that there are some who would embrace this preference. It seems that most people are inclined to live on earth for as long as possible.

The meaning of the writer seems more intent on contrasting our physiological selves with our spiritual selves. The body is the physical self which is said to be absent from the Lord. This absence is neither physical nor chronological. It stands in contrast with a higher identity that is rooted in God.

Presence with the Lord does not require us to physically die. It calls for us to embrace and



live an identity that is defined by our relationship with God. We get to be present with God, while still playing with our grandchildren.

Prayer

God of Presence,

Walk with us throughout our lives, first on earth and later in your kingdom. We desire to be constantly present with you, even here and now.

By Your Grace,

Amen

Saturday, March 30, 2019

Then Jesus told them this parable. "Suppose one of you has one hundred sheep and loses one of them, doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says: "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep."

Luke 15:3-6 NIV

In most renderings of this passage of scripture, you hear how lovingly the shepherd cares of his sheep. The shepherd takes on the task of finding that one lost sheep, as we get a better understanding of how important the one lost sheep is to the shepherd. What if we looked at this passage from the perspective of the lost sheep?

Being lost is a very frightening experience. The lost sheep was probably like a child who gets separated from his or her parent at a store. Those few minutes probably felt like hours. The second it is

realized that he or she may be lost, can be quite terrifying. Out of desperation the child calls out and listens intently for a familiar voice to respond. The expression on the child's face and their frantic movements convey the pain.

I can only imagine that the sheep go through a similar experience. The moment the child or the sheep gets a familiar response, or even a touch, changes everything. If only the child or the sheep could know the depth of the love extended to them in that moment of reconnection. As God's sheep, we are grateful, though we can never understand.

To know that someone loves you that much has a deeper impact than one can imagine. We thrive on those connections. We need to know that someone cares about us and that we are loved.

Prayer

As we go through this season of Lent, we are reminded that our Savior loves us beyond measure.

Amen

Sunday, March 31, 2019

The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

Joshua 5:12 NRSV

There is a difference between first aid and ongoing medical care. Those who administer first aid should be clearly aware that the choices that they make are specific responses in the moment. They provide the best

intervention for the moment in time. When the urgency has subsided, ongoing care is able to focus more effectively on what is best for the long-term health of the patient.

God is faithful to distinguish between the urgent need for first aid and the optimal continuing care. When we are at risk of starvation, manna may be a good solution. In the comfort of our homes, God does not want us to treat daily life with habitual urgency. The manna is taken away. It is time to function normally and cook dinner.

Every area of our lives has some figurative manna to dispense with. God remains fully willing to provide emergency care whenever there is an emergency. God calls upon us to grow beyond the urgency of these temporary situations. We are created to be effective in an ongoing way. Cancel the order for a "Manna Cookbook."

Prayer

Timely God,

You are present whenever we need you and however we need you. Bless us to discern the urgency of the moment. Bless us also, to realize when the urgency has subsided.

In Your Time,

Amen

Monday, April 1, 2019

Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion. When God restores his people, let Jacob rejoice, and Israel be glad!

Psalms 53:6

Sometimes we are faced with situations that we may deem as hopeless. In that hopelessness, we feel like a heavy dark cloud is hanging over us. However we feel, we don't think we can do anything to change the situation. We feel helpless.

It is in those darkest times of our lives that God does his best work! The only thing we need to do is to be faithful and step back so God can work. God doesn't need us to get in the way by making our own plans to get rid of our pain.

God is perfectly willing to restore us and bless us. The blessing and restoration will come at the appointed time. Then we should rejoice and be glad. We should give thanks and praise to God.

Abiding Lord,

We thank you for the unconditional love afforded to us. Help us to be patient and open to your will. We shall continue to give thanks, praise, and honor to you.

