

The Path To Peace



Lenten Meditations 2017

Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd

*Each person who has
made a contribution
is sharing part of their story,
their God journey,
with us all.*



Photo: Marj Matzky

Thanks to all for sharing your gifts!

Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd 2017

Dear Friends in Christ,

Lent 2017

Each year when we our Lenten Book of Meditations comes out I am filled with a sense of joy and anticipation. Through the years this booklet has provided inspiring stories, given new insights, beautiful art work, much humor, and warm and tender memories of our life together.

Of all the materials out there to assist and guide us each Lent, and there are so many, this is my favorite. Why? Because it's produced by you, members of our parish family.

The sharing of your reflections and meditations are a gift to us all. Each person who has made a contribution is sharing part of their story, their God journey with us all. That is a rich and deep gift to our life together.

Someone recently mentioned that, really, we are all simply walking each other home to our final destination in the tender embrace of our Lord. How true that is. This year through this booklet we are all walking each other through Lent to the celebration of new life and resurrection.

For those new to writing meditations, it takes a bit of courage to be vulnerable in your sharing. Please know it has been well worth the effort. Through your gift of thoughtfulness we are all blessed indeed. It is one of the great gifts of our parish; we depend upon and learn from each other in our life in Christ. This booklet shows that together we can accomplish more than any of us could on our own.

As always, I want to thank Patti and Richard for their considerable skill and expertise in producing this resource. Know of our deep appreciation.

Let us now begin our journey together.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patti + Richard", written in a cursive style.



*But happiness is fleeting;
joy is deep*

Photo by Mary White

March 1 - Ash Wednesday

Psalms 103

2 Corinthians 12

Isaiah 58:1-12

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

I am turning to Paul, 2 Cor. 12 for guidance. First I need to confess that I have been envious of Paul's conversion and spent many years hoping to have a spiritual awakening as epic as his. Thankfully, mine was subtle. No blinding light, no fanfare; a quiet moment when 'I understood,' and my life changed. Epic redefined.

It came at a time of great turmoil; my surroundings were far from peaceful. Yet I had the sense that I would be okay; that I was safe; that the chaos I created need not dictate the condition of my soul. I had been living with the idea that peace was something that happened when you had everything else in your life in order. Peace redefined. And peace came with a reminder.

A thorn. And that thorn has caused me to dig deeper into my faith at every turn. My reminder when I am judgmental, or when I feel sorry for myself, or when I feel like I've cornered the market on goodness. It makes me think of others rather than myself. The thorn unsettles me, yet it is the reason I experience joy. It's easy to feel happy surrounded by beauty, on a vacation, or when you have money and lots of stuff. But happiness is fleeting; Joy is deep. Peace is facing the unthinkable and feeling safe through it. Paul's description helped me to see that the thorn is why I have any peace at all. It is reason I (we) grow.

Mary White

March 2- Thursday

Psalm 84:7-12 or 23

Philippians 4: 10-13

Luke 14: 1. 7-14

Wow, this is the passage that I picked at random to write about, probably one of the most famous Psalms of all time. Most of us think of it as the “Funeral” Psalm: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. . . .” The hard rock band The Offspring even sang it in one of their songs. I use Bible Gateways to help me study and understand the readings. It is an online site that Bob Markham introduced me to years ago. When I looked up Psalm 23 using the Good News translation, this is the interpretation that came up.

Psalm 23 -- Good News Translation

*The Lord is my shepherd;
I have everything I need.
He lets me rest in fields of green grass
and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.
He gives me new strength.
He guides me in the right paths,
as he has promised.
Even if I go through the deepest darkness,
I will not be afraid, Lord,
for you are with me.
Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.
You prepare a banquet for me,
where all my enemies can see me;
you welcome me as an honored guest
and fill my cup to the brim.
know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life;
and your house will be my home as long as I live.*

This is perhaps the most comforting and straight forward passages I have read. It has a different feel to it than just comfort as we face death. It instead reminds me that we don't face this life alone. That He is with us with every breath we take and beyond. And how about this—Philippians' 4: v. 13: “I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me. “

I can put one foot in front of the other.

Kris Murray

March 3 - Friday

Psalm 98 :1-10 or 103

Isaiah 49: 5-6

Luke 9:2-6

I recommend that you read both of the psalms. I couldn't pick one over the other!

Psalm 98 beautifully honors God as Creator of all things. And it inspires us to be joyful and grateful that we are part of His creation. Sometimes we need to take pause in our rushing around, or our despair at the news, or our aches and pains, or our fears. If we pause and really look around there is always something to make us say, WOW! "For he has done marvelous things!"



Psalm 103 speaks of the Lord's steadfast love and compassion for his people. We are reminded that we should not be passive. He forgives us when we fall short, but we must try to follow His commandments.

The passage in Luke reminds us that we should not be passive. Jesus gave his disciples the power to heal and sent them out to proclaim his good news as well as to heal those in need. He imparts those same powers to us. It may not be dramatic. We may not even notice. Every day we have the opportunity to touch others whether it be through a gesture, or smile, or helping hand, or even just a look of respect. We can pass on the hope and love which is the GOOD NEWS of our Lord. "For He has done marvelous things!"

Bev Strohm

March 4 - Saturday

Psalm 86:1-11

Isiah 58:9-14

Luke 5:27-32

Here I am at the beginning of another Lenten season. It seems as if it was only yesterday that I was pondering what to do with Lent, and here I am again.

A couple of things strike me as I think about the readings for today.

First of all the reading from Isaiah, points out that perhaps a good place to start is to “give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,” (Isa. 58:10) as the NASB version has it. The Message paraphrases this as “If you are generous with the hungry and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out,” If we were to do these things God says “Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness, your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight. I will always show you where to go. I’ll give you a full life in the emptiest of places.” Perhaps this might be a good place to focus this Lent.

Secondly, in the Gospel of Luke we read of the call of Matthew. Matthew was a Publican or tax collector who Jesus called to follow him and become one of the Apostles. One of the things that strikes me about Luke’s account is that Matthew “left everything behind and got up and followed him.” (Luke 5:28) That probably would have been quite a lot for him. What he left was a favored position with the Romans, substantial wealth that he probably accumulated, by cheating his fellow Jews. But, what he found was forgiveness and grace. He felt that placing Jesus first was a better idea than what he had been doing.

May we during Lent come to value our walk with the Lord more than the many other things that usually take first place in our busy lives, and focus on something the Lord values.

Bob Markham

March 5- Sunday

Psalm 32

Romans 5:12-19

Matthew 4:1-11

The readings today cover the stories of Original Sin and the Temptation of Christ, and include a psalm and letter from Paul.

Adam & Eve introduced us to the world of sin by giving into temptation and eating the forbidden fruit. Jesus showed us his providence – and the true path to righteousness – by resisting the devil’s temptations and casting him out. David’s psalm tells of the mercy of the Lord on those who believe, and Paul’s letter implores us to be righteous – our sins will be forgiven.

Father Lance shared some wonderful insights several weeks ago. We have free will, and thus freedom to choose. Make good choices! But don’t be too hard on yourself if you stray – you are God’s beloved, in whom He is well pleased. Remember, you are not alone – together we walk, in unity and love, the path to peace. The words of this hymn are attributed to Gregory the Great:

*Now let us all with one accord, in company with ages past,
Keep vigil with our heavenly Lord in his temptation and his fast.*

*The covenant, so long revealed to those of faith in former time,
Christ by his own example sealed, the Lord of love, in love sublime.*

*Your love, O Lord, our sinful race has not returned, but falsified;
Author of mercy, turn your face and grant repentance for our pride.*

*Remember Lord, though frail we be, in your own image were we made;
Help us, lest in anxiety, we cause your Name to be betrayed.*

*Therefore we pray you, Lord, forgive, so when our wanderings here shall
cease,*

We may with you forever live, in love and unity and peace.

