

# LENTEN SAINTS

## A GUIDE

FEBRUARY 21-MARCH 21

LED BY DAVID ALLEN AND KARI MARTIN

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All Saints Day 1, Wassily Kandinsky, 1911, Lenbachhaus, Munich



# INTRODUCTION

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Often, Lent is associated with the act of repentance, but is not always paired with turning toward justice. When the Hebrew prophets told the people to repent of their sins, it always came with the addendum to not just turn away, but to turn *toward* something else: Justice! Righteousness! Mercy! As we go about this Lenten season, we thought we would look to the saints of our faith, the ones that modeled not just what it looks like to repent but also gave us a vision of just living. These saints become windows into the kingdom-of-God-living; they are our guides on a Lenten journey that ends with resurrection life, with the inbreaking of this kingdom of God. With that in mind, each Sunday we will explore the life and work of a different saint, that we might learn from them what it is we are turning toward. It is our hope that the materials in this booklet will supplement our time together each Sunday. For each week we have a brief biography of the respective saint, a selected reading from the saint, a passage of Scripture for discussion, and a prayer for reflection throughout the week.

Kari Martin and David Allen



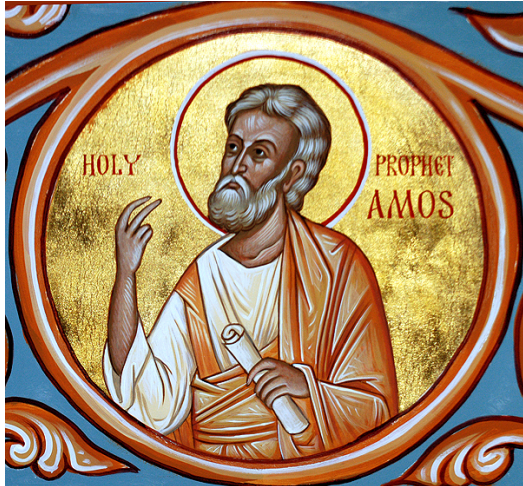
Christopher Holt (American, 1977–), *Haywood Street Beatitudes*, 2018–19. Fresco, 9 1/2 × 27 ft. Haywood Street Congregation, Asheville, North Carolina. Photo: John Warner.



*All Saints' Day (Allerheiligen)* (plate, folio 46) from *Klänge (Sounds)*

# WEEK 1 - AMOS

FEBRUARY 21



*Biography:* The prophet Amos was alive during the first half of the 8th century BCE during the long and peaceful reigns of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah. Amos himself was a farmer and herder who prophesied about the inequities that were forming between the rich and poor and the need for justice and righteousness. Amos said of himself, “I am no prophet, nor a prophet’s son; but I am a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the Lord took me from following the flock and the Lord said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel’” (Amos 7:14-15).

*Scripture: Amos 5:14-25*

<sup>14</sup> Seek good and not evil, that you may live;  
and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you, just as you have said.

<sup>15</sup> Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate;  
it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts,  
will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord:

In all the squares there shall be wailing;  
and in all the streets they shall say, “Alas! alas!”

They shall call the farmers to mourning,  
and those skilled in lamentation, to wailing;

<sup>17</sup> in all the vineyards there shall be wailing,  
for I will pass through the midst of you, says the Lord.

<sup>18</sup> Alas for you who desire the day of the Lord!

Why do you want the day of the Lord?  
It is darkness, not light;

<sup>19</sup> as if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear;  
or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall,  
and was bitten by a snake.

<sup>20</sup> Is not the day of the Lord darkness, not light,

and gloom with no brightness in it?

<sup>21</sup> I hate, I despise your festivals,  
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

<sup>22</sup> Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,  
I will not accept them;

and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals  
I will not look upon.

<sup>23</sup> Take away from me the noise of your songs;  
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

<sup>24</sup> But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

### *Prayer*

Eternal God, Lord who touches the earth and it melts, who calls forth the waters of the sea and pours them out like rain, hear our prayer. Bring forth your kingdom, where the plow will overtake the reaper, where the mountains will drip with sweet wine and the hills shall flow with it, where you will rebuild from the ruins, plant vineyards and drink from them, make gardens and eat from them. Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream, we pray.