In Christ,

Amen

Tuesday, April 2, 2019

Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

Revelation 19:9 NIV

One thing about wedding feasts is that they are a lot of fun. We can count on a meal that is more elaborate than our everyday fare. People are dressed up and intent on having a good time. The bride and groom put on a show,

throughout the occasion, kissing each other whenever they hear tinkling glasses. It seems that smiles are permanently affixed to every face.

Wedding feasts are also expensive. No matter how small the circle of friends that the bride and groom have, the list of invited guests must be pared repeatedly. Even the most distant friend or relative seems to expect an invitation. They all want to share in the revelry of the day.

The wedding supper of the Lamb would seem to be one for which invitations are hard to come by. Gladly, our God has made provisions for a big turnout. Blessed are those invited to this feast. You and I are invited.

God of Hospitality,

We appreciate the invitation to spend some time in your company. We do not take this welcome for granted. We will come, prepared to spend eternity with you.

With Joy,

Amen

Wednesday, April 3, 2019



Late in the afternoon, the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go

to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging because we are in a remote place here." He replied, "You give them something to eat."

Luke 9:12-13 NIV

When the disciples assessed the realities of the large crowd that Jesus was preaching to, they exercised reasonable judgement. Based upon their limitations, they sought to send the crowd to places where their needs could be more effectively met. They recommended an orderly dismissal, to allow for securing food and lodging. They were about to witness the awesome power of Jesus.

This would be a miracle that they could not have ever imagined or comprehended. They observed Jesus take what little they had, (which was only five loaves of bread and two fish) and feed over five thousand people.

Each week, teachers and providers demonstrate what Jesus called upon the disciples to do. They are aware of budget shortfalls which limit how much can be put on each plate. Various formulas determine how many plates can be prepared. Jesus would have us to learn from these devoted workers who look beyond reason and meet needs.

Loving Lord,

We are grateful for all the ways you feed us and care for us. Inspire us to be committed to do what we must, in the feeding of your flock.

In Your Spirit,

Amen

Thursday, April 4, 2019

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned...

Isaiah 43:2 NRSV

Sometimes being present is of little consequence. We often hear news reports of some tragic event which was witnessed by people who did nothing but witness the event. First aid was not administered. Attackers were not engaged, even when the observers greatly outnumbered them. Witnesses are willing to see the story but too often refuse to join the story.

In the text, God is said to walk with us through perilous waters. Not only that, God affects us and the rivers that we encounter. The fire that we face, with God by our side, does not prevail over us. God is more than an eyewitness. God lays hands on our situations. Presence may fall short of affecting our outcomes, but God is more than present. God is present and accounted for. We can count the blessings that come because God is both present and acting in our behalf.



Effectual Lord,

We are grateful for all that you do for us. You regularly chase the wolf away from our doors. Still, we are pleased to merely know that you are by our sides.

Comforted by You,

Amen

Friday, April 5, 2019

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy."

Psalms 126:1-3 (NIV)

How frustrating it must be to have a talent and find yourself unable (for various reasons) to use that talent to honor God. It is also frustrating to have something that you value devalued or put down by others.

Mary had a beautiful voice and sang in the choir. It took a long time for her to join the choir, because of her work schedule. Some of the choir members including the director practically accused her of being unfaithful because of this. Being a single mother, she needed her job and the benefits it provided. After her probation on the job was over, she had more control over her schedule.

Even with more control, there were still times when she had to change her schedule and miss rehearsal. Finally, she gave up, as she grew tired of trying to negotiate with the director and members of the choir. She found a community gospel

choir that she joined. When they heard her voice, she quickly was called on to do song leads and solos.

The community choir was often called upon to provide music for events. Many church congregations called on them for special occasions. Mary was pleased that she had opportunity to utilize her talent to praise her God. When word of her talent got back to her church choir, they attempted to coax her to join them by making her feel guilty. They became angry with her for not joining them. Mary did not appreciate how judgmental her home church choir members were being. She prayed fervently to God about what to do. She was very conflicted, often finding herself in tears. Their judgment was very harsh.