May we all, as a church family, strive daily to bring this divided world together – to set an example of selfless love, and to promote peace on earth.

John Norris

March 6 - Monday

Psalm 19: 7-14

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-16

Matthew 25: 31-46

God in Our Time

For me, Lent is a gift of time to get to know ourselves and God better, while becoming more aware of our place in community. Reading and studying scripture is important; yet, we are called to more. Lent is an opportunity to discover Jesus in our time and the place we live, as well as what our part is in building His Kingdom here, in our community.

This is not an easy task. Through spiritual disciplines (e.g. penitential rites, prayers, fasting, sacrifices or charitable works) we try to change our perspective, getting a clearer sense of ourselves, God and community. For me, the Examen of Ignatius of Loyola works well. Ignatius - a 16th century Spanish soldier - used his military discipline in his spiritual life, establishing his *Spiritual Exercises* that is still used by the Jesuits (the religious order he founded).

The Examen is a way to pray, using 5 steps with the fluidity of a 5-course meal:

1. *Quieting Ourselves: By giving ourselves into the prayer time available to us, shedding all busy thoughts and urges, letting God emerge as He presents Himself to us today.*
2. *Reviewing with Gratitude: With no set agenda, recall the day's events – positive and negative, peering into but not lingering on them, thankful to God for life, blessings and His presence.*
3. *Embracing Our Emotions: Mindful of God's continuing presence, we recognize our feelings about these events – sadness, joy, anger, regret, shame, annoyance, hope, relief, etc.*
4. *Focusing on One: Continuing to be mindful of God's presence and blessings, let one event, along with its emotions, emerge and consider it closely.*
5. *Moving Forward: Aware that God is always with us, look to the immediate future and see a specific way we may improve as we move forward.*

6. The Examen is one way to pray that can help us use even a sliver of time (5-15 minutes) or the luxury of a longer period (30-60 minutes) to embrace who we are, who we are called to be, while being warmed by the faithful presence of God.

James Peters

March 7 - Tuesday

Psalm 34:1-8 or 124

Hebrews 10: 33-39

Matthew 24: 9-14

Psalm 34: 1-8: David writes to God explaining that he knows God will always be there to help him with his troubles. God will always help anyone who is willing to ask for help. God hears every prayer, and will support His followers through Life's inevitable struggles.



Psalm 124: God is on our side because otherwise the bad times would be worse, and we would feel trapped. God can help you with any problem, but you are responsible to act on the solution.

Hebrews 10: 32-39: Change is difficult for everyone, and is a constant struggle. Struggle is God's way to strengthen an individual's faith. An individual who changes helps others simply by showing that everyone can change. The process is hard, and at times will seem impossible. But patience and persistence will bring everlasting rewards.

Mathew 24: 9-14: Jesus is teaching us that believing in Him will come with much resentment. Many people will give up and turn on one and other. There will be some who lead others to become sinners. Those whose faith is tested who stay strong will save themselves and others.

Eugene L Zona Jr

March 8 - Wednesday

Psalm 51:11-16

Jonah 3:1-10

Luke 11:29-32

Turning from darkness, cleansing; purifying with light...

The people of Nineveh, having been warned by Jonah of impending doom, turned from sin and darkness and were saved... David, after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba, asked God for cleansing and renewal... Jesus reminded people of the lesson of the Ninevites, and the importance of turning from darkness to the Light that he provides; to put this light on a lampstand, so that all may see.

These passages bring to mind spring cleaning, a mostly forgotten annual ritual that was sacrosanct to my mother-in-law, Joan, who passed away several years ago. Every year, during the month of March, Joan would begin emptying closets and cupboards, taking down draperies, opening windows even when it was still cold—airing, clearing clutter and debris, washing and disinfecting her entire home from floor to ceiling. I would marvel at the energy and enthusiasm with which she approached this task, even when she became elderly.

Although I've never quite adopted this ritual in the physical realm, mostly because I don't enjoy cleaning like Joan did (every year I tell myself I really should!), I do think it has important applications as an analogy for our spiritual lives.

What if we spent the same time and attention on cleaning our spiritual house? What resentments, burdens of guilt or shame, critical judgments of others, or regrets are we holding onto in the deep recesses of our souls? When we wake at 2 am, with no distractions, what thoughts haunt us? These are the things that clog our spirit, interfere with our connection to God and impede our growth as Christians.

These impurities need to be brought before God, aired in the fresh sunlight and cleansed, purified and renewed by the spiritual water that is His Holy Spirit. May we then open our hearts to receive His Spirit more fully.

Patti Curtin

March 9 - Thursday

Psalm 19:7-14

Wisdom 7:24-28

John 14:23-26

Truth be told, I have been planning this Lenten reflection long before the 2017 request for submissions to the Lenten Readings Booklet was sent out.

I was feeling so ready to submit something because a Major Act of God occurred to me over the past year. In fact it was so BIG, I deemed the Event worthy of being elected to the 2017 Lenten Reflection book. Now I suppose there's a problem in deciding what one's Lenten Reflection would be without actually having the readings from Patti.

And then there was the possibility that this Big Act of God just may serendipitously and spontaneously match my readings. God's plan is uncanny at times. Then on the other hand, I have a lingering uneasiness with my overall analysis.

What I mean is, if I am tracking the weekly messages from Pastor Lance correctly, I think he's been saying that major Acts of God happen daily. If I am thinking an Act of God only happens once in a blue moon, I may be way off course here.

Well, just to make sure, I'll go ahead with due diligence, pore over those readings, and discover the obvious.

Oh,.... and about that Big Event? I can't even find the words to write down what happened.

It's much easier to describe in person, so if you need to really know, track me down during coffee hour. It will take 5 minutes to tell you.

Jack Brennick

March 10 - Friday

Psalm 130

Ezekiel 18: 21-28

Matthew 5:20-26

For my birthday, my wife gave me a great T-shirt that reads “My thoughts have been replaced by Hamilton lyrics” (since I am such a crazy big fan of the songs from the musical Hamilton).

It occurred to me as I went through these readings that this would be a pretty good idea, except that instead of Hamilton lyrics, we replaced our thoughts with lines from the Psalms! What an awesome roadmap for life that would be. Whenever we are feeling down or lost or guilty, we could just shuffle through the Psalms to get us through those moments!

Psalm 130 reminds us that when we are feeling low (“out of the depths I cry to you Oh Lord”) or particularly guilty, that God’s love and forgiveness are always there.

Ezekiel also reminds us that no matter how much we may have strayed, redemption and forgiveness are there for us...we just need to make the right decision to turn to God. (of course, he reminds us that things will not necessarily go well for the good person who turns away from God).

It is probably no coincidence that these passages are joined with this Gospel. This Gospel is a bit of a gut-wrenching eye opener. Most of us usually feel that we are doing pretty well when it comes to keeping the commandment “Thou Shalt Not Murder” (at least I hope so). In this passage, Jesus tells us that holding on to anger for your brother (or sister) is pretty much the same thing....and calling someone a “fool” could put you in the express lane to hell. Wow, strong stuff! But a powerful lesson that those resentments that we hang on to (for even the smallest thing) are diametrically opposed to the way Jesus tells us to live our lives.

So when you are thinking about what to “give up” for Lent, how about letting go of anger and resentment? The great news is that God tells us that when we go in the wrong direction, there is a way back to God’s love...but that starts with doing the right thing and reconciling things with one another. Have a blessed Lenten season! *Mike Rosato*

March 11 - Saturday

Psalm 119:1-8

Deut. 26:16-19

Matthew 5:43-48

To be “perfect” and obey are difficult requests, indeed. But, if a person continually reaches for what is easiest, they do not come to know their full abilities.

Often, I hope to find the way I can coast through life – a balance of feeling like I am achieving and I won’t fail. But failure is not imperfect. Failure is part of becoming perfect.