### **NOTES**

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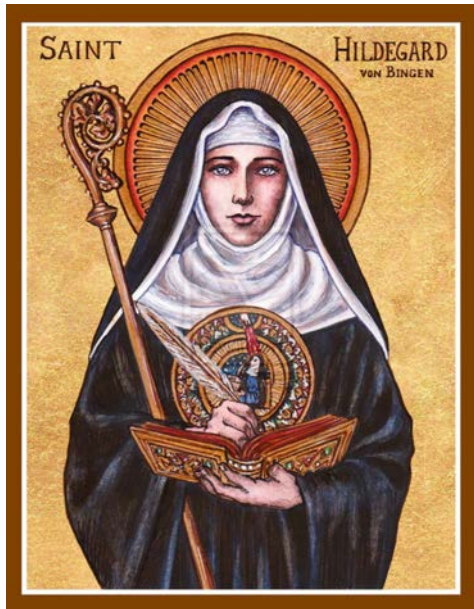
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# WEEK 2 – HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

## FEBRUARY 28



*Biography:* Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) was a German Benedictine abbess, composer, philosopher, and mystic who may be better labeled a “jack of all trades.” Hildegard was the magistra of her monastery, wrote prodigiously on topics including scientific natural history, medicine, and botany, and corresponded with a pair of Popes, a German emperor, and several other states-people. Hildegard’s love of the natural sciences and her devotion to God combined to make a Saint who had a deep affection for creation.

### *Excerpts:*

- “All creation is a song of praise to God.”
- "Glance at the sun. See the moon and the stars. Gaze at the beauty of earth’s greenings. Now, think. What delight God gives to humankind with all these things. All nature is at the disposal of humankind. We are to work with it. For without it we cannot survive."
- "Humankind, full of all creative possibilities, is God’s work. Humankind alone is called to assist God. Humankind is called to co-create, so that we might cultivate the earthly, and thereby create the heavenly."
- “In Hildegard’s worldview, a beam of sunlight, the fragrance of a flower, or the graceful movement of a swan were all participants in the holy chorus of creation”

-Source: Cynthia Overweg, “Hildegard of Bingen: The Nun Who Loved the Earth”

### *Scripture: Job 38:1-13*

<sup>1</sup> Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:

<sup>2</sup> “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?”

<sup>3</sup> Gird up your loins like a man,

I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

<sup>4</sup>“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?  
Tell me, if you have understanding.  
<sup>5</sup>Who determined its measurements—surely you know!  
Or who stretched the line upon it?  
<sup>6</sup>On what were its bases sunk,  
or who laid its cornerstone  
<sup>7</sup>when the morning stars sang together  
and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?  
<sup>8</sup>“Or who shut in the sea with doors  
when it burst out from the womb?—  
<sup>9</sup>when I made the clouds its garment,  
and thick darkness its swaddling band,  
<sup>10</sup>and prescribed bounds for it,  
and set bars and doors,  
<sup>11</sup>and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther,  
and here shall your proud waves be stopped’?  
<sup>12</sup>“Have you commanded the morning since your days began,  
and caused the dawn to know its place,  
<sup>13</sup>so that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth,  
and the wicked be shaken out of it?

*Prayer:*

God is the foundation for everything  
This God undertakes, God gives.  
Such that nothing that is necessary for life is lacking.  
Now humankind needs a body that at all times honors and praises God.  
This body is supported in every way through the earth.  
Thus the earth glorifies the power of God.  
-- Hildegard of Bingen, “A Prayer of Awareness”

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# WEEK 3 – SOR JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ

## MARCH 7



*Biography:* “A poet, nun, dramatist, and scholar, Juana Inés de La Cruz (1651-1695) was born in San Miguel Nepantla, Tepetlixpa, Mexico. As a child, she was inquisitive and gregarious: by the age of three she could read; by six, she had started asking permission to cut her hair short and disguise herself as a boy so she could attend university. At the age of eight, she began writing poetry; at nine, she was learning Latin... [She] is known and revered today for her wisdom, talent, and bravery.”

