

ST PAULS MEMORIAL CHURCH
at the UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA



Lenten Devotional
2018

Ash Wednesday, February 14

Psalm 51:1-7 • Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 • 2 Corinthians 5:20b –
6:10 • Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Days of thick darkness
the road ahead
unseen
and yet
a voice is calling
Come back, come back to
me
I am full of loving kindness
tender mercies
I will walk with
you
Take
my
hand

Thursday, February 15

Psalm 37:1-18 • Habakkuk 3:1-18 • Philippians 3:12-21
• John 17:1-8

“Do not fret because of the wicked,” the Psalmist says, “. . . it leads only to evil. For the wicked shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.” Habakkuk sings, “Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vine . . . yet I will rejoice in the Lord.” Chill, they tell us, God is still God—and in charge. Timely, these “nevertheless” readings, but it’s *kairos*, not *chronos*: God’s timing, not ours.

Then, as usual, the New Testament readings make us think again about what happens in God’s *kairos*, what God’s kind of intervention is likely to be. In Jesus’ “final discourses,” recorded in John’s Gospel, Jesus calls on God to glorify him so that he may glorify God. But we know the rest of the story, that Christ’s glory comes in and through torture and death before its completion in resurrection and ascension. Then Paul, while agreeing with Psalmist and prophet that the wicked can end only in destruction, abruptly reminds us that “our citizenship is in heaven” and our salvation is a transformation that changes *us*, conforming us “to the body of [Christ’s] glory,” the body that is walking to Calvary in the full knowledge that it is the only way home.

Not just this brief season of Lent but also our much longer Lent of political, social, and ecological turmoil call us to acknowledge our sinfulness—our complicity, willed blindness, greed, apathy, and more—and to repent and be changed. It is the hope manifest in these readings, faith’s ringing “nevertheless,” that makes it possible for us to gaze honestly upon our sins, things done and left undone, individual and communal, that have brought us to this crossroad. “He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory.” Thanks be to God.

— Margaret Mohrmann

Friday, February 16

Psalm 31 • Ezekial 18:1-4, 25-32 • Philippians 4:1-9 •
John 17:9-19

Cast away all the transgressions . . . and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. [Ezekial 18-31].

Rejoice . . . and the peace that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts. [Philippians 4:4–7]

Caught up in it all as in a spider's web
I cannot and do not wish to
Untangle myself from
The mesh of my day-to-day life
Too busy with tasks, responsibilities, excuses
Not enough time . . .
I hardly notice God
I do give thanks for the strength of the web
Built mostly with love and good connectedness
I do rejoice in all I have
Seeing the beauty of the web
In the places where it catches the light
Yet my soul still longs for a deeper inner peace
To let loose the tangled threads
To mend the broken places
To let go the fear of uncertainty
To turn around when going in the wrong direction
To build with the tool of a strong yet gentle faith
If I would but take more frequently
A Mary Oliver moment —
To know the taste of pond water . . . amazed by the tasting¹
To see a swan as an armful of blossoms . . . figuring out what beauty is for²
To have weeds in a vacant lot be a doorway . . . allowing for another voice to
speak³
Then perhaps I would know the peace that surpasses all understanding
Then perhaps my soul would be renewed . . .
If I would but commit my spirit . . .
Placing my heart in the hands of God.

Alluding to poems by Mary Oliver: ¹"At Blackwater Pond"; ²"Swan"; ³"Praying"

— Anne Cressin

Saturday, February 17

Psalm 30 • Ezekiel 39:21-29 • Philippians 4:10-20 •
John 17:20-26

In a beautiful Psalm of healing, we are assured, ***“Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.”*** How I, and maybe you, yearn for this to be true. Usually I do believe it is true. Well, at least there are moments when I sense that it may be true. If we attend to the news of our world, the shocking suffering of our friends and families, we will have to wonder about this “joy in the morning.” Is this joy an empty promise—a platitude along the lines of “it’s all for the best?” I don’t think so.

Let’s listen to Ezekiel. ***“I am the Lord their God because I sent them into exile among the nations, then gathered them . . . I will leave none of them behind . . . I will never again hide my face . . . I will pour out my spirit. . . .”*** In spite of anger and frustration, God is tender. He wants to be at one with the people of Israel. He wants authentic connection, to love and be loved freely.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus beseeches God to shield his disciples. ***“As you, Father, are in me, and I am in you, may they also be in us. . . . The glory you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one . . . Father, I desire also that whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”*** We are offered a loving and generous God, a God who wants to be within us. Love radiating to and fro among us. All love craves mutuality. Jesus asks for an intimacy among God and Jesus and the disciples (us!). Let us look to all who are given to us, everyone: friends, families, parishioners, people on the street, people from history, perhaps creation itself. Think of how we laugh together, hold hands, pray as one. Let us love them all, giving and receiving with open hearts. Then I believe that, ***“. . . joy comes with the morning.”***

— Nan Mayer

First Sunday of Lent, February 18

Psalm 25:1-10 • Genesis 9:8-17 • 1 Peter 3:18-22 •
Mark 1:9-15

Mark 1:12-13: At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. [NIV]

These two verses are all that Mark has to say about the temptations of Christ. We are familiar with the detailed descriptions in Matthew and Luke. This story used to teach me that Jesus was better than me, because he resisted hunger, greed and envy. But as I grew, I learned new perspectives. For one, I think that Jesus faced temptation regularly in the next three years, all the way to the Cross. If he set an example of anything for me, it was the power of repeating the right choices until doing so becomes easier.

It is comforting to think of Jesus as being perfect. According to the Bible stories, Jesus was not at all the first perfect being to be tempted. Lucifer, the most perfect of the angels close to God, also made a choice: to fall in love with himself. As Satan, Lucifer and his followers appear repeatedly in the human story, fighting their own Creator.

To me, this story is a cliff-hanger that deserves more than two verses. Among all creatures, only humans and angels have free will. By definition, our wills must be free to reject God (or, more accurately, to choose ourselves instead of God). For one who is fully human and fully divine, there is only one temptation that could have any meaning: the sin of pride. Pride brought down Lucifer, and pride almost cost our Lord his Lordship. Jesus knew that he was in and of the Father and one with the Spirit, but by becoming human, he had a choice to be himself, and what is more essentially human than our sense of self? In choosing *islam* (Arabic for “submission”), he suppressed his own identity and, while remaining human, remained one with God. In so doing, he set us marching toward our happy ending.

Thanks be to God for Jesus, who stepped back from the brink and saved us.

— Jonathan Hine

Monday, February 19

Psalm 41 • Genesis 37:1-11 • 1 Corinthians 1:1-19 •
Mark 1:1-13

Psalm 41 is viewed as the closing psalm of Book 1 of the five books which constitute The Psalter. Herein David asks God for mercy during a time of serious illness, confesses he has sinned against God, seeks forgiveness, and asks for strength in the face of personal attacks.