The terms, “perfect” “and “failure”, are strong terms. They seem to be the opposite ends of a spectrum. But, as stated, I see failure as part of the journey to “perfect.” Perfect as an end, then, becomes a measurable goal. To aim for “half as good” or “darn-tootin’ close” are not clear, measurable goals.

To understand our spiritual self, even as it is hard to quantify, we must find ways to assess our spiritual growth so we can fulfill God’s calling for our life. Measurable goals are one way to assess and track progress. And, as a friendly reminder, our spiritual goals are not required to be achieved tomorrow, but over a lifetime.



We are told today to strive to “be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” It seems impossible, but with God, through God, and because of God, our perfection is assured.

Denise Junker

March 12 - Sunday

Psalm 121

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

Gen. 12:1-6

John 3:1-17

The Gospel reading for
might be the most quoted
John 3:16.

***“For God so loved the
only begotten Son, that
him should not perish, but***

FOR GOD SO LOVED
THE
WORLD
THAT HE GAVE HIS ONE AND ONLY SON,
THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM,
SHALL
NOT
PERISH
BUT
HAVE
ETERNAL
LIFE.
JOHN
3:16

today contains what
verse from the Scripture,

***world, that he gave his
whosoever believeth on
have eternal life.”***

John 3:16 is known to Christians and non Christians. It often appears at sporting events on signs just saying **John:3.16**. This verse says it all, the reason for Easter is God's love for the world, His world. It is hard for us to imagine that God's love for us is so great that he sacrificed His son Jesus on the cross on that dark Friday to keep us from perishing. His love is so great and all we have to do is believe in Him and accept His gift.

We have all done, thought or said bad things, which the Bible calls “sin.” The result of sin is death, spiritual separation from God. Every Sunday we acknowledge that we are sinners, we have fallen short of God's expectations, our sin separates from God and there is nothing that we can do to make us “good enough” for heaven.

The good news is that God made a way, His LOVE for us is why he sent His Son. He does not want one single person of this earth to perish. Christ lived a perfect, blameless life and provided the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He died in our place. It is only by God’s grace—His undeserved mercy—that we can have eternal life with Him in heaven. All we have to do is have faith, to believe Christ died for us and ask Him to forgive our sins.

On that dark Friday He died because of His love; on Easter His love came back to be with us FOREVER

Ed Kushall

March 13 - Monday

Psalm 86: 11-17

Acts 8:26-39

Deut. 6:20-25

John 4:31-38

To sit and listen is a very hard task to do. We are so busy with our own thoughts, we don't always hear what the other person is saying.

In Deuteronomy, it talks about obeying the Laws of God. Our grandchildren will ask us questions about the meaning of these laws. We must "listen" to what God has said so we can explain these laws and why they are important to us.

Psalm 86 talks about "listening" to God's ways so we can live according to His truth. God will watch over and take care of us.

In John 4, we have Jesus who "listens" to God and is nourished by it. The disciples "listen" to Jesus the planter. The people then "listen" to the disciples who are able to harvest and bring the people to eternal life. Jesus plants the seed, then the disciples harvest the people and all this is accomplished by "listening".

In Acts 8, the eunuch is willing to "listen" to Phillip explain the scripture. The eunuch is then filled with the Holy Spirit.

God is able to do all of these things because people "listened" and were moved to accept God's will. People's thoughts were changed, brought to clarity or reinforced because they "listened". If we listen, truly listen, we can hear God speak to us. We never know to whom or when God will need us to listen.



We need to be ready.

Cathy Switzer

March 14 - Tuesday

Psalm 50, 7-15, 22-24

Matthew 23: 1-12

Isaiah 1:2-4, 16-20

Today's readings make me recall an old joke. A tourist in mid-Manhattan asks a passing man on the street, "Do you know how to get to Carnegie Hall?" Without breaking his stride this seasoned New Yorker offers a single word: "Practice." A phrase I don't hear much these days is, "practicing Christian," someone who tries to follow the tenets of his faith in daily life. I've often wondered if that phrase originated from modesty, essentially an acknowledgment that being a *true Christian* is a truly difficult state for anyone to fully achieve.

In Psalm 50, God rebukes his followers' practice of sacrificing burnt offerings; they got it wrong. In other words, the ceremony, the ritual, the canned script, the routine we follow -- instead of bringing us closer to God might actually drive a wedge between us. How many times have I found a prayer and recited it, thinking this will help make me good with God and thought no further beyond that? To be honest: far too many times. I need to reflect more on line 23: "Those who bring thanksgiving as their sacrifice honor me; to those who go the right way," (NRSV). But what is the right way?

The brief Isaiah excerpt builds on the Psalm. The Lord says, "Israel does not know, my people do not understand," (v.3). Although raised in the Lord, His people have rebelled, going their own way, forgetting or ignoring what God wants from them. We end up dealing "corruptly" (v.4) with others. We think we know best, but really, isn't that the child in us? It's only when we truly become adults that we realize the wisdom we were given in Jesus' teaching, *is* really wise. The right way is not always man's way but it is always the Lord's way.

Matthew drives home the Old Testament points. While it takes a lot of practice to be a Christian, it's not the quantity as much as it is the quality. We practice our religion up to a point: follow certain rules, attend services, hit our marks, and go home feeling justified. That's what happened to the Pharisees: they settled for man's approval, not God's. The true practice for any Christian, Jesus says is being a "servant" (v.11) and humbling ourselves (v. 12). That's hard. If it wasn't, we'd all be doing it and God's kingdom would be here. But as they say, practice makes perfect.

Richard Reid

March 15 - Wednesday

Psalm 31: 9-16

Matthew 20: 17-28

Jeremiah 18:1-11. 18-20

Who knew that doing God's will was going to be this hard? David had his share of problems. Jeremiah could have been the messenger that everyone wanted to kill and Jesus was the messenger that they did kill. It seems that being God's messenger puts a lot of other people on edge.

King David and the Old Testament prophets didn't mince words. They knew God was with them. They also knew that it did not mean their task was going to be easy. All around them were threats and doubts. It didn't matter that David was victorious, nor did it soften a hard heart when Jeremiah offered an alternative to God's wrath. Both these fellows were the subjects of plots and slander. Each of them had to make a concerted effort to stay focused on God and trust that God was in control.

Now fast forward to Jesus as he gets ready to go to Jerusalem. The mother of the sons of Zebedee wants to see her kids as vice presidents of the Kingdom of God. I can just imagine Jesus shaking his head when he is asked if one brother can sit on his right and the other on his left. Didn't they know that this was not a passive ministry? Choosing to take the cup Jesus drinks was going to open them to more problems than they could have imagined. Going with Jesus means going into the stuff of life and that stuff can get really messy. His is not a ministry that can be run from the sidelines or through a text. Sooner or later everyone gets called out of their comfort zone.

Whatever it means to do God's work involves effort. It involves risk. It asks us to take a chance to say what needs to be said knowing that others may not want to hear it. It also means taking time to listen as we seek God's voice in others and may not always like what we hear. We need to join our hands and hearts in taking the message of Christ forward. Together we can make a difference without ever having the corner office.

Sharon Therkildsen

March 16 - Thursday

Psalm 1

Luke 16: 19-31

Jeremiah 17:5-10

This is not our world, but God's world. God watches us to see where we go, and whom or what we adore. The easy and fun way may not really lead to Him. We all think we choose our path, but I think it has been chosen for us. God has put us in place. Live in his creation the right way and He will watch over you.

In our Psalm, happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, but delight in the law of the Lord. He watches over the way of the righteous and fulfills their needs, but lets the way of the wicked perish.

In our reading of Jeremiah, God tests our minds while searching our hearts. A Supreme lie detector test! Energetically serve His commandments and He will offer just rewards. Don't, and your rewards will also be just.