(biography from Poetry Foundation)

*Excerpt:* from *La Respuesta (The Answer)*

*On community and learning:*

“What could, however, serve to excuse me would be the great trial I have undergone in lacking not only a teacher, but schoolfellows with whom to review and practice what had been studied. For my only teacher was a mute book, my only schoolfellow an unfeeling inkwell. And instead of explanations and exercises I had interruptions, posed not only by my religious duties (for it is well known how usefully and beneficially these take up one’s time), but by all those other things incidental to life in a community: as when I would be reading and the nuns in the next cell would have a notion to sing and play; or I would be reading and two maidservants, arguing, would come to appoint me arbiter in their dispute; again, as I was writing, a friend would come to visit me, doing me a very bad turn with very good intentions, so that one must not only make way for the interruptions but give thanks for the harm done. And it is always so, for the times I devote to study are usually those left over when observances of the Rule of the community is fulfilled, and the same time is left to the other nuns to come and interrupt me. The truth of this can be known only to those who have experienced life in community, where the strength of my vocation alone assures

that my nature can find enjoyment, together with the great love that exists between me and my dear sisters. For as love itself is union, it admits no distant extremes.”

*In response to criticism that a woman should not write about God:*

“I confess also that... I had no need of exemplars, nevertheless the many books that I have read have not failed to help me, both in sacred as well as secular letters. For there I see a Deborah issuing laws, military as well as political, and governing the people among whom there were so many learned men. I see the exceedingly knowledgeable Queen of Sheba, so learned she dares to test the wisdom of the wisest of all wise men with riddles, without being rebuked for it; indeed, on this very account she is to become the judge of the unbelievers. I see so many and such significant women: some adorned with the gift of prophecy, like Abigail; others of persuasion, like Esther; others, of piety, like Rahab; others, of perseverance, like [Hannah] the mother of Samuel, and others, infinitely more, with other kinds of qualities and virtues... And if the evil [of theological words] is attributed to the fact that a woman employs them, we have seen how many have done so in praiseworthy fashion; what then is the evil in my being a woman?”

*Scripture: Mark 14:3-9*

<sup>3</sup>While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. <sup>4</sup>But some were there who said to one another in anger, “Why was the ointment wasted in this way? <sup>5</sup>For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.” And they scolded her. <sup>6</sup>But Jesus said, “Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. <sup>7</sup>For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. <sup>8</sup>She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. <sup>9</sup>*Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.*”

*Prayer*

Blessed are you, O Lord, for you have not chosen to place in the hands of others my judgment, nor in mine, but have reserved that for You alone. You have freed me from myself, and from the necessity to sit in judgment on myself, a judgment which could be no less than condemnation. You have reserved me to your mercy, because You love me more than I can love myself.

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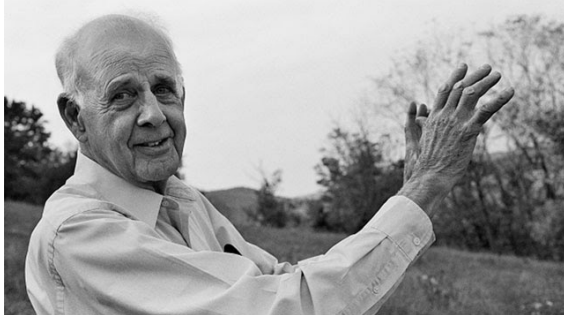
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# WEEK 4 – WENDELL BERRY

MARCH 14



*Biography:* Wendell Berry is, among other things, a poet, novelist, and environmentalist. The farmer calls Port Royal, Kentucky, his home, a place where he returned to after a brief stint as a professor at New York University. Berry is the author of over 50 books and was awarded the National Humanities Medal by President Barack Obama in 2010.