The words, in terms of both praise and prayer, are profound and speak with the same relevance today as at the time of the psalmist. Blessed is the person who has regard for the weak (v.1). Such compassion will be rewarded by the Lord with protection during times of trouble, sickness and character attacks (v.2-3).

These verses brought to mind a quote I once used in a speech I wrote. The quote was from the late Sen. Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, who said, “The moral test of government is how it treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped.”

Against today’s backdrop of division, racism and malice toward many, the psalmist offers a way forward if we are willing to live his words by accepting Presiding Bishop Michael Curry’s exhortation to be Crazy Christians . . . “to love like Jesus, to give like Jesus, to forgive like Jesus, to do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with God—like Jesus. Crazy enough to dare to change the world.”

In the closing verse, we are implored to praise the Lord “from everlasting to everlasting.” As I read this, I was reminded of the words from the fourth verse of the hymn *Of the Father’s Love Begotten*—a message not only for Christmas, but indeed for the entire liturgical year.

*Christ, to thee with God the Father,
and, O Holy Ghost, to thee,
hymn and chant and high thanksgiving,
and unwearied praises be;
honor, glory and dominion,
and eternal victory,
evermore and evermore!*

— Steve Bevis

Tuesday, February 20

Psalm 48 • Genesis 37:12-24 • 1 Corinthians 1:20-31 •
Mark 1:14-28

“Behold this dreamer cometh” (Genesis 37: 19). So speak Joseph’s brothers as he approaches, and they plot to destroy him.

In 2018, the dreamer is a both a political and spiritual metaphor. The “dreamers” in the news are children of illegal immigrants brought to this country through no fault of their own, but who have no status as citizens. Will they be forced to leave the only home they’ve known?

Another dreamer, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., dedicated his life to achieving his vision of equality and justice. In his 1963 “I have a dream” speech, Dr. King reached for a vision of a community in which the sons and daughters of slaves and the sons and daughters of slaveholders would be able to sit down and find reconciliation, a country where the declaration that all men (and women) are created equal would become a reality. And he dreamed and died for a nation of freedom and justice.

The dreamer Joseph also became a doer and a healer as he reconciled with his brothers who would have killed him. And in Mark’s Gospel reading, Jesus calls his disciples to follow him, and they marvel as he heals a distraught man.

How can I follow Jesus’ teachings to help myself and others heal from hurt, anger and violence that still rocks our community after the summer of 2017? How do I respond spiritually to the plight of the dreamers and to the injustices that exist in our world and in our town?

God, help me to find during this Lenten season an opening to make a difference in my beloved community.

— Kay Slaughter

Wednesday, February 21

Psalm 53 • Genesis 37:25-36 • 1 Corinthians 2:1-13 •
Mark 1:29-45

Mark 1:29-45

1 Corinthians 2:1-13

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

I came to the church by way of Evangelicalism, a tradition that can be difficult to describe to outsiders, particularly those who only know it by its often fraught political “fruit.” But Episcopalians can learn from Evangelicals, even if we use different words to describe our shared faith. Born from the “plain truth,” Bible-alone rhetoric of American revivals and Holiness movements of the nineteenth century, the denominations I was a part of took no issue with a *literal* understanding of Jesus’ miracles.

When we learn in today’s Gospel reading that Jesus healed the ailing with the touch of a hand and cast out demons (literal demons) with a word, it can be easy for us to try to scientize it—to excuse it or explain it away with the tools of our contemporary context. But I think we lose something when we don’t allow ourselves to take it at face value.

And that’s the *mystery* of our faith.

The liturgical tradition and rich church history Episcopalians embrace allows for mystery. It allows us to wrestle with belief at the very same time that we proclaim the Nicene Creed, to look in on our symbols—like the cross or the nativity—with curiosity even after years of familiarity with the church. And yes, it allows us to believe, against all odds, that Jesus has and continues to transform things and people that never stood a chance of changing otherwise, in ways that are unexplainable or impossible to articulate.

This mystery, likewise, reveals profound personal grace: we don’t have to know everything.

— Leah Wise

Thursday, February 22

Psalm 50 • Genesis 39:1-23 • 1 Corinthians 2:14 – 3:15
• Mark 2:1-12

The Gospel lesson for today embodies, I think, the great theme of faith in action.

Mark describes four men who seek to bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus for healing. They are blocked by the crowd, so they take the man to the roof of the place, break through and lower the man to Jesus.

Imagine these men: They hear of Jesus, his words and his work of healing, and they decide to help their friend. They arrange a conveyance and set themselves at the four corners of the pallet. Perhaps they pray together before setting out. They lift together and walk—how far? The paralyzed man sways back and forth with the steps of his friends—perhaps it is an uncomfortable journey for him, but fueled by hope.

Then they reach the edge of the crowd—what can we do now? The roof—find tools—break through—who has rope? a sling? Cries from below, “What is happening? Will we be crushed when the ceiling falls? Look, a man lowered from above!” They peer down through the hole. Imagine Jesus: He sees the ceiling open, the hands lowering a body to the floor. He knows immediately the self-sacrificing faith of the men above and the hopeful faith of the man before him. It is faith in action, faith with hands and feet, overcoming obstacles for a nearer presence with God.

This is the faith that will find forgiveness and healing. Amen.

— Charles Lancaster

Friday, February 23

Psalm 54 • Genesis 40:1-23 • 1 Corinthians 3:16-23 •
Mark 2:13-22

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

We know quite a bit as a species. We know how to create structures that maintain comfortable temperatures. We know how to speak to humans on the opposite side of the planet, and how to build vessels that can escape the gravity of that planet. We know how to prevent disease and build submarines and manipulate atoms. We know more than any human cohort before us. We have reason to consider ourselves “wise.”

But despite all our knowledge, our collective wisdom, in our minds we still suffer. Some of us are still anxious about the future, some are lonely, some afraid, some covetous, some bitter and resentful of ourselves and of others. We search desperately for ways to work out these problems on our own, tapping more and more into the collective of human knowledge—*surely in the vast swaths of information the internet provides, someone has written an article to solve my internal misery.*

Often, we find something helpful, maybe even something that motivates change in us for a while. But in this reading, we are cautioned: “do not deceive yourselves.” Sustained growth cannot happen alone. To change, deeply and meaningfully, we need a community to support and encourage us—the temple of Christ. We need the church to provide guidance in helping one another and the world. We need God, as the first source of all knowledge, all wisdom.

Let us not boast of human leaders, then, or argue about what we do or don’t know. The understanding that we don’t have all the answers is a key element of humility, which is itself a key element of love. Let us embrace one another in that humility. In doing so, may we find that while we cannot *know* all things as God does, we *have* all things—through His love, and by His mercy.

— Virginia Greene

Saturday, February 24

Psalm 139 • Genesis 41:1-13 • 1 Corinthians 4:1-7 •

Mark 2:23 – 3:6

The Sabbath—creating a space to allow for knowing Jesus in our daily lives. A reflective pause, a breath of fresh air, a gentle touch, the Eucharist, and the presence of acceptance without judgment.