Finally, in the Gospel of Luke, we see an example of His testing a response to a daily happening. If you can help, but don't help - you will receive your just reward.

To paraphrase a wonderful country preacher I heard recently, you can be right or you can be kind. Right is a correct action, but kind is always better because your heart is engaged.



Larry Therkildsen

March 17 - Friday

Psalm 97:1-2, 7-12 or 96

1 Thess. 2: 2-12

Matthew 28: 16-20

As we have written in past meditations for this book, this is a special day for us as it is our wedding anniversary, marking the day when Father Lance married us. But we know this is an important day for a much greater reason – it is the Feast of Saint Patrick, one of the world’s most popular saints.

Today the Church remembers and celebrates a humble, pious and gentle man whose love and total devotion to and trust in GOD should be a shining example to each of us. When he was about 14, he was captured by Irish pirates and taken to Ireland as a slave to herd and tend sheep. Patrick turned to GOD and wrote a memoir titled “The Confession”. In that piece, he wrote: *“The love of GOD and his fear grew in me more and more, as did the faith, and my soul was roused, so that in a single day, I have said as many as a hundred prayers and in the night, nearly the same.”*

After escaping from slavery, Patrick had a vision which prompted him to study for the priesthood. He was later ordained a Bishop and sent to take the Gospel to Ireland where he converted many people and built churches throughout that country. Patrick often used shamrocks to explain the Holy Trinity. He converted most if not all of Ireland to Christianity and is credited with working many miracles in the process.

Many Sundays Father Lance closes mass with a wonderful blessing that starts out, “May GOD be within you to refresh and renew you, may GOD go before you...” – you know the one. The blessing Father Lance says is from the Celtic tradition and very similar in thought and sentiment to the following poem Patrick once wrote. He named his, “The Breast-plate”: *“Christ be within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ inquired, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.”*

May we all keep the example set by St. Patrick and the words of this poem in our hearts and minds during this Lent and always.

Nan and Roch Whitman

March 18- Saturday

Psalm 122 or 34

Luke 24: 44-48

Ecclesiasticus 47:8-10

Psalm 34:1-8 and Luke 24:44-48. have to do with God's promises and understanding of God's word.

As I am sitting here thinking of what I am going to write. I think of how God has worked in my life. As we are going through some tough times with the business, I remember that he promises to free us from our fears, to guard and defend us, show us goodness and to supply our needs. We feared the unknown of our future, though we had been in business for over 20 years. I know that if you give it to God and trust in him that everything will be okay; he has our best interest. As human beings, it is hard to not try and control what lies ahead.

God showed me a double rainbow the day we were closing so I knew that was a sign that he would take care of us. As time went on and things were not getting any better I had my doubts. I thought that he was going to take care of everything right then, but now with much prayer and time spent in the word, I began to realize that it was in his time, not mine. So everyday I would give it to him and I trusted that we were going to be ok. With that commitment, came a peace that can only come from God. I praise him and thank him for this rough time because I know that I will be a stronger Christian and closer to God.

So if you are going through a trying time remember that you are not alone. There is someone there to lift you up and give you peace. All you have to do is ask and he will answer.

May we have ears to hear, eyes to see and a faith in Christ to carry us. God Bless, and trust in the Lord,



Annie Bishop

March 19 - Sunday

Psalm 95

Romans 5:1-11

John 4:5-42

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Romans 5:1-11

Thanks be to God!!

March 20 - Monday

Psalm 89

Romans 4: 13-18

2 Samuel 7:4, 8-16

In Psalm 89, Ethan delivers a maskil (illumination or reflection) containing God's covenant to David. This is a song used to open the ears of those listening so they might receive greater understanding of God. This takes place during a particularly difficult time in David's life.

In Samuel, again at a time when Israel is collapsing and in chaos - God tells Nathan to tell David "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel and I have been with you wherever you went...when he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use....But I will not take my steadfast love from him."

Where does this unshakable faith come from? - Paul tells the Romans - It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith in the Lord.

Mary and Joseph must have been near panic when they discovered their 12 year old son Jesus was not with them as they and their families began their return home after the annual Passover Festival in Jerusalem. Luke reveals - On the third search day they found Jesus in the Temple, sitting with the Jewish teachers, listening to them and asking questions. All who heard him were amazed at his intelligent answers. His parents were astonished and his mother said, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been terribly worried trying to find you." "Why did you have to look for me? Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?"

In the 17th century, John Bunyan, an English priest, wrote this beautiful poem that takes a giant step toward explaining all.

*Run, John, run
"The law commands
But gives me neither feet nor hands
Tis better news the Gospel brings
It bids me fly
It gives me wings"—Oh that I could be so gifted*

Arnie Lagergren

March 21- Tuesday

Psalm 34: 1-8 or 145

Philippians 4:4-9

Luke 6: 17-23

I Told God I was Angry

I told God I was angry;
I thought he'd be surprised.
I thought I'd kept hostility
quite cleverly disguised.

I told the Lord I hate Him
I told Him that I hurt.
I told him that He isn't fair,
He's treated me like dirt.

I told God I was angry
but I'm the one surprised.
"What I've known all along. He said,
you've finally realized."

"At least you have admitted
what's really in your heart.
Dishonesty, not anger,
was keeping us apart.

Even when you hate me,
I don't stop loving you.
Before you can receive that love
you must confess what's true.

In telling me the anger
you genuinely feel.
It loses power over you,
permitting you to heal."

I told God I was sorry
and He's forgiven me.
The truth that I was angry
has finally set me free.

The author wishes to remain anonymous

March 22- Wednesday

Psalm 103:1-4; 13-18

2 Timothy 2:10-15

Matthew 13:47-52

I have been writing Lenten Meditations for almost as long as Good Shepherd has been producing this booklet. While thinking about that, it caused me to reflect on how my faith has changed and grown over the years.

These readings have a streamlined theme about them: pray to the Lord, rely on the Lord, worship the Lord and your life will be well. He heals. He renews. He is mercy and grace and rich in love. He is not a punishing God, but is nurturing like a father. He knows us inside and out.

Paul writes in his second letter to Timothy that:

If we die with Him, we'll live with him;

If we persevere with him, we'll rule with him;

If we turn our backs on him; he'll turn his back on us, but If we give up on Him, he'll always be there because he can't be false to himself.

We live in tumultuous times; a broken world. Now more than ever is it vital to relieve our anxieties with prayer and faith.

Think of God when you awake. Thank Him for the sun, or the rain, or the snow. Thank him for opening your eyes another day. Thank Him for your blessings and your loved ones.

Think of God when you go to sleep. Thank Him for the day, the food you ate, the good things that happened to you.

Ask God to grant you peace . . . it works. Accept the path that He puts before you; follow it and embrace it. You may be amazed at how anxieties and worries lessen or even melt away.

Kris Murray

March 23 - Thursday

Psalm 33: 6-11 or 98:1-4

Acts 17:22-31

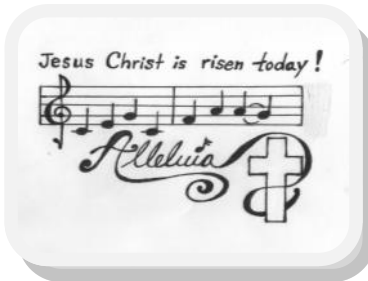
Matthew 5: 11-16

Psalm 98:1 *"Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things"*

Music inspires.

I believe that the psalmist is suggesting that music is one way for those who believe in the grandeur of the world around us to give an outward display of their inner beliefs. This connection brings us all together through the love of God and Jesu Christ allowing us to pause during our busy lives and reflect on this beauty.

Psalm 98:4 *"Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music"*



Singing of jubilant songs brings us into a community of people who give thanks to gifts bestowed by God. It connects us to those near to us. Through old/ancient songs, it connects us to many who have come before us. Through recordings and sheet music, it propels our thoughts of joy to Lord through music to future generations.