*Excerpt from Wendell Berry's essay, The Two Economies*

“It is possible to make a little economy, such as our present one, which is so short-sighted, in which accounting is of so short a term, as to give the impression that vices are necessary and practically justifiable. When we make our economy a little wheel turning in opposition to what we call ‘nature,’ which is in reality the Great Economy, then we set up competitiveness as the ruling principle in our explanation of reality and in our understanding of economy; we make of it, willy-nilly, a virtue. But competitiveness, as a ruling principle and a virtue, imposes a logic that is extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, to control. Competitiveness asks for the maximum of profit or power with the minimum of responsibility. That logic explains why our cars and our clothes are shoddily made, why our ‘wastes’ are toxic, and why our ‘defensive’ weapons are suicidal. And it explains also why it is so difficult for us to draw a line between free enterprise and crime. If our economic ideal is maximum profit with minimum responsibility, why should we be surprised to find our corporations so frequently in court and robbery on the increase? Why should we be surprised to find that medicine has become an exploitive industry, profitable in direct proportion to its hurry and its mechanical indifference. People who pay for shoddy products or careless services and people who are robbed outright are equally victims of theft, the only difference being that the robbers outright are not guilty of fraud.

If, on the other hand, we see ourselves as living within the Great Economy, under the necessity of making our little human economy within it, according to its terms, the smaller wheel turning in sympathy with the greater, receiving its being and its motion from it, then we see that the virtues are necessary and are practically justifiable. Then, because in the Great Economy all transactions count and the account is never ‘closed,’ the ideal changes. We see that we cannot afford maximum profit or power with minimum responsibility, because in the Great Economy the loser's losses finally afflict the winner. Now the ideal must be ‘the maximum of well-being with the minimum of consumption,’ which both defines and requires neighborly love. Competitiveness cannot be the ruling principle, for the Great Economy is not a ‘side’ that we can join, nor are there such ‘sides’

within it. It is not the sum of its parts but their membership, the parts inextricably joined to each other, indebted to each other, receiving significance and worth from each other and from the whole. One is obliged to ‘consider the lilies of the field’ neither because they are lilies nor because they are exemplary but because they are fellow members and because, as fellow members, we and the lilies are in certain critical ways alike.”

*Scripture: Matthew 6:28-30; Amos 2:6-8; Luke 15:1-7*

<sup>28</sup> And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

<sup>6</sup> Thus says the Lord:

For three transgressions of Israel,

and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;

because they sell the righteous for silver,

and the needy for a pair of sandals—

<sup>7</sup> they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth,

and push the afflicted out of the way;

father and son go in to the same girl,

so that my holy name is profaned;

<sup>8</sup> they lay themselves down beside every altar

on garments taken in pledge;

and in the house of their God they drink

wine bought with fines they imposed.

<sup>1</sup> Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” <sup>3</sup> So he told them this parable: <sup>4</sup> “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? <sup>5</sup> When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. <sup>6</sup> And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ <sup>7</sup> Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

*Prayer*

Learn by little the desire for all things

which perhaps is not desire at all

but undying love which perhaps

is not love at all but gratitude

for the being of all things which

perhaps is not gratitude at all

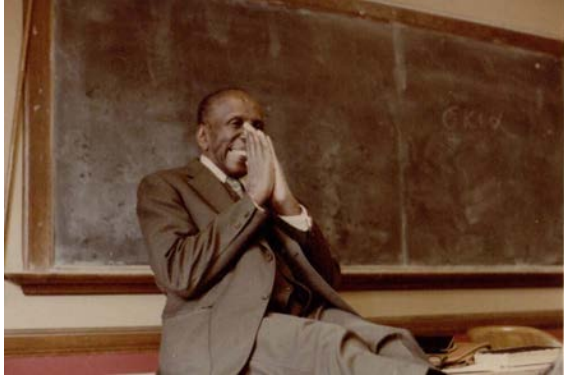
but the maker’s joy in what is made,

the joy in which we come to rest.