Mark 2:27-28: *The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.*

As a child, I wrestled with the concept of the Sabbath. We did not have breakfast before church on Sunday. Although enjoying a hearty lunch after church, I was perplexed by why we were not able to eat before church on Sunday. Before school it was mandatory to eat breakfast. Because it was Sunday, was this sense or nonsense?

In later years working in churches and in retail, Sundays were included and busy. What was this concept of the Sabbath to be honored? To see Jesus healing on the Sabbath, but asking for the outstretched hand. The image of the Sistine Chapel.

Mark 3:4 *Stretch out your hand. He stretched it out and his hand was completely restored.*

Jesus' request is to meet him with our presence. Very simply and as we are.

Psalm 139:1 *You have searched me Lord, and you know me.*

This is for today and tomorrow and always. To honor the Sabbath is to pause, to take the breath, inhale and exhale, to accept the touch that reaches out to us, letting go of judgment, accepting. Accepting Christ.

1 Corinthians 4:1- 4 *This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. . . . It is the Lord who judges me.*

The Sabbath is offered, as an outstretched hand, to “still” ourselves as in contemplative prayer, to let go of judgment, both internal and external, the chance to pause for a moment, a day, the Sabbath, or our lives to know Jesus.

— Kelley Lewis

Second Sunday of Lent, February 25

Psalm 22:23-31 • Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 • Romans 4:13-25 • Mark 9:2-9

If you look at the reading for today, you will see that we have a passage from Genesis, then Paul's interpretation of that passage in his letter to the Romans. Paul makes many of his arguments about Jesus and what his death and resurrection mean for us by interpreting the Hebrew Bible. Remember, the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament was just the Bible to the earliest Christians and for Paul. The Church had not yet designated or finished writing a New Testament. We should remember this whenever we look at the Hebrew Bible. I have, unfortunately, encountered some Christians who feel the Hebrew Bible is just full of law and the wrath of God and would prefer to just ignore it. This is a very old impulse, dating back at least to the Christian thinker Marcion in the second century AD. This impulse is also wrong-headed and ought to be resisted. As we begin to see in our Romans passage for today, the gospel of righteousness through faith, the overwhelming power of God's grace, and a God of love all came from people steeped in the Hebrew Bible, like Jesus and Paul. It was the Hebrew Bible that gave birth to the ideas we cherish most in the New Testament.

I have also seen another troubling trend among some Christians. Some people are afraid to interpret the Hebrew Bible christologically—with Christ in mind—or with the message of the New Testament in mind. They insist that the writers of the Hebrew Bible could not have had Christ in mind, therefore we shouldn't do the type of thing Paul does in our reading from Romans. While historical critical scholars in the academy certainly shouldn't interpret the Old Testament in light of the New, it is okay for Christians to do so. We can accept that the Hebrew Bible is inspired on many levels, having both meanings that would be recognized by the Jews and Israelites who wrote it, and meanings only discerned through the guidance of the Holy Spirit by Christians centuries later.

Monday, February 26

Psalm 56 • Genesis 41:46-57 • 1 Corinthians 4:8-21 •
Mark 3:7-19a

“He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons.”

Twelve

Chosen

Named as apostles

“ . . . Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is Sons of Thunder); and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomen, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.”

Multitudes throughout the ages

Redeemed

Named as heirs through hope

The twelve

The multitudes

Sent out to proclaim the message

Called to be servants of Christ

Courage

Selflessness

Radical love

*“My vows to you I must perform, O God;
I will render thank offerings to you.
For you have delivered my soul from death,
and my feet from falling,
so that I may walk before God
in the light of life.”*

The twelve

The multitudes

Sent out to proclaim the message

Called to be servants of Christ

Give me courage, selflessness, radical love

— Christie Thomas

Tuesday, February 27

Psalm 61 • Genesis 42:1-17 • 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 •
Mark 3:19b-35

“They came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, ‘Behold, thy mother and they brethren without seek for thee.’ And he answered them, saying, ‘Who is my mother, or my brethren?’ And he looked round about him on them which sat about him, and said, ‘Behold my mother and my brethren! For whoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother.’” Mark 3:31-25

Christ’s incarnation, ministry, and crucifixion challenge our narrow, human notions of family and blood lines, tribe and patriotism. Privileged positions attained through a family name, a sense of self that is propped up by supposed noble lineages and material wealth, or being a citizen of the most militarized, powerful nation the world has ever seen: these mean nothing to God. Overcoming these false refuges and idols of the mind lies at the heart of the Lenten season, at the heart of Jesus’s command to pick up our cross. We are asked by Christ to constantly transcend our limited identities, our false selves, and so recover our true selves at a deeper level.

And what of this true self recovered at a deeper level? This too becomes an idol and must be given up! Like the layers of an onion, Christ peels away the layers of our false self, year after year. Christ asks that we empty ourselves at the foot of His Cross, he beckons us “Die, that you might live.”

Our Rector has suggested, preaching on the feast of St. Paul, that we become a church of conversion. What does this mean? One meaning perhaps is to be a church that is constantly dying to, transcending, and reinventing herself; to be a church that seeks to widen the notion of “mother,” and “brother,” and “sister,” in each other. We are such a church! Yet, while our earthly pilgrimage lasts, let’s continue to encourage each other to take greater risks in and for Christ, groping for the unknown frontiers of conversion in the far country.

Wednesday, February 28

Psalm 72 • Genesis 42:18-28 • 1 Corinthians 5:6 – 6:8 •
Mark 4:1-20

The Parable of the Sower seems to have a straightforward message that emphasizes the importance of an open heart and mind—a readiness for the word and works of the Lord that is beyond openness and even eagerness and more about sustained preparation and cultivation. Are we tending to whatever practices we have that keep us centered and in a place where we can hear and notice the Lord made manifest in our lives each day?

In 1 Corinthians 5:8 we are reminded that the gift of the Feast isn't just an invitation we receive at church but rather the choice we have each day to live into the grace of the gifts of our Christian life. To feast with “sincerity and truth” allows the seeds of the Sower to bring abundance. By purging “malice and wickedness”—overt evil as well as daily distractions that disrupt the sowing of the seeds—we are creating fertile ground to receive, grow and share the gifts of God's word.

Part of my spiritual practice that helps ground me each morning is a reading meditation. While I rotate the readings each year, for a long time I have closed with the following prayer from Marianne Williamson. If you have a prayer/reading that means a lot to you I would be interested in receiving it. erikaviccellio@hotmail.com

Dear God,

I give you this morning. Please take away my despair of yesterday. Help me to forgive the things that caused me pain and would keep me bound. Help me to begin again. Please bless my path and illumine my mind. I surrender to you the day ahead. Please bless every person or situation I will encounter. Make me who you would have me be that I may do as you would have me do. Please enter my heart and remove all anger, fear and pain. Renew my soul and free my spirit. Thank you, God, for this day. Amen.