I pray that we all may hear and sing songs in hearts and minds which give joy to the Lord, so that we are continually inspired to remember all of the marvelous things which the Lord has created in the world around us.

March 24- Friday

Psalm 31: 15-24

Revelation 7:13-17

John 12: 23-32

Love the Lord, all you his saints. The Lord preserves the faithful, but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily. Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord.

Psalm 31: 23 – 24

For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Revelation 7: 17



These passages from today's readings bring me a sense of hope and peace. Both provide images of God taking care of the faithful. There are many instances in life when this message is all we can hold on to. Perhaps it is during a time of illness. Perhaps it is during a time of financial insecurity. Or maybe your life is just not turning out as expected. Whatever your circumstance, God is with you.

But as the psalm says "Love the Lord". That is where we must begin. Love the Lord and trust God to "shepherd" you to a better place.

Brenda Munch

March 25 - Saturday

Psalm 45 or 40:: 5-11

Isaiah 7:10-14

Hebrews 10:4-10

Luke 1:26-38

First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them”—though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Hebrews 10:4-10

“He sets aside the first to establish the second.” This sums it all up for me—the difference between struggling to be perfect by the law and allowing His perfect grace to cover us, to heal us and restore us. When we mess up so badly we just want to curl up in a ball and cry, Jesus is there, tenderly reassuring us that we don’t have to do it all; that he has already done it and what he offers us, though it seems too generous and we seem wholly undeserving, is the path to freedom and peace. We have been made holy, past tense, means that we are perfect AS WE ARE in God’s eyes. What an amazing gift!

I guess that’s really what Easter is all about.



Patti Curtin

March 26- Sunday

Psalm 23

Ephesians 5:8-14

1 Samuel 16:1-13

John 9: 1-41

A phrase that I have heard several times recently is *speaking truth to power*. I thought I knew what it meant but I decided to Google it to make sure. The Huffington Post definition for “**truth to power**” is believing deeply in what you say and fighting every day to have that heard. It may not be popular; it means taking a risk, it means standing for something.” Jesus is a prime example of truth to power. In return, he attracted many followers. The authorities feared him more and more as his crowds kept growing.

After predicting his death, Jesus said that unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies it will only be one kernel of wheat but if it dies it produces many seeds. We are the seeds he was talking about. We need to do as he would do. We need to speak truth to power.

The message of the cross is the power of God. God chose the weak things to shame the strong. Today make a point of taking a risk. Stand up for something or someone who could use your help.

As a church we feed the homeless at both RAIHN and at the Bridge Shelter. We donate things that these people really need. We help to feed children in our community with the backpack program. Each week in the prayers for the people we pray for poor. We are helping to build a school in Costa Rica.

What a great place the Church of the Good Shepherd is. With community so much can be accomplished. We are blessed!

Marj Matzky

March 27 - Monday

Psalm 122 or 133

Ephesians 4:1-7

Matthew 9: 35-38

“Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matthew 9:35-36)

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one Baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: ‘When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.’” (Ephesians 4:2-8)

It’s those times in our lives when we’ve all but given up hope that the truly miraculous happens. Times when that which we have searched so long and hard to find is given to us.

We are reminded that some of the most precious gifts in life come from an anonymous donor. We don’t need to ask why; we just need to accept the gift for what it is...a gift! One that is given to restore our faith in things unseen.

Prayer is such a gift! I do believe that any time any one prays for another, it does place into the universe a positive power that cannot be quantified, nor should one presume to do so. Prayer, however, has value beyond that positive power since it also helps each of us to escape our own self-oriented concerns, making us all the more whole and more human. We need to stop presuming that we can understand how prayer works or even how God might use our prayers and simply be about the task of **living, loving** and **being** as a way of practicing the presence of God and then leaving the results to God

Barbara Fornalik

March 28 - Tuesday

Psalm 46:1-8

Romans 7: 1-12

Ezekiel 47:1-9

John 5:1-18

Whenever I get to the ocean my favorite thing to do is to dive right in and then float on my back, letting the water hold me up and take all my cares and worries away. Floating with the sun on my face I say the Lord's prayer . . . Ahhh! . . .

Of course I can't always get to the beach, so I also like to close my eyes in the shower and feel the water as God's love washing over me, taking all my troubled thoughts and worries away.

All my readings have the theme of water running through them.

"There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God" (Psalm 46:4)

"and behold, water was issuing from the threshold of the temple... everything will live where the river goes." (Ezekiel 47:1, 9)

In John 5: A man is lying ill near a pool of healing water, but he is too crippled to get into the water. Jesus goes to him and asks "Do you want to be healed? Rise, take up your pallet, and walk." At once, the man was healed.

The Word of God, Jesus and his teachings, are the Living Water.

As water is essential to sustain physical life, Living Water is essential to sustain spiritual life.

Psalm 46:1 - "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

March 29 - Wednesday

Psalm 26:1-8

Romans 12: 9-21

Matthew 5:1-12

I read all three writings and basically, they all say the same thing: Be joyful, follow God's commandments, do unto others as you would have them do to you. O Lord, we do try! And try and try and fail, or sometimes, are successful. If we fail we feel guilty and sad that we were unable to do as we should—but if we succeed—hooray!!

Too much of our lives are difficult, but—I learned a long time ago to ask God's help. He always helps, not always the way we wish, or instantaneously, but always in His timing and according to His will.

This date—March 29, is very hard for me. My youngest son died of pneumonia on March 29, 1997. My first thoughts were "Help!!" and God did. I would not be here if not for Jesus. Always praise Him for everything!



Peace and love,
Shari Miller

Artwork by Gwen Brennick

March 30– Thursday

Psalm 106: 6-7

John 5:30-47

Exodus 32:7-14

.This Psalm talks about how our ancestors had sinned in Egypt and how we have sinned. Today we still sin. Two thousand years ago people gave no thought to God's many miracles or acts of kindness. Do we? Maybe we do for a while; then we forget about them and return to our old ways. Maybe we don't mean to, but we do. Thankfully, we have a wonderful Lord who forgives us and keeps giving us chances to repent and grow closer to Him. What a wonderful Jesus we have! His precious mercies are new every morning; great is His faithfulness.

Next, we have Exodus. Moses said that at Horeb the people made a calf and worshipped an idol cast from metal. They exchanged their glorious God for an image of a bull which ate grass. They forgot that God saved them by bringing them out of Egypt. God almost destroyed them had it not been for Moses, who stood in the breach before him to keep his wrath from destroying them. What a tragedy this was. God was pretty mad at His people. God was ready to forsake His beloved people. It took Moses to talk and calm Him down.

In John's Gospel, he is also lamenting over the fact that God's beloved people were turning away from Him by going their separate ways. John wanted more than anything to have the people turn back to Jesus, obey His commandments, and walk where He wants to lead them and not where people themselves wants to go. God yearns for us to rejoice in His marvelous light. Unfortunately, some refuse. Those who refuse will spend life on earth and hell in utter darkness forever and ever. Can you imagine what this must be like? John has written this to us as a wake-up call. He doesn't want anyone of us to perish, but to live in Jesus and have life eternal.

I'm expecting to see people who are already in Heaven and those of us who are yet to cross over on the other side of the river.