As Mary prayed to God, she was led to weigh her options. She decided to stay with the community gospel choir. She was very happy serving with them — her goals to serve were met with the community gospel choir. She eventually offered to sing with her home church choir on special occasions. The church choir finally accepted her, and their harsh judgment stopped.

Thank you God, for keeping us and helping us make right decisions when we want to serve you. Help us to remember not to let other people make decisions for us, especially when it comes to serving you. Give us the courage and strength to remember who we are, even when others treat us badly.

Amen

Saturday, April 6, 2019

Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. They were looking for Jesus and were asking one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? Surely he will not come to the festival, will he?" Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who knew where Jesus was should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

John 11:55-57 NRSV

Most of us have been unexpectedly "stood up" on some occasion. Sometimes the intended dinner date offers elaborate explanations of why they failed to show. Sometimes they simply disappear, never to be heard from again. Every now and then, the reason for not showing is believable. Some truly unavoidable crisis has redirected the original plan.

Jesus could have cancelled the Passover feast. Who would refuse a request to reschedule if there were assassins involved? He could have cancelled and gone on to live a normal life.

Jesus never sought a normal life. The threat that he faced was a threat that was in his original job description. He came to demonstrate, in large things and in small ones, that God keeps promises, even dinner dates.

God of Faithfulness,

Because you show up, we can boldly encounter life and its challenges. Your faithfulness serves as an example of how we too can be promise keepers.

By Your Truth,

Amen

Sunday, April 7, 2019

Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses in the Negeb.

May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

Psalms 126: 4-6 NRSV

You will reap what you sow. That proverb has been shared with countless generations over time. It is used to motivate and direct us. Certainly, scripture has no reason to contradict such wisdom. Neither God nor God's psalmist are redirecting us to a less motivated approach to life.

The psalmist speaks from an awareness that most of us have had or will have. That realization is that our seed bags are sometimes insufficient for challenges that we face. We are motivated and work diligently,



but we find ourselves unable to get it done. The prayerful hope is that God will take up the slack.

The ministry of Jesus was consistently about taking up the slack. He fed us when we were out of food. He healed us when our health failed. He stood up to those who would judge or harm us. It should come as no surprise that the psalmist called upon God for reinforcement, nor should we be surprised that Jesus answered.

God Our Help,

We thank you for standing in the gaps of our lives. We often fail to summon our best efforts. Even when we do, our best is not always enough. Your best is.

By Your Power,

Amen

Monday, April 8, 2019

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.

Hebrews 10: 23-24 KJV

If the word “provoke” was commonly used as the writer of Hebrews uses it people would have little objection to being provoked. Seldom would anyone complain that we were being provoked to love and good works. The sad truth is that people do complain about exactly that.

We have been called to live and proclaim the Gospel message. The Gospel is rooted in the celebration of God’s love by loving and treating

each other well. Such treatment can readily be understood to be “good works.” Why do we meet with such resistance, as we seek to provoke one another for the better?

Something about our testimony or our actions does not invite love or good works. We need to find out what is missing from our testimony. If we can figure it out and authentically extend the love of God, it may be the provocation is not needed.

God of Love,

We desire to share your love. Let our words and our actions prove to be irresistible indicators of what we have received from you, and now offer to others.