— Erika Viccellio

Thursday, March 1

Psalm 70 • Genesis 42:29-38 • 1 Corinthians 6:12-30 •
Mark 4:21-34

Mark 4: 33-34: ³³With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; ³⁴he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

Wouldn't that be helpful—to have been at one of the private meetings that Jesus had with his disciples where he explained everything. No more wondering what He really meant when He said (25) “For to those who have much, more will be given; and from those who have nothing even what they have will be taken away.” This particular quote in Mark is most bothersome to me as a parable, given that it can also be used to support Ayn Rand's thoughts about how the economic world should be.

Why does that bother me? Because parts of the Bible have been interpreted not that long ago to allow slavery, to condemn certain personal choices, and to construct unequal societies. And they could be used that way again.

Yes, religious scholars (and the not-so scholarly) have offered centuries of interpretations for the many parables. And yes, apostles wrote of their time with Jesus and their interpretation of Jesus' messages in the parables.

Some of the other parables in today's readings are much easier to understand. That famous mustard seed, and the light under the bushel basket, for instance. Seeds grow and lights light, now as in Jesus' time.

Here we are millennia advanced (well . . .) in our comprehension skills, limited to sayings and stories provided to simple farmers, fishermen, and shepherds so long ago. It's all we have, but it does get frustrating. As we process through this time of Lent and Easter, it behooves me to do the best I can to listen to the words spoken long ago, and contemplate their meaning for me today.

Perhaps I should go fishing.

Friday, March 2

Psalm 69 • Genesis 43:1-15 • 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 •
Mark 4:35-41

Jesus Calms the Storm: ³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. ⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” ⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Whenever someone asks me, do you really believe Jesus performed all those miracles? I answer, “I am from New York, I believe them all except the virgin birth.” And I do it to keep it light and funny. What I really think is this: in Mark 4:35-41, the disciples of Jesus are scared, the waves are huge, and Jesus calms the waters and them. This is similar to what I witnessed once working in city government.

There was a financial crisis in my agency (this was not a unique event). The state was refusing to release a substantial amount of revenue that our agency was due. Everyone was in a dither. I was new as the budget director and not responsible for the catastrophe (the last budget director was). I attended several meetings of higher ups while they decided what to do when they weren't shouting at one another.

In these meetings, some bureaucrats were furious, blamed others and in general were just mean. Some were scared and didn't know what to do. There was one person who was calm, quiet and exuded confidence. The more we met, the more everyone was looking to him, waiting to hear what he had to say. We finally worked our way out of the dilemma and received the revenue due us. When I looked back at those events, I realized that this one person had not necessarily come up with the solution but had allowed the solution to surface. In his calmness, he made it happen. I am not talking about tranquility. I mean he was deliberate, thoughtful and confident. Needless to say, he was widely respected and much in demand.

It was a good early experience for me. From then on, I tried to keep my cool, sense of humor and confidence. And it certainly paid dividends for me in my career, but more importantly, I was a happier person and so were the people who worked with me.

— Lynne Weikart

Saturday, March 3

Psalm 75 • Genesis 43:16-34 • 1 Corinthians 7:10-24 •
Mark 5:1-20

One of the readings suggested for today's meditation is Mark's Gospel 5: 1-20. The story tells of a man possessed by a multitude of demons and living in the hills among many tombs. When Jesus came upon the man he cast out the demons and sent them into a herd of nearby pigs. Once possessed, the pigs rushed down a steep bank into a lake and were drowned. As Jesus was getting back into his boat the man begged to be allowed to go with him. Jesus refused and said: "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."

I wonder if it would have been easier for the man to travel away with Jesus. I expect he thought so and he probably worried about how he would handle staying behind and discussing the events with his immediate family and friends and his wider circle of acquaintances. Would they believe him? Would they welcome him back into the community? Would he be up to the challenge of talking about what Jesus had done? Would he be able to answer their questions? Would he be able to withstand any further attacks by the demons that had controlled him? Would he be able to withstand the naysayers?

I hope the man took full advantage of his time with Jesus and committed to carrying the message forward within his town. I think the message would have been that Jesus is willing to drive away demons that attack individuals and societies; that he has unlimited mercy and that he often uses the least expected people and places to do his work and spread his word. Also, perhaps, that Jesus knows that the people he asks to spread his word are imperfect.

May we each in our own way spread the good news of Jesus and check in with him regularly for inspiration and guidance.

— Nancy Grable

Third Sunday of Lent, March 4

Psalm 19 • Exodus 20:1-17 • 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 •
John 2:13-22

wonder

God's glory shines in the skies;
Creation bestows warmth and light
wordlessly God speaks in power and authority.

Yet to Moses and to the chosen the power is given shape in ten words

of uniqueness, *refreshing the soul*
of worship, *making wise the simple*
of praise, *giving joy to the heart*
of duty; *giving light to the eyes*
the law of God for God's people, *enduring forever*
greater than the human wisdom of the world

the Word, the Messiah, given from God *refreshing the soul*
surpassing human expectation, human
understanding; *making wise the simple*
God's power raises the temple in
three days *giving joy to the heart*
divine law transcends human law, *giving light to the eyes*
grace given not earned *enduring forever*

may the law of God, the Word,
more precious than gold, sweeter than honey
keep your servant from willful sins

Monday, March 5

Psalm 80 • Genesis 44:18-34 • 1 Corinthians 7:25-31 •
Mark 5:21-43

Mark 5:36-43

The child with its capacity to wonder, its trust and openness, its un-lived potential, is dead. The child's parent summons Jesus who accuses the mourners of lacking faith. He takes the parents in to the child and, taking her by the hand, tells the child to arise. The child gets up and walks.

Might we, here today, lacking faith, accept the Divine invitation to go within with Christ to heal and free our sleeping child? What difference would it make in our lives and to those around us and, indeed, to the wider world?

Sitting in silence for even five minutes a day or being part of a meditation group can help us be open to God's presence within with its healing and freeing power.

May we, in faith, accept the Divine hand and allow our sleeping child to rise, unleashing more spontaneity, creativity, joy and love into ourselves and our world.

Be still and know that I am God
Be still and know
Be still
Be

— Brenda Peterson

Tuesday, March 6

Psalm 78:1-39 • Genesis 45:1-15 • 1 Corinthians 7:32-40
• Mark 6:1-13

How Joseph's brothers must have felt when, after having stripped him of his coat and sold him to the Egyptians, they realize that he who will help them through the famine is Joseph himself! What grace Joseph shows in embracing them after his time of trial!

In one way or another over time, I have left others in the pit instead of offering my strongest hand. Some of my students, about whom I care most and who are among those in greatest need of my care, fall short of what they could and should achieve. Had I more fortitude and were I less selfish, I could make a greater difference in a life or two.