Deb Anderson

March 31 - Friday

Psalms 27:5-11 or 16:5-11

John 5:19-24

Wisdom 7:24-8:1

Let's focus on both Psalms. For Psalm 27, three words: "tent," "face," and, "level" leap out. "Tent" appears twice, first as a place of refuge, then as a place of religious celebration. To a desert people, a tent protects against the harsh sun so seeing it as a "shelter" (verse 3, NRSV) makes sense. Verse 6 refers to "enemies". A tent is not a "walled fortress"; how much protection can it offer? But what if our enemies are within us: sinful desires causing us to love ourselves and not God or our neighbors? The writer sees salvation in learning the Lord's "way". The tent is also a house of worship, suggesting that we can and should pray anywhere, always. Seeing God's face (verse 8) is paramount. This seems strange since several Old Testament passages said seeing the face of God means death, like the Gorgon of Greek myth. No, too literal! Surely the face must be God's favor. Then there is the word, "level", as in the desired "level path" which the author craves. Why? Doesn't the road to heaven lead one UP to God, just as the evil way leads one DOWN to Hell? Pondering a moment, I picture the elderly walking. Any incline or decline can be a challenge for them. When the road is flat – level – they have an easier time of it. Anyone of any age prefers a smooth surface for walking without rocks to trip over or holes in which to stumble. Yes, wishing in this life for a level path without obstacles is a very smart prayer.

Having done the heavy lifting with Psalm 27, Psalm 16 seems fairly obvious. Talk of "boundary lines" in verse 6 suggest that "level path" and the phrase, "pleasant places" also in verse 6 seems to underscore it. When I find mentions of "Sheol" and "the Pit" (the Hebrew version of Hell) in verse 10 and the phrase, "path of life" in verse 11, I marvel at the connection to Psalm 27. The middle section, verses 7 to 9, is just a straightforward statement of the writer's desire for God, but without Psalm 27's Jack-in-the-Box key words from which connotations pop up for the reader to interpret and assemble like jigsaw pieces. The Psalms offer 150 ways to travel, some more challenging than others, but all paths will lead to God's word if our eyes and ears and heart are open to receive it.

Richard Reid

April 1 - Saturday

Psalm 72:11-17

Ephesians 3:14-19

John 18: 33-37

“This isn’t some kind of practical joke, is it?”, my friend asked the other day. I was telling him about my GPS instrument and how it’s been giving direction—both physical and emotional —throughout my life, with actual examples:

Something told me years ago to talk to my baseball coach, at whom I was livid over an earlier tongue lashing. The time we spent together resulted in reconciliation and A’s (two of them) in classes he taught. Those grades were the difference between graduation on time or another year in school.

Something told me, again years ago, to take a right hand turn off of Old Ridge Rd. onto Five Mile Line Rd. I did and the direct result was a job as an English teacher at Thomas High School...a 26 year tenure that even taught me—so much.

Something told me, just several weeks ago as I slipped on ice and fell against my house, to protect my face as I hit the glass storm door. In the brief second that I had during my fall, I was able to twist my head. The result? Two slight cuts on my chin, not a broken nose or eyes filled with glass, which is surely what would’ve happened.

In all three incidents (and there were lots more), I was being guided-talked to- from something inside of me.

“Tell me about this someone-something inside”, my friend asked with a sly smile. “I call it my personal GPS”, I answered. “Everybody is born with one and it doesn’t cost a cent.” “Aha”, my friend laughed aloud. “GPS is a thing people buy and use to direct their movements. What you mean is GPS...Global Positioning System.” No, I told him. “My GPS is a natural part of human beings. Some call it “belief”...not the machine you’re talking about. My GPS stands for “God’s Practical Solutions”.

“Not an April Fool’s thing?”, my friend frowned. “Only if you don’t use it”, I replied with a smile.

Lee Burgess

April 2 - Sunday

Psalm 130

Romans 8:6-11

Ezekiel 37:1-14

John 11:1-45

Dear God,

Please give direction in my life

And re-direction, love & forgiveness.

When confidence diminishes,

Brighten my path with sunlight,

To guide me through my fears & failures.

Breathe life into me & like a miracle

Let me hear You whisper,

“You can do anything with Me.”

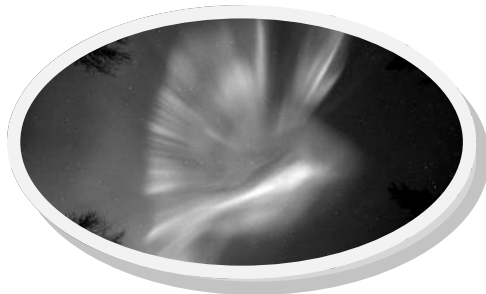
I trust your action in me, Your Spirit in me.

Help me attend to Your call, pleasing you

By following Your plan for me.

Love always, like You have taught me,

Debra



Debra Nelson

April 3-Monday

Psalm 84:7-12

Philippians 4:10-13

Matthew 25:31-40

Opening up the scriptures for the day, I laughed aloud at the passage from Philippians. It was like a door opening on a fresh spring day. Jesus was welcoming me, wondering where I had been and why had it taken so long to get back on track? How would the day be different if we would shift the “to do” list to later and first be quiet and bring our day to the Lord in prayer and to continue this practice as the day unfolded?

These thoughts mimic the famous hymn “What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer...Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged, Take it to the Lord in prayer.”

These themes reoccurred today as I was waiting for children at their Saturday lessons. I discovered no wi-fi, my work computer was out of power, my phone was also limited in operation and I was forced to sit and to just “be.” Without all of these technological wonders, what was I to do for two hours of my time?

My thoughts slipped back to my scriptures and the task of writing this piece. Obviously, there was plenty to do. By actively not having access to any of the distracting ways of these electronic devices, I enjoyed my morning just fine, and have a greater sense of tasks that I have been missing. I also have greater peace from resting from the frenzied pace of the open Internet at my fingertips.

In this day during Lent and beyond, I hope you can gain or regain the feeling of a door opening on a fresh spring day. God is waiting for you to just “be” and see where He can take you in your day. Unplug and de-stress. I am sure you will find a glimmer of fresh air, be given fresh outlook, and probably discover a few God-inspired tasks that are waiting just for you to accomplish.

Erica Ragan

April 4-Tuesday

Psalm 77:11-20 or 98:1-4

Romans 9: 19-33

Exodus 3: 7-12

Luke 6: 27-36

We've all heard it and seen it over the past few months: the negativity, friends who are aren't acting like friends anymore, families who aren't acting like families anymore. Sometimes it is hard to hold our tongues when all we really want to do is say "You're wrong! I don't agree!". Maybe this is why Luke 27-36 seems so fitting. Jesus is teaching his disciples (and us) a lesson. If we are to truly follow him, loving our enemies is not an option. He never said it would be easy, but he also never said that it was negotiable. The Message puts Jesus' directions into contemporary language that makes it pretty clear what Jesus wants us to do: *Luke 27: I say this: Love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst.*

Luke 35-36: Help and give without expecting a return...Live out this God-created identity the way our Father lives toward us, generously and graciously, even when we're at our worst. Our Father is kind; you be kind.

Our Heavenly Father is kind, generous, gracious, and helpful. God created us to be the same. We all know the world is a much happier and brighter place when we do things for others instead of ourselves. We've seen what happens when we offer a smile or a hug. It is easy to love the people with whom we agree...it is harder to love the people with whom we don't see eye to eye. Maybe that's what Jesus meant by "enemies". We are not going to get along with every person we meet, but we can be kind to every person we meet. We can lend a hand without expecting anything in return and even when we are feeling frustrated, annoyed, and angry at everything that is happening, we can remember that God is still with us. He is still writing the story and only he knows the ending.

We are created in God's image and it is our job to "live out this God-created identity the way our Father lives toward us, generously and graciously".

Keisha Stokes

April 5 - Wednesday

Canticle 2 or 13

John 8:31-42

Daniel 3:14-20; 24-28

Daniel is one of the “Prophetic Books” but, this story seems less prophetic and more like a reminder. Nonetheless we have 3 guys, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who are non conformist in the extreme. Nebuchadnezzar gathers everyone from the Babylonian Empire out onto a plain where he has erected a golden statue which he expects everyone to bow down to. Our 3 guys don’t bow and they are called out. They tell the king that their God is a powerful God that will save them from the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar orders the furnace stoked up to 7 times its normal temperature and orders them tossed in. His guards are burned up in the process but Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are still walking around the furnace with a 4th figure that had the “appearance of a God.” Nebuchadnezzar orders them out of the fire and to everyone’s surprise “not even the smell of fire came from them.” He sees the light, yet again. Everyone is now ordered to honor the Jewish God and laws or be destroyed.