-- Wendell Berry, “Untitled”

# WEEK 5 – HOWARD THURMAN

MARCH 21



*Biography:* Howard Thurman (1899-1981) was a mystic, pastor, writer, professor, and mentor. He was the first Black Dean of Boston University Chapel, he helped start the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples (the first multi-faith, multi-ethnic worshipping community), and his book *Jesus and the Disinherited* was said to have always carried in Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s briefcase. His wise words, among other things, speak to what it means to follow the person of Jesus and to the deep stillness that can be found in the Spirit of God.

*Excerpts:*

“The ante-bellum Negro preacher was the greatest single factor in determining the spiritual destiny of the slave community. He it was who gave to the masses of his fellows a point of view that became for them a veritable Door of Hope...When he spoke to his group on an occasional Sabbath day, he knew what they had lived through during the weeks; how their total environment had conspired to din into their minds and spirits the corroding notion that as human beings they were of no significance. Thus his one message springing full grown from the mind of God repeated in many ways a wide range of variations: ‘You are created in God’s image. You are not slaves... you are God’s children.’ Many weary, spiritually and physically exhausted slaves found strength and power gushing up into all the reaches of their personalities, inspired by the words that fell from this man’s lips.” (from *Deep River*)

“How good it is to center down!

To sit quietly and see one’s self pass by!

The streets of our minds seethe with endless traffic;

Our spirits resound with clashing, with noisy silences,

While something deep within hungers and thirsts for the still moment and the resting lull.

With full intensity we seek, ere the quiet passes, a fresh sense of order in our living;

A direction, a strong sure purpose that will structure our confusion and bring meaning in our chaos.

We look at ourselves in this waiting moment - the kinds of people we are.

The questions persist: what are we doing with our lives? - what are the motives that order our days?

What is the end of our doings? Where are we trying to go?...

What do I hate most in life and to what am I true?  
Over and over the questions beat in upon the waiting moment.  
As we listen, floating up through all the jangling echoes of our turbulence, there is a sound of another kind -  
A deeper note which only the stillness of the heart makes clear.  
It moves directly to the core of our being. Our questions are answered,  
Our spirits refreshed, and we move back into the traffic of our daily round  
With the peace of the Eternal in our step.  
How good it is to center down!"  
(from *Meditations of the Heart*, I.9)

*Scripture:*

**Matthew 6:25-34:** <sup>25</sup>“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup>And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? <sup>28</sup>And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup>yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? <sup>31</sup>Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ <sup>32</sup>For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup>But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup>“So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

*Prayer*

Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart. Here is the citadel of all my desiring, where my hopes are born and all the deep resolutions of my spirit take wings. In this center, my fears are nourished and all my hates are nurtured. Here my loves are cherished and all the deep hungers of my spirit are honored without quivering and without shock. In my heart above all else, let Thy love and integrity envelope me until my love is perfected and the last vestige of my desiring is no longer in conflict with Thy Spirit. Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart.  
(from Howard Thurman, *Meditations of the Heart*, V.7)

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## **A Lenten Saints Reading List**

Wendell Berry, *The Art of Commonplace*  
James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*  
Ellen Davis, *Scripture, Culture, Agriculture*  
Dorothy Day, *A Long Loneliness*  
Sor Juana Inés de La Cruz, *La Respuesta*  
Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*  
Paul Elie, *The Life You Save May Be Your Own*  
Bell hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place*  
Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*  
Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*  
Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter at Birmingham Jail"  
Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*  
Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*

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## **The First Baptist Church**

## **Henderson, North Carolina**

Ronald S. Cava, Senior Minister  
Amy S. Russell, Associate Minister  
Mark L. Hopper, Minister of Music and Organist  
David G. Cole, Associate Minister of Music and Organist  
Tammy C. Hight, Director of Childhood Discipleship  
David Allen, Pastoral Intern  
Kari Martin, Pastoral Intern  
Linda O'Brien, Financial Secretary  
Tammy Manning, Ministry Support Coordinator  
Amber Jones, Administrative Support Coordinator  
Robert Snow, Custodian  
Marion D. Lark, Senior Minister *Emeritus*  
Philip M. Young, Composer-in-Residence  
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