In Christ,

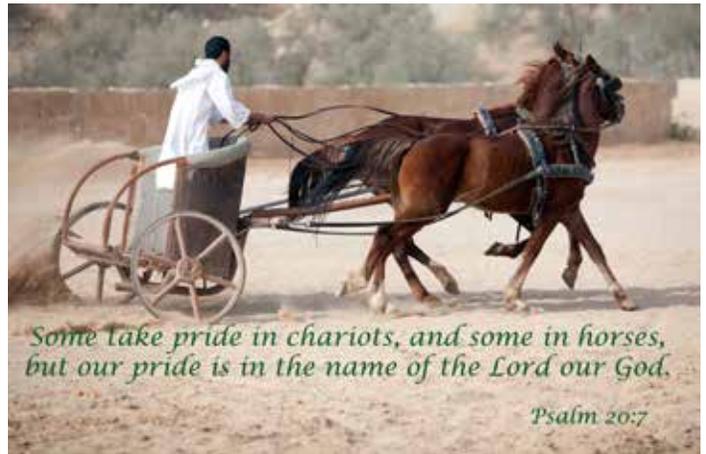
Amen

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

Now I know that the Lord will help his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with mighty victories by his right hand. Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the Lord our God. They will collapse and fall, but we shall rise and stand upright.

Psalm 20:6-8 NRSV

In Biblical time it was common for the troops to be led into battle by first petitioning God, in prayer, for victory. God would not let



Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the Lord our God.

Psalm 20:7

them be defeated. He would uphold and protect them. Their trust was in an almighty God who lovingly protected them. Unfortunately, the concern was that their defeat would mean that God did not find favor in them.

Some would go into battle taking pride in their instruments of war (their chariots, horses, the number of men they had, etc.). They trusted in their possessions. They were often shortsighted and unwitting believed that they could win their battles with their own power.

Although most of us in today’s world do not face battles of this magnitude, we still call upon God in prayer for success in our (personal) battles. We cry out to God and wait for a response. Unfortunately, if we do not meet with success in our private battles, we think it means that we did not have enough faith. Sometimes we may think it means we have sinned and that we are being punished.

Dear Lord,

Help us to keep our faith strong. Help us to remember that you love us unconditionally and will continue to care for us no matter what.

With Trust,

Amen

Wednesday, April 10, 2019

Were you angry with the rivers, Lord? Was your wrath against the streams? Did you rage against the sea when you rode your horses and your chariots to victory? You uncovered your bow, you called for many arrows. You split the earth with rivers; the mountains saw you and writhed. Torrents of water swept by; the deep roared and lifted its waves on high.

Habakkuk 3:8-10 NIV

We are accustomed to speaking of God's love when we are being politely liturgical. Love is a good backdrop for worship or songs. Christian counseling makes good use of love, as a way of supporting persons or promising that things are going to be alright. Love works well, when things are going well.

When we feel victimized or mistreated, we often put the idea of love on the shelf. We still describe God as a companion and advocate, but with a bit of edge. We summon the "wrath" of God. God's love may be lurking in the background, but as a motivation for visiting pain and destruction on those who have offended us. In our belief that God is as tempestuous as we are, we imagine God to be

driven by anger and rage.

Certainly, God experiences pain and disappointment. We have betrayed God. We have disobeyed God. We are guilty of harming God's creation in multiple ways. Still, God is not controlled by emotions, except for one; love drives God to do what is godly and good for creation.

God of Love,

We praise you for being aware of, but not driven by, our shortcomings. We have done plenty to call forth your wrath. In all things, you continue to model and live out divine love. For this, we give you thanks. – In Jesus,

Amen

Thursday, April 11, 2019

I have passed out of mind like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel. For I hear the whispering of many terror is all around! as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life. But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors. Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.

Psalms 31:12-16 NRSV

Fear is only a four-letter word, but it has enormous impact. It packs an accurate one-two punch that knocks you cold. Athletes, especially boxers, train daily. They condition themselves to be able to take those punches they know they will receive in the ring. They even study their opponents. They know



their opponent's strengths and weaknesses. Daily training is the usual regimen of great athletes. They practice daily to be at their best when they step into the ring.

Just like athletes, we who call ourselves believers must practice and condition ourselves to do our best. We step into the ring (the world) every day. The world out there can sometimes be cruel and more than we can handle. Therefore, we as believers, must study and meditate on God's word daily. It is part of our training and conditioning.

Gracious God,

Your word is a guiding light unto my feet. Help me, Lord, to wait patiently on your leading.