We are reminded before Communion that "we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under [God's] table." Joseph was more merciful toward the shortcomings of others, even his loved ones, than many people often are in our place and time. We must strive to do our best without necessarily expecting to receive the mercy of others. In resolving to do better, I am humbled by God's mercy.

Jesus says that prophets may be honored, except in their own city. It is those who walk with us and know our flaws best who may treat us with the most familiarity but the least honor. Despite his reputation elsewhere, it is understandable that Jesus's own people, not knowing His nature as God on earth, questioned His abilities to teach, as my students question me and as we at times question authority figures who have a following locally or beyond.

It is difficult to coexist with and to try to walk in the shoes of those who are different. From Joseph's brothers to Jesus's fellow citizens to ourselves, the challenges to accept others and to forgive are great. Jesus's disciples abide in a house to teach until they depart that place (Mark 6:10); so have we been put on earth to enrich others until we depart. As we seek wisdom to accept what we can't change and strength to change what we can, we must, as we are reminded at the Benediction, honor all people.

— Barry Keith

Wednesday, March 7

Psalm 82 • Genesis 45:16-28 • 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 •
Mark 6:13-29

This gospel reading from Mark 6 relates the story of the death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod, the Roman client ruler. It reads like an episode from a lurid Hollywood epic. Herod has imprisoned John but has not harmed him, although John has told Herod that it was unlawful to have taken his brother's wife. The wife, Herodias, wants John killed. Her opportunity comes when her daughter (Herod's step-daughter?) dances for Herod and some of his friends. He is so pleased that he promises the daughter one wish; and at her mother's urging she asks for John's head on a platter. Herod is "exceedingly sorry" but does not want to break his promise.

In pondering the story, I must confess I have never before considered its relevance for me or the contemporary world. And yet, there do seem to be deeper issues involved. As an agent of a cruel and despotic power, Herod had great powers. Executions of rebels were common. But verse 20 of the passage strikes a very different note. "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. When he heard him, he was much perplexed; and yet he heard him gladly."

What conclusions might we draw from these striking but cryptic statements? Here are some thoughts.

- Herod sensed the presence of goodness but later pushed aside the insight.
- He was torn between two forces, the right course to take and a trivial promise.
- His position of power actually limited his capacity to act freely.
- A gnawing sense of an encounter with holiness can be troubling at the very least.
- Meanwhile, John's determination to serve God was absolute.

If these are legitimate conclusions, then the gap between the story and our own situations is much reduced. On our very different level we also face conflicts. I would invite all of us to think about implications for the challenges we face in our own lives. Lord, help us to know what we are called to do to serve your will. Amen.

— John Zuck

Thursday, March 8

Psalm 85 • Genesis 46:1-7, 28-34 • 1 Corinthians 9:1-15
• Mark 6:30-46

When I first chose this day for a reflection, I saw the Gospel: Miracle of the loaves and fishes. I thought that perhaps I would reflect on the miracle that happens daily in our Haven Day Shelter kitchen, where the hungry are fed through the generosity of so many, and our baskets are filled with the leftovers.

However, I was caught unaware and deeply moved by that well-known quotation from Psalm 85: “Kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss, and truth shall spring out of the earth.” How raw, how expressive, even passionate, these words!

We have suffered so much from the events of July and August in Charlottesville when anger and lies have met, injustice and violence faced us, sticks and torches sprang out of the earth.

What is our Christian response in the face of such violence? How challenged we are to face violence with Christ’s words, “Father, forgive them. . . .”

We must not cease praying the words of this ancient song from more than two millennia ago. “(Lord) You have forgiven your people’s sins and pardoned all their wrongs. You stopped being angry with them and held back your furious rage.”

Surely we, too, must forgive and pardon, as God has done for us. It is our unassailable Christian hope to live and work for the day when kindness and truth shall meet, justice and peace shall kiss, and truth shall spring out of the earth.

We watch, and work, and wait for this day of peace.

— David Slezak

Friday, March 9

Psalm 92 • Genesis 47:1-26 • 1 Corinthians 9:16-27 •
Mark 6:47-56

Mark's gospel gives us the story of Jesus walking on water, a miracle in itself. But there are other lessons in this passage:

The disciples are out fishing overnight, doing their daily work. A storm blows up and they have trouble with their boat. Jesus notices this and walks over the sea towards them. They mistake him for a ghost and are terrified. They only recognize him when he speaks and calms the sea.

Once they have landed the boat, the local people “at once recognized” Jesus and bring him people to heal from all over the area.

So these two different strands in one story: Jesus is not recognized by those who know him well. Then a short while later he is recognized by strangers. In both situations Jesus responds by acting: quelling the storm to save his friends and healing the sick.

Would I know Jesus if I saw him? Or rather, do I remember that God is present in all of us—even the “least of us”? Do I recognize Christ in you?

In the final lines of his sonnet, “As Kingfishers Catch Fire,” 19th-century Jesuit priest and poet Gerard Manley Hopkins teaches us about recognition:

“For Christ plays in ten thousand places.
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men’s faces.”

— Deborah Healey

Saturday, March 10

Psalm 136 • Genesis 47:27 – 48:7 • 1 Corinthians 10:1-13
• Mark 7:1-23

I remember being distinctly confused the first time I read through Leviticus. Why would God be concerned about such things as the cloth we wear, or the state of our food, or the mold that grows in our house? And if he was, why didn't we still care about those things? Even my cousins who claimed to be "biblical" Christians (as if there were others) still shaved, wore mixed fabrics, and ate shellfish. The passage selected for today from the seventh chapter of Mark seems to put to rest those concerns. Jesus' denunciation of the hypocritical acts of the Pharisees appears to present a hierarchy of biblical laws—it is more important to care for your parents, we read, than to make the temple offering. The things that we say and do are far more important than what we eat.

But if we are to say we are serious Christians, people who take our scripture seriously, what are we going to do with the 613 commandments of the Torah? We could dismiss the many dietary and sanitary laws as the predecessor to food safety laws, as a kind of Biblical FDA, but this would deny any divine aspect to the rules. We could take a page from St. Barnabas' book, who interpreted Lev. 11:7 "You shall not eat swine" to mean "You shall not consort . . . with men who are like swine," but in doing so we would commit the great exegetical sin of anachronism and impose a totally foreign context onto the text.

God's laws are not a call to legalism, nor the strict adherence to tradition, but to greater intentionality. They tell us to be deliberate in the way we interact with the world, with one another, and in those ways with God. We liturgical Episcopalians know this kind of intentionality in worship all too well. Let us take the opportunity of the season of Lent to be so intentional with one another, and to examine the ways we defile ourselves with wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, and the ways in which we have put tradition over the Gospel, the things we have done and those left undone. Let us more wholly recognize the goodness of creation declared in Genesis and affirmed by Jesus in these passages, and more wholly love God because, as the psalmist reminds us, *His mercy endures forever.*

— Lachlan Hassman

Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 11

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22 • Numbers 21:4-9 • Ephesians 2:1-10 • John 3:14-21

God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world through him, but to save the world through him. John3:17

Scripture is explicit in dire warnings of human susceptibility to evil. “Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into light for fear their deeds will be exposed,” some live “in the land of the enemy,” “astray in the wilderness,” “foolish men plagued for their offense, and because of their wickedness.” John3:20, Psalm 107:2,17.