To me, this story reiterates the salvation stories of the Old Testament... the continual falling into sin and gaining redemption. It is a lesson we are still learning today. The need for power can bring down many a good person. We need to be reminded daily that the most important thing in our lives is not power, but love...love of our families, love of our fellow man, love of our planet and love of God.

“We look forward to the time when the Power of Love will replace the Love of Power. Then will our world know the blessings of peace.”

William Gladstone

Chris Norris

April 6 - Thursday

Psalm 105:4-11

John 8:51-59

Genesis 17:1-8

In Genesis, God made a covenant with Abram. He changed his name to Abraham and promised him he would be the father of many nations, and of many kings. This everlasting covenant between God and Abraham and his numerous descendants gave them the land of Canaan and guaranteed that God would always be their God.

The Psalm reemphasizes this promise made to Abraham and encourages his descendants to “look to the Lord and his strength; seek his favor always. He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made for a thousand generations.”

The passage from John shows an angry crowd believing that Jesus was possessed by demons. They did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God. As Jesus tried to make the connection between God, Jesus and Abraham the crowd grew angrier. Jesus slipped away as they made attempts to stone him.

There are two things that strike me from these passages. The first is that the world we live in is not that different from the time of Jesus. We still have people who react without understanding, and hurt each other over differences in beliefs.

The 2nd and much more positive idea is that from the beginning of time, as recorded in the book of Genesis, God had a plan for his people. He promised to be our God for “thousands of generations.”

I take comfort in being part of that plan and knowing that I can always “Seek his face” in times of confusion, trouble and especially times of Thanksgiving!

Janet Maier

April 7- Friday

Psalm 72:1-8

2 Peter 1:3-11

Jeremiah 31:10-14

Matthew 5:3-16

In Psalm 72, it describes the ideal qualities that a king, or ruler should have to govern his people justly and fairly. How ironic that this reading comes at a time when our nation seems so divided about how our newly elected president is trying to do his job.

In 2 Peter, he explains to us how God has blessed us with everything we need to know in order for us to be godly, and have brotherly affection for others. He also explains that having a strong faith enables us to exhibit and perform these gifts in our dealings with those around us. This mention of faith reminds me of a homily I once heard. There was once a village that was suffering through a major drought. They all gathered together to pray to their God for relief from this hardship they were experiencing. In other words, they were praying for rain. But...only one small boy brought an umbrella. Who had the most faith?

In Matthew, Jesus shared the message we refer to as the Beatitudes. These are blessing statements that describe the qualities of those who truly try to follow Jesus: assisting the poor, providing outreach to the needy, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and working for justice. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could each do just one of these? Wishing you all a happy and healthy Easter.....HopHop!



April 8– Saturday

Psalm 84:1-6 or 133

Ephesians 4:11-16

Matthew 21:12-16

The theme I take home from these readings is that mankind possesses a free will to exist on this planet earth, and God allows us to use this gift as we, as individuals or communities, see appropriate. In the bible, for the most part, humans have been allowed to exercise this God given right of free will.

Although, as noted in Matthew, Jesus lost it a little and overthrew the tables of the money changers in the temple, saying they turned His house of prayer into a den of thieves. So I have a little conflict with this one as God is supposed to be all forgiving. However, I am comforted that our spiritual Father experiences such emotions as frustration and anger (with us oh-so- perfect- a species). Since I have no business judging God, I will roll with it and remember that although God is all loving, there seems to be a theme our heavenly parents would want to live by.

Our every day existence is fraught with dilemmas between how to behave in a method that pleases God and what responses aid in our emotional, financial, or social survival. When we are afraid our security is threatened, from a schoolyard to a global scale, we are faced with a decision on what is the right thing to do, to say, or to act. It is then that we need to remember that love is always the answer; to try to do unto others as we would want done to us and to err is human and that God forgives us.— no matter what. Rejoice that we were given free will and a vessel to implement this free will.

Ephesians comments that all parts of the body are complementary to each other. When the body works for good, its love is edified. This suggests the contagious nature of love and how it can spread from each part of the body, then as a loving being, then, through the community. I pray that every day, I can remember to exercise my free will to chose to spread God's unyielding love from self to others and make it an epidemic.

Brenda Pierce

April 9 - Palm Sunday

Psalms 31:9-16

Philippians 2:5-11

Isaiah 50:4-9

Matthew 27:11-54

It has always seemed a little odd to me, a little off-base, that at the beginning of our worship service on this day we open with the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, but end the service with a reenactment of his Passion. We wave palm branches and sing “Hallelujahs” (while parents quell the palm sword-fights that inevitably break out among our youngsters). It’s more than a “bummer” – it’s the penultimate Party-Pooper Sunday! What author would write a book that opens, “Here comes our hero! What a welcome! Oh, by the way, he gets executed before you get to Chapter Two.” Hardly makes you want to read any more chapters. It’s like going to the dentist for a teeth whitening and coming home with a root canal.

Historically the church has used this service to remind those who do not attend Holy Week services of the events that formed the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. But some people find it hard to be reminded of Jesus’ betrayal and terrible suffering. While watching Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of the Christ” for the first time, with a clergy member (not an Episcopalian) sitting next to me, I broke down and wept during the whipping scene. It was too much to bear. The cleric asked me, “Why are you crying?” All I could think to say in reply was, “Why aren’t you?”

Over the years many people have advocated for not including the Passion narrative at the end of the Palm Sunday service, preferring a day filled only with joy and praises. I suspect it was not all joy and praises on that first Palm Sunday. The disciple Thomas said, “Let us go with him to Jerusalem to die.” Surely the last thing the disciples wanted was a huge tumultuous welcome that would catch the attention of the Temple authorities as well as the Roman governor. Picture yourself as a disciple of Jesus on Palm Sunday – wouldn’t you feel an element of fear mixed in amongst the joyful celebrating all around you?

Palm Sunday, for me, is the glory of Christ’s faithfulness in being willing to complete his mission on earth. He knows human nature well enough to know that we will always have sorrows mingled with joys. Jesus accepts this sweet welcome knowing exactly how bitter the suffering to come will be. Our Palm Sunday service is both parade and Passion. Perhaps we should call it “Bitter-sweet Sunday” instead?

Steve Robb

April 10 - Monday

Psalm 36:5-11

Hebrews 9:11-15

Isaiah 49:1-9

John 12:1-11

From Psalm 36: “Thy steadfast love, Oh Lord, extends to the heavens, thy faithfulness to the clouds . . . How precious is thy steadfast love, Oh God! The children of men take refuge in the shadow of thy wings.”

The psalm uses the word “steadfast” several times to describe God. This is one quality of God that I have appreciated many times in my life. When I have faced hardship or struggled with despair, God has always been there as a comforting presence for me.

The psalm says God’s faithfulness to us extends to the clouds. When we reciprocate this faithfulness back to God, we can count on Him to support us in our troubled times and to be our refuge.

We can find rest and renewal in the shadow of God’s wings. Amen!



Kathy Stokes

April 11 - Tuesday

Psalm 71:1-14

1 Corinthians 1: 18-31

Isaiah 49:1-7

John 12: 20-36

Psalm 71: 1 -14 "Be thou to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for thou art my rock and my fortress.

"A Mighty Fortress is Our God, a bulwark never failing;

As you can imagine, when I read Scripture, songs often pop into my head. Today was no exception.

The Psalm rang out with Martin Luther's hymn. And then throughout the psalm, the whole purpose of why we sing kept coming to focus:

v. 6 My praise is continually of Thee.

v. 8 My mouth is filled with thy praise, and with thy glory all the day.

v. 14 and I will praise thee yet more and more.