Amen.

Friday, April 12, 2019

It makes good sense that the God who got everything started and keeps everything going now completes the work by making the Salvation Pioneer perfect through suffering as he leads all these people to glory. Since the One who saves and those who are saved have a common origin, Jesus doesn't hesitate to treat them as family, saying, I'll tell my good

friends, my brothers and sisters, all I know about you; I'll join them in worship and praise to you. Again, he puts himself in the same family circle when he says, Even I live by placing my trust in God. And yet again, I'm here with the children God gave me.

Hebrews 2:10-13 The Message

As championship teams are built in any sport, the players and their fans build reputations. Statisticians document every superlative that describes the performance of the teams. As much as we celebrate most home runs, consecutive free throws, or the number of touchdowns, we are acutely aware of how long a team and its fans waited to win a championship.

The suffering of sport fans, as they watch their team on cable or sit in reserved seats, can not be compared to the suffering of Jesus. Still, it can help us to have some understanding and appreciation of how shared suffering can bind us to one another. For this reason, Jesus chooses to regard, as brothers and sisters, those who have identified with the suffering that he endured for our good.

Brother Jesus,

We thank you for securing our victories, even when we deserted you.

Triumphantly,

Amen

Saturday, April 13, 2019

Now the festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was near. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put Jesus[a] to death, for they were afraid of the people. Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve; he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers of the temple police about how he might betray him to them. They were greatly pleased and agreed to give him money. So, he consented and began to look for an opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd was present.

Luke 22:1-6 NRSV

Evil and wrongdoing take no holiday. Even though it was Passover, an important Jewish traditional festival, the chief priests and scribes continued with their plot to kill Jesus. It did not take long for them to find someone to help them with carrying out their evil, destructive plans.

Judas wasted no time in presenting himself to those who wanted to kill Jesus. He had previously proven himself to be one of questionable character. His greed for money was suspected to be valued over being one of the twelve. Greed took him to the place of valuing money over life. He was willing to do almost anything to gain more money.

Many of us stand in judgement of Judas. Who among us knows for sure that we could not be bought? Forty pieces of silver may not sound like much, but the price is not what is important. We want to believe that we are with Jesus, no matter what.

Loving God,

We give thanks to you for breath and life. We give thanks for your unfailing love.

Eternally,

Amen

Sunday, April 14, 2019
Palm Sunday



When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' Just say this: 'The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord needs it."

Luke 19:29-31 NRSV

The idea of asking for "gift receipts" may have come from Jesus. From being the recipient of fragrances and jewelry at his birth to being the subject of an impromptu parade in his last days, Jesus often received gifts that were wrong sized or ill shaped. We are too fond of

giving Jesus what we want to give.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, it was essential that we get it right. Jesus gave clear instructions throughout the week that we call "Holy Week." He described the animal that he would ride into the city. He sent disciples to secure the upper room. He directed his disciples to follow his examples of prayer and humility, even washing their feet.

Jesus still acts with awareness of the importance of each day. He still gives clear direction.

Guiding Lord,

Make clear what you want us to do and what you would have us to discontinue.

By Your Direction,

Amen

Monday, April 15, 2019

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice; or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth, and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

Isaiah 42:1 NRSV

True servants of God, do not worry about having what they need to successfully do the will of God. They know that God is with them and will provide what is needed. Advocating and serving those who have needs

is welcomed within the Christian community.

The poor and needy are often without voice. They are taken advantage of by those who prey upon others.

These predators are more concerned with meeting their own personal needs. They only pretend to be helpful to others. Problems only get worse when they are involved.

Those in need are often unable to afford decent housing. They make uneasy choices between food and health care. They need advocates. People in positions of authority and recognition are in the best position to speak for them. God takes delight with those who tirelessly work for justice.

Loving God,

Send us advocates when we need advocacy. Send us when others need advocacy. Let us secure each other.