Many faithful recognize that we now face dark reminders of those forebodings: the leader of the free world, capable of triggering nuclear holocaust, at once at war with truth, press, courts, science, the environment and intelligence defenses, uncontrollably flouting basic precepts of sexual conduct, demeaning of the poor, blacks and browns, demagoguery and narcissism without equal. All in plain sight, in “the light”: all denied without trace of shame for “fear their deeds will be exposed.”

How are the faithful and best among us best advised to respond to a leader so categorically at war with the best among us? That question confronts us all, without easy answers. But this much seems clear: hope and comfort come from deep in the recesses of our faith and our certain resolve to stand up for the best in us with unflinching vigor.

Monday, March 12

Psalm 89:1-18 • Genesis 49:1-28 • 1 Corinthians 10:14
– 11:1 • Mark 7:24-37

Mark 7:32-35

³²[In Decapolis] some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him. . . . ³³ Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. ³⁴He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" ("Be opened!"). ³⁵At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

Entering Lent, most of us think about what we'll give up for 40 days. We almost consider it a New Year's resolution, with spiritual meaning. However, we usually don't challenge ourselves in terms approaching Jesus' suffering and temptation during his 40 days in the wilderness. To me, Mark's words display the true loss and pain we can experience in a life seeking to follow Jesus. Being open to hearing from God in our lives prepares us for his arrival in our hearts.

I also think about the suffering that too many people will undergo during this Lenten season. My mother is undergoing chemotherapy for the cancer that appeared in her body last fall. In our community and larger world, people are scorned for their ethnicity or background, instead of being appreciated for who they are as individuals. Others feel incomplete, alone, depressed, uncertain or afraid. Agony surrounds us and, too often, lies within us.

We wonder how God can allow such suffering among family, friends and our neighbors. At the same time, the pain helps us understand how important are those around us, how we must experience loss to become stronger in spirit and how our walk with Jesus makes us who we are. During this Lent, I wish you happiness and peace as you work through your own challenges and seek to follow Jesus in your life.

— Steve Bolton

Tuesday, March 13

Psalm 95 • Genesis 49:29 – 50:14 • 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 • Mark 8:1-10

Psalm 95 is a liturgy of God's sovereign kingship. It is written in two parts: a celebration of this kingship asking us in the "Venite!" to come and sing to the Lord, to the Rock of our rescue (vv 1-7), but then a subtle shift occurs through a change in point of view, from song of acclaim to prophetic rebuke (vv 7b-11). The entire psalm is filled with allusions to the Exodus and Numbers, and part 2 is recounted fully in Hebrews 3:7-11 as quoting the Holy Spirit, there ensuing, in v. 12-13a, "Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day. . . ." Thus it is that, while we start out with the heady joys of coming to worship, even recalling the miraculous water from the rock, we end this Psalm conscious of the seriousness and cost of the choice we make in discipleship. Meribah ("dispute"), where the Israelites quarreled with YHWH, and Massah ("testing"), where they tried God's patience, made God loathe them (Numbers 14) and swear they "shall not enter my rest." Considerable subtlety is used in the choice of the Hebrew term here. Because of these behaviors, the wilderness generation was denied entry to the Promised Land. Our acclaim of God's sovereign kingship depends on our recognition of God through obedience.

I love to cross-reference, a holdover from my seminary days. I can't help but enjoy words like "hapax legomenon," "enclitic," and "antithetic parallelism." I took many courses in Psalms, studying them in English, in Hebrew, and learning of many other aspects of them, including doing my own translations. It was revelatory to know that, due to the inherent nature of Hebrew, one's own well-substantiated translations are as valid as the ones which have come down to us through various scholarly interpretations.

While we love chanting the BCP's versions, it was difficult for me to be satisfied with just portions of Psalms, when I had first met them "whole," and indeed, had listened to them chanted AT LENGTH by the Cistercian monks for years at my retreat center prior to entering the Episcopal Church. The psalms are, perhaps, the "crown jewels" of the canon, part of Jesus' Bible. How beloved they are by so many generations of Jews and Christians!

I recall the final years I spent visiting my wheelchair-bound mother in Brewster, NY. We wore out one of those videos you "fed" into the machine, opening to a voice reciting familiar psalms with beautiful, colorful time-release images of flowers opening, kayakers braving the rapids, huge, majestic snow-covered mountains, ocean swells with sea birds, and lakes and trees such as we could only now enjoy together on the TV screen. How close we were to each other then, listening to these beautiful, illustrated Psalms!

(With thanks to Robert Alter, Mitchell Dahood, and the countless scholars who brought us the RSV, NRSV, and TANAKH.)

— Margaret V. Lee

Wednesday, March 14

Psalm 119:121-144 • Genesis 50:15-26 • 1 Corinthians
12:1-11 • Mark 8:11-26

In today's psalm, David implores God's help to deal with harm. "I have done what is righteous and just; do not leave me to my oppressors." "My zeal wears me out, for my enemies ignore your words."

Dealing with safety is a theme I come back to a good deal in my life. As I get older I become more fearful. "Are the kids and grandkids all right? What in the world is happening to my country? Don't drive at night. Is anybody safe?" And with each fear inevitably comes simmering anger that focuses me to name my enemies and, more important, get back at them if I can.

The second reading tells of Joseph who had plenty to be angry about. His jealous brothers sold him into slavery and tricked his father into thinking him dead. But Joseph responds with love and forgiveness, taking care of his brothers and their families. We don't know how Joseph managed this, other than by being a blessed person. The story provides an end goal, not a roadmap, for forgiveness.

Returning to the Psalm, David takes comfort in knowing that God's law is "everlasting and true." He asks God's help to understand the incomprehensible, "Give me understanding that I may live." So, unlike my instinct to seek revenge, David asks for understanding. Is this how Joseph managed to forgive his brothers? He trusted in God to get past his fear and anger and come to know his enemies—his brothers—in a new way.

Lent is a period of waiting for the enlightenment of Christ. It takes time. Perhaps the meta-message here is that it takes patience to understand my enemies and my fears, but that the work of doing so is up to me. The road forward is not to change other people, but to change myself by understanding things in a new way. Learning to forgive and to trust are in my court. Like the 40 days of Lent, it will take time.

— Annabelle Loper

Thursday, March 15

Psalm 69 • Exodus 1:6-22 • 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 • Mark 8:27 – 9:1

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.” (Mark 8:34-35)

I would much prefer to soften these words, to have them mean something gentler than what they do.