I sometimes ask the kids, "How is singing at Good Shepherd different than singing in school? And they start to realize, we aren't performing here. When we sing we are singing prayers to God, we are singing praise to God and we are sharing God's love and word with those who are listening to our songs.

"My mouth is filled with thy praise, and with thy glory all the day" v. 8



One of my first organ teachers carried her music in a case and taped to the inside cover was a quote she found somewhere that was attributed to J. S. Bach. It's been many years, but as I recall it said:

*"The purpose of music is to glorify God
And edify thy neighbor."*

At the bottom of his manuscripts, J. S. Bach would often write,

"Soli Deo Gloria"

"To God alone be glory!"

May your heart be filled with praise today as you ponder Psalm 71.

And..... we sing together:

*"Praise God from whom all blessings flow...Praise Him all creatures here
below...Praise Him above ye heavenly host...Praise Father, Son and Holy
Ghost! AMEN!*



April 12 - Wednesday

Psalm 70

Hebrews 12:1-3

Isaiah 50:4-9

John 13:21-32

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Hebrews 12: 1-3 (King James version)

Now that we are in the home stretch of Lent, it will soon be OK to go back to eating chocolate or potato chips, or whichever goodie was given up for the past 36 days. Amen! But, just because Lent is coming to a close, the hard work still must continue, and to be followers of our God, the business of being Christ-like is like running an ultra marathon. I guess being good was never supposed to be easy, but the payoff, eternal joy, is the bargaining chip and promise that makes it all worthwhile.

Scriptures tell us that nothing is more important to God than the salvation of humanity; so important, in fact that God as Jesus endured a human form and lived an every day human life, only to suffer unimaginably in the last hours of life. It seems to me that as we have been saved through the life and death of Jesus, that we ought to rejoice in that unending love, and practice love, happiness, and peace. Eternal joy is the last thing I think of when I am running late and get cut off in traffic. There are more colorful words that come to mind. But alas! There will be other commutes, other traffic issues, and many, many other challenging and annoying situations every day until death. So, here is the ultra marathon I must run with (God help me) patience. Good thing there is chocolate.

I hope and pray for serenity and perseverance for the race, and the vision to see the finish line, with the winner's cup of never ending joy in this life and for always.

Brenda Pierce

April 13 - Maundy Thursday

Psalm 116:1;10-17

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Exodus 12:1-14

John 13:1-17; 31b-35

I chose Maundy Thursday because I wanted to learn more about it and its meaning. The word, “Maundy”, comes from the Latin word, “mandatum,” or commandment. It has only one use in the English language: as an adjective to describe the day before Jesus’ crucifixion. You won’t find it anywhere else. Ever.

This day, of course, may best be remembered as the day of the Last Supper when Jesus shared the bread and a cup of wine at a sacred meal with his disciples. We repeat this sacrament regularly in church as a part of the Holy Eucharist. The word, “Eucharist”, comes from the Greek meaning, “thanksgiving.”

Another important ritual we remember on this day was when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples in an act of humility. As a young girl, I remember watching the Pope ceremoniously washing feet on nightly television news. To me it seemed as awkward and as strange as it apparently felt for Jesus’ disciples.

But Jesus did another thing on this day. He issued a new “commandment,” which we read in John 13: 34. “. . . love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” I’m not sure that it’s given as much gravity or emphasis as the Last Supper or the foot washing of Maundy Thursday. But it requires neither bread and wine nor water and towel. And instead of practicing it as a ceremony daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly in church, it is something we can do anywhere any time and as often as we wish, if it is in our hearts to do it.



Allison Mayer

April 14—Good Friday

Psalm 22

Hebrews 10:16-25

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

John 18:1-19:42



MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?

Here is an example of when it felt like when God forgot about me. I was working for a contract security company. I was a site supervisor with five guys under me for several years and had received a “Supervisor of the 3rd Quarter” award. Then, through no fault of my own the job was gone. The client decided to change the contract, eliminating the supervisor position. I accepted a position to work in Michigan for the contract company. Two months later the managers gave me a challenge coin for doing a good job for them. I returned to New York with no permanent position available.

Father Lance always tells us we can’t experience Easter’s resurrection without going through a Good Friday, but we may go through several Good Fridays and Easter Mornings. I’m going through another rough patch. I know God’s got a plan for me and things will work out just like they always do.

Beth Dinan

April 15—Holy Saturday

Psalms 31:1-4; 15-16

1 Peter 4:1-8

Job 14:1-14

Matthew 27:57-66

After reading the scriptures in Psalms, Job, and 1 Peter, I definitely could feel God's Presence and sense that we are in His care. Many words are found here that bring hopefulness to each of us. These are strong messages, giving HOPE:

Refuge

Trust

Hope

Enthusiasm

Strength

If you feel lost, remember, seek the will of God.

Stay away from evil desires, drunkenness, carousing, idolatry and judgment.

Live in the Spirit of God's eyes...



Angela Masters

April 16—Easter Sunday

Psalm 118: 1-2; 14-24

Colossians 3:1-4

Jeremiah 31:1-6

John 20:1-18

Happy Easter! If you didn't skip ahead then this is the page you've been waiting for.

Our readings for Easter start with Old Testament, Jeremiah 31:1-6. Jeremiah's prophecies offer the exiled Jewish people hope for the future based on past promises and new Prophecy from The Lord. Jeremiah is reassuring the Israelites their exile will end and The Lord will rebuild the faithful who survive the sword. This must have been of enormous comfort to the Jewish Diaspora throughout the ages. In hindsight, this prophecy also foreshadows the Christian Messiah surviving death and the faithful celebrating this event.

Approximately 450 years after the time of Jeremiah, Christ was crucified, died and was resurrected. This is SUCH a life altering event that each of our 4 Gospels has its' own explaining narrative. This year, we are focusing on the Gospel of John 20: 1-18. Johns description has Mary finding an empty tomb, with her fellow disciples confirming it. Jesus appears to her as first a Gardener, then as himself with the message of the Good News for her to bring to the other disciples.

I love that Jesus revealed himself to a woman, but that's not all there is to love here. Before Jesus reveals himself to Mary, when the other disciples also see the empty tomb and leave, John writes "He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying." At this point, no one has any idea where Jesus' body has gone or what will happen next. Can you imagine how grief stricken, scared and confused they must have been?

As followers of the recently crucified Jesus they were also certainly in danger of being harmed by the Roman or even Jewish authorities. Why would they stay nearby? Especially after seeing an empty tomb, no Jesus, alive or dead. I think the sentence “Then the disciples went back to where they were staying,” shows the depth of their spiritual faith in God and personal devotion to Jesus and is a powerful example to us, about hanging on to our faith through our own times of grief, pain and confusion. We are an Easter people— we may not know what’s coming next but we know if we can hold on long enough it will be our salvation.

Our next reading is Colossians 3: 1-4. The crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Jesus is now a completed event we commemorate each year with Easter. I think it’s worth reminding ourselves that we’re Easter People all year round. Colossians does this by encouraging us to live in Christ. Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is. Set your minds on things above, not earthly things. When Christ appears you also will appear in Glory. (Those were the cliff notes)!

I saved Psalm 118 for last even though it’s first on the list I was given. I love this Psalm, one of my all-time very favorite lines is line 22-23; “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes.” Back in the day Jesus *was* rejected, over and over, different towns, groups of people, even many of his own Jewish brethren. But, with his ministry, death and resurrection he became the cornerstone of a whole movement, a whole new way of relating to God. This has continued to be true every day since then. Jesus becomes the cornerstone of faith for many people, one at a time, every day. Again, creating those Easter People!

Have a Happy and Blessed Easter.

Candy Pape

We are Easter people!



Alleluia!
Christ has set us free!



Photo by Mary White



Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Colossians 3:1-4