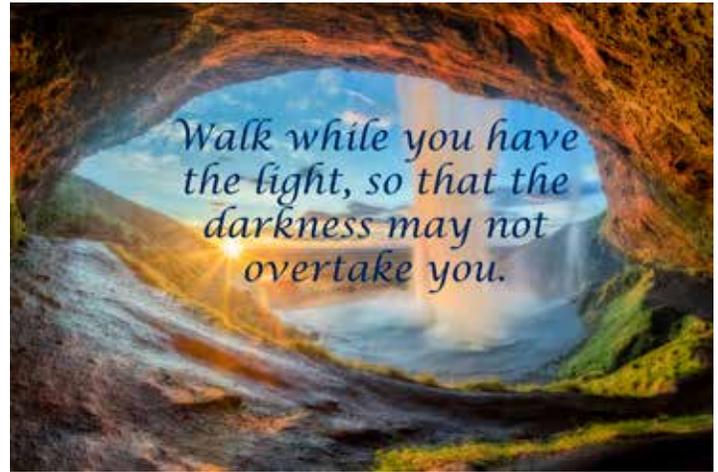
Through Christ,

Amen

Tuesday, April 16, 2019

Jesus said to them, 'The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light.'

John 12:35-36 NRSV



I have had the experience of taking courses in school in which the course instructor was the author of the textbook. The most complex of concepts sounded perfectly clear, when articulated by the writer. On more than one occasion, I was not as clear, in my understanding, when the author was not in the room.

I found the need to "walk in the light" of the author's teaching long enough and well enough to understand more fully. We all must sometimes stand in our own understanding and convictions. To do so, we should take full advantage of the presence of those who guide us.

Jesus walked among us, then transitioned to a different way of accompanying us. He has promised to always be with us, and he is. Instead of being dependent upon the light of his physical presence, we have become children of the light.

God of Light,

Your have shone upon us, now shine through us. As we have been enlightened by you, let us shine for you.

Through Jesus Christ,

Amen

Wednesday, April 17, 2019

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart.

Hebrew 12:1-3 NRSV

Have you ever felt like you have given your all to a venture? Just when you near completion, something happens that either sets you back or makes the goal impossible to reach. How you respond can and will make a difference. How do you find the courage and strength to keep picking up the pieces and starting over?

Start Over! For some people, they appear to simply start over without skipping a beat. They pick up the pieces and move on. For others, the setback leaves them lost and confused. For others, they are overwhelmed with grief and are stuck there.

Some people learn from their setbacks. They can take what they learned from that experience and apply it to helping them to succeed the next time. Is there or should there be a difference in how you approach your life and work toward your goals if you are a Christian?

As Christians if we're to

ask ourselves that question sincerely, we would hope to answer that question with an affirmative "yes." This does not always describe what we do. Our faith should inform and be part of our daily life. If we are faithful, we can run the race of life with perseverance.

God,

We give thanks that you are the author and finisher of our faith. Help us to run each race with perseverance.

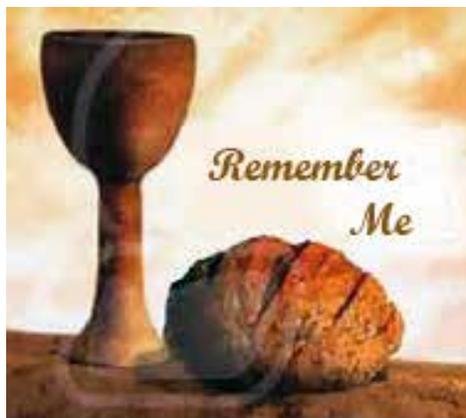
With Your Strength,

Amen

Thursday, April 18, 2019 Maundy Thursday

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 KJV



Millions of Christians in the United States and billions in the world regularly gather at the table that we call the Lord's table. We share in a practice that binds us all together, even while we remain greatly divided about what we are doing. We are commemorating the death and suffering of Jesus, according to some of us. Others say that we come to celebrate our unity with God and one another. For still others, we come to a table of reconciliation and forgiveness.