It is easier to contemplate denying one’s self if the self is merely on layaway until Easter. The effacement of the ego, a cheerful willingness to let go of soft living, so far, so good, if at the end of Lent I may return luxuriantly to Oreos or bubble baths or Netflix binges.

It is easier to imagine that the cross is just a symbol of perseverance through adversity. That way, I can celebrate the Christian life as something immutably buoyant, triumphant after a bad day or a bad diagnosis. Fast-forward through the crucifixion and the slow death: I already know the ending, and would rather dwell on the victory.

Last month I got a sharp shock reading the spooky-beautiful words of Karl Barth, who wrote that under the sign of the cross “we are marked like trees for felling.” Jesus teaches us to take an axe to the very root of our selves. Not to congratulate ourselves for suffering suffering so well.

— Matthew Carter

Friday, March 16

Psalm 107:1-32 • Exodus 2:1-22 • 1 Corinthians 12:27 – 13:3 • Mark 9:2-13

These four readings are all rich in meaning. (Take time to read them all and see what speaks to you.) For me, the Transfiguration is irresistible as the embodiment of the Gospel message of God's presence with us. According to Rowan Williams, it is the first subject undertaken by those learning to "write" the sacred icons of the Orthodox Church. The icons show the figure of Jesus standing on the stony mountain while at the same time emerging from a circle of light, an almost cinematic depiction of God's breaking into our world and speaking to us in human form. (The icons also reveal the Cross as an integral part of the Transfiguration.) Orthodox Archbishop Kallistos Ware points out that the light from beyond that transfigures the body of Jesus flows outward to permeate all creation: each stone and blade of grass and human face is now to be seen and valued in all its individuality and "isness."

Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves – goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*

G. M. Hopkins, "As Kingfishers Catch Fire"

This appreciation of "each one" is seen in today's psalm, where the poet delights to list the specific recipients of God's care: those from east and west, north and south, the hungry, the thirsty, the prisoners, the foolish, even those who go down to the sea in ships, where they see "his wonders in the deep."

A few Sundays ago, the Collect was a prayer for grace to hear and proclaim the Good News in order "that we and the whole world may perceive the glory of his marvelous works." And this glory is shown in the wonderful diversity of human gifts, as St. Paul emphasizes in today's reading from 1 Corinthians: "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. . . . Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?" No, but all are to follow "the more excellent way" of love as described in the next chapter. Let us follow this way of love as we come down from the mountain having seen God's creation and each other transfigured by and through Jesus.

— Vickie Gottlob

Saturday, March 17

Psalm 108 • Exodus 2:23 – 3:15 • 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
• Mark 9:14-29

In today's readings are the familiar stories of Moses and the burning bush, Jesus healing an epileptic son, and Paul's truthful and magnificent description of love which culminates in "And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love."

In this time of Lent, we have faith that the resurrected Christ will appear to us, as he did on the first Easter. And yet, are we not all like the father of the young epileptic, who cried out, "I believe; help my unbelief?"

We hope for the Resurrection in the midst of death and the Crucifixion, as Prudentius (Hispania Roman, 348-413) did in his poem about the burning bush:

Flames rose and seemed to burn the thorny bush.
God moved amid the branches set with spines,
And tresses of the flames swayed harmlessly,
That he might shadow forth his Son's descent
Into our thorny members [which] sin infests
With teeming briars and fills with bitter woes.
For tainted at its root that noxious shrub
Had sprouted from its baneful sap a crop
Of evil shoots beset with many thorns.
The sterile branches suddenly grew bright
As God enkindled with his mighty power
The leafy boughs, nor harmed the tangled briars.
He touched the scarlet berries, blood-red fruits,
And grazed the twigs that grew from deadly wood,
Shed by the tortured bush with cruel pangs.

[*The Divinity of Christ 55-70; Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*]

But then at the Resurrection, as Paul teaches, when the perfect comes and imperfect passes away, we will understand fully. We will no longer have need of faith, because we will see Christ face to face; we will no longer have need of hope, because the Resurrection will have come; and then only the greatest will remain, which is love.

— Kelly Carney

Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 18

Psalm 119:9-16 • Jeremiah 31:31-34 • Hebrews 5:5-10 •
John 12:20-33

How to bring god closer
after the frenzy, the snarling riots,
this god hanging on a tree?

Do I stand here, as the story goes,
looking, do *nothing*, imagine
pouring myself towards him,
a flame across a field?

Or would I go there,
climb up, pry the first nails out
with the claw of a hammer,
wrap my arm tightly around his waist,
like my son I rescue from a branch too high?
I struggle to keep his weight on my hip,
his arm over my shoulder
while I wrest the other nails loose.

Smelling his sweat and tears,
I hoist him, lower him to the ground,

and then, with a wet cloth,
wash blood and dirt from his face,
tell him it will be all right now.

He is not forsaken, I say.
I'm here and can help.

I'm strong and fierce, have survived childbirths
and madness, sickness and suicides.
Here, I will carry you down.
I will go get more help.

And I know others who will come,
with bandages, bread,
broth and soft songs, blankets.
We will not leave you there.

— Christine E. Black

Monday, March 19

Psalm 31 • Exodus 4:10-31 • 1 Corinthians 14:1-19 •
Mark 9:30-41

The psalm appointed for today is Psalm 31, which begins, in the Book of Common Prayer, “In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness.”

The psalm begins with words of comfort—God is my rock of refuge, my strong fortress to save me, but this is not David, the shepherd, speaking; this is King David, asking God to “lead me and guide me . . . and to take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me, for you are my tower of strength. . . .” This is a king, looking for guidance on how to govern.

But this is an old king. His son Absalom rebelled against him, and was killed by David’s army. David was grief-stricken, old and bed-ridden. When his eldest surviving son Adonijah usurped the throne, David elevated his illegitimate son Solomon to succeed him. Age, illness, and palace intrigue were wearing David down:

- “. . . my life is waxen old with heaviness. . . .”
- “My strength faileth me, because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.”
- “I am become like a broken vessel.”
- “. . . they conspire against me, and take their counsel to take away my life.”
- “Let the lying lips be put to silence. . . .”

Young David is remembered as the young shepherd whom Samuel identifies as God’s chosen, and as the kid with the sling who brought down Goliath. But as I get older, these psalms, written in his old age, resonate more with me. When David tells us to “Love the LORD, all you who worship him. . . . Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD,” he has come through the valley of the shadow of death and emerged at the other end—older, wiser, but not broken. I can’t really relate to the king, but I can relate to the old man.

— Lloyd Snook

Tuesday, March 20

Psalm 125 • Exodus 5:1 – 6:1 • 1 Corinthians 14:20-40
• Mark 9:42-50

In Exodus 5:1-6:1, Moses and Aaron plead with the king of Egypt to let the Hebrew people go. Psalm 125 assures us that “Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which can never be shaken.” The Psalm goes on to state that “the wicked will not always rule over the land of the righteous.” This psalm is God’s assurance to his faithful people that He is indeed “working his purpose out, as year succeeds to year,” in the words of a hymn that contains God’s unfailing truth. God asks only that we trust in him totally and do not let that trust waiver. The Hebrew people needed abiding faith that indeed it was God’s plan to release them from their painful bondage in Egypt rather than abandoning them to Pharaoh’s wicked rule. We need a like faith in God’s governance of the present world.