What we agree on is that Christ joins us at the table. We celebrate both his presence and his promise to continue to be with us. There is no need to reach unanimity regarding the theology of the table. It is enough to know who is at the table with us.

Omnipresent God,

Continue to be with us, now and always.

By Your Mercy,

Amen

Friday, April 19, 2019 Good Friday

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried, and were saved; in you, they trusted and were not put to shame.

Psalms 22:1-5 NRSV

The very thought of being alone or feeling abandoned makes most of us feel uneasy. The truth is some people feel like this even when other people are around. Others are present, but they don't interact with you. I have seen too many comic strips and commercials in which people interact with their cell phones and electronic games rather than each other.

You and I see this happening at restaurants and in public places all the time. I consciously tried to discipline myself to talk to people. Many people have resorted to requesting that you text them rather than make a phone call. Text messages are viewed as practical and less intrusive. A text message requires less attention. People are getting more impersonal.

Feeling abandoned by humans is hard but feeling abandoned by God is more than most could bear. The unrelenting anguish is soul wrenching as we read in this Psalm. It is so hard to believe that God does not answer.

I believe that God does answer. Sometimes God's answers are not heard because God is not saying what we want to hear. God promises that we will never be alone or forsaken. There is nothing we could do to cause God to leave us.

Omnipresent Lord,

Stay with us, in good times and bad. Teach us to extend our blessing, by sending us to accompany one another.

By Grace,

Amen



Saturday, April 20, 2019

The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception would be worse than the first."

Matthew 27:62-64 NRSV

For the last 50 years or more, the Church has been experiencing the shocking realization that we are not the only people on the earth. Most of us who are over 40 were born into a culture in which we could assume that our neighbors were Christian. With this assumption prevailing, we spent centuries making demands upon people rather than equipping ourselves to explain and offer the Gospel message.

In today's world, when we make demands, nobody springs into compliance. Some ask us to explain our demands. Others simply ignore us. We are in the process of "inventing" evangelism. We

only recently have found it necessary to understand or to explain the story of Jesus.

The truth is that there were always sceptics. This text reminds us that there were people at the crucifixion of Christ who were as convinced that a fraud was being perpetrated as there were faithful believers.

We continue to need to explore and offer what we understand as the truth of Jesus until all the world knows and claims him.

Enduring Lord,

You have already done the heavy lifting. Our work is to lift you before the people. Grant us all that we need to accomplish our task.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen

**Sunday, April 21, 2019
Easter Sunday**

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among- the dead? He is not here; but has risen.

Luke 24:1-5 NRSV

Anointing the body with oil and wrapping it in cloth was considered in those days the proper way to honor and

respect the dead. The dead person's body was attended to by the women. It was not an uncommon practice. It was rare for bodies to be stolen, unless there would be a profit involved. So naturally, the women were concerned.

Why do we look for the living among the dead? Perhaps it is because we don't know the difference. Perhaps it is because we are one among those who are called the dead! We look for people like us! This may be a revelation to learn or discover about oneself.

The angels were likely talking about the physical body. This however can apply to the spiritual self as well. I

am addressing the spiritual self. If we don't address our faith, we are neglecting the spiritual self. Building up and growing in faith is a continuous process. Jesus may no longer be with us in the flesh, but he continues to be with us as a spiritual presence.

Loving God,

May we continually be guided by your spiritual presence.

May we also remember your teaching. Thank you, for all you have done and continue to do.

Saved by Your Blood,

Amen

About the Authors

The Lenten meditations for this year are offered by Betty Miller Green and Irvin W. Green. They have served multiple (5) regions and congregations of The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) throughout their 46 years of marriage. They have been active in the National Convocation, as planners and presenters. The Green's have previously written several years of both Lenten and Advent Devotions.



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