Likewise, today we must trust that God’s love will correct all that is evil in the present time, so that righteousness, peace and love can prevail in all the world. At the same time that we trust in God’s action, we are his partners in reconciling the world to God’s purposes. Therefore, we must accept our responsibility to ‘Render evil to no one’ as we go about our lives, striving for justice in all that we undertake.

Whenever we say the words of the Lord’s prayer, we ask that God’s kingdom may come on earth, as surely as it exists already in heaven. Our actions can be helpful in seeing that it does come, but they can also hinder its coming. We must make the choice to be co-creators with God so that his kingdom will be a present reality in this world.

Wednesday, March 21

Psalm 130 • Exodus 7:8-24 • 2 Corinthians 2:14 – 3:6 •
Mark 10:1-16

For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. II Corinthians 2:15

The word aroma automatically brings me to the kitchen. I think of the evenings when we take that extra time to make a delicious meal with fresh herbs and spices. I can close my eyes and hear the subtle sounds of a simmering pot and be reminded of the olfactory satisfaction. I do not, however, think of “being” the aroma of Christ to God. Today we are challenged to dig deeper and find understanding in “being the aroma.”

Aroma implies something invisible and silent yet distinct, powerful, real, and present. Aroma is open and available to embrace, but impossible to touch. Aroma is a wonderful metaphor for Holy Spirit. It is easy for me to think literally about aroma, but it isn’t always as easy to take time to be reminded that the characteristics of aroma are similar to the characteristics of the Holy Spirit. Today we have that opportunity to recognize that the Holy Spirit is open and available to embrace, but impossible to touch. This is true because, despite our most careful investigation into the Holy Spirit, we must look within to find it. It is there—completely invisible and silent yet distinct, powerful, real, and present. The Holy Spirit dwells within us and we are called to accept this magnificent truth and give it away among those who are “being saved and those who are perishing.”

Long pause. . . . Deep breath. . . . What? Called to accept this magnificent truth and give it away among others? Give me a break, I’m just trying to live. I have enough to do to fulfill my role as employee, entrepreneur, child, sibling, parent, friend. How can I be called to accept something magnificent and give it away?

Maybe we can find guidance (and many more questions) in the waning verses of today’s reading . . .

Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 2 Corinthians 3:4-6

We have work to do, let us work together for the Spirit to give life.
Amen.

— Darren Ball

Thursday, March 22

Psalm 142 • Exodus 7:25 – 8:19 • 2 Corinthians 3:7-18 •
Mark 10:17-31

Mark 10:17-31 is the story of the young man who asks Jesus “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” The young man tells Jesus “I have kept [the commandments] since my youth,” and “Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, ‘You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’” At this response, the young man “was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.”

Jesus and His disciples then discuss wealth, and Jesus uses the metaphor of a camel and the eye of a needle to illustrate. The disciples ask, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus’ reply: “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

Finally, the disciples begin to brag: “Look, we have left everything and followed You.” Jesus’ reply affirms the good, the bad, and the really good that His followers may expect, “a hundredfold now in this age . . . with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life,” and ends by saying “many who are first will be last, the last will be first.”

I’m afraid I have generally taken this reading as a mandate to more or less push back against—What is meant by “wealth”? Does this work in today’s world? Etc.

But what if Jesus is not issuing a mandate, but an invitation? And what if the key part of that invitation is **“Come, follow Me”**? What if Jesus is inviting us to “sell” whatever might get in the way of that invitation? Or maybe to share, transforming that dross to better purpose—“give . . . to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven”? What if Jesus in fact is extending His invitation to all of us, and as He does, “looking at” each one of us, He “loves us” too?

— Karen Mawyer

Friday, March 23

Psalm 143 • Exodus 9:13-35 • 2 Corinthians 4:1-12 •
Mark 10:32-45

Slave

1. a person who is the legal property of another and is forced to obey them.

Servant

1. a person who performs duties for others, especially a person employed in a house on domestic duties or as a personal attendant.

(Google Dictionary)

These readings are all about these two conditions, and if one understands the Bible as a user's manual for how to live one's life, it teaches one how to have a relationship with God. There are those who claim to be slaves to Jehovah, but I don't think God wants that.

God is Love, and I believe God wants us to love in return . . . to give our lives over to God in love. To be God's servant means to willingly take on service to The Supreme Ruler of the Universe[s]. I see those people all around me, and I am blessed. They are, to me, the epitome of Love . . . doing unto others as they would have others do unto all of us.

Go forth, Belovéd, and Love God and all of God's creation!

— Mary-Carolyn Lawson

Saturday, March 24

Psalm 137 • Exodus 10:21 – 11:8 • 2 Corinthians 4:13-18
• Mark 10:46-52

Mark 10:46-52: Jesus heals the beggar, Bartimaeus

Bartimaeus was a beggar because he was blind. In Jesus time, people with disabilities, widows, orphans, unwed pregnant women were all at the mercy of people around them for basic survival. The society shunned them as unclean, or unworthy. They were seen as an embarrassment. Many families must have cared for their own and protected them, as families do today. Bartimaeus may not have been so fortunate, because he was begging at the side of the road. When Bartimaeus called out to Jesus, the people around him “rebuked him.” They patronized him and tried to keep him in his place. Rather than accept their rebuke, Bartimaeus “cried out all the more.”

Imagining this scene, I suspect there were gasps and snickers from some, and wide eyes and covered mouths from others. Surely the crowd separated and to give Bartimaeus a wide berth. “Master, let me receive my sight.” Jesus responded, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” “And immediately, he received his sight and followed him on the way.” Jesus’s miracle gave Bartimaeus new life with his sight. The same miracle likely transformed the crowd’s view of the marginalized among them.

As a pediatrician, I care for children and young adults with profound disabilities. Their families tell me stories about how people look at them askance and give them a wide berth almost anywhere they go. They often feel marginalized, forgotten, and untouchable. I know they long to be included, remembered and touched.

Who are the marginalized among us? Might our kindness be received as a miracle? Might we be transformed in the process?

— Jim Plews-Ogan

Palm Sunday, March 25

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 • Isaiah 50:4-9a • Philippians 2:5-11
• Mark 11:1-11

He rode in on a colt.
It wasn't a white horse
Or a chariot of gold.

He rode in on a colt.
No saddle of fine leather
Or bridle of silver.

He rode in on a colt.
An animal so lowly
Unbroken, untried.

He rode in on a colt
They threw cloaks on his back
To act as a saddle.

He rode in to hosannas.
Yet his mount was so small
His smile so tender.

He rode in on a colt
Humble as a child
In a manger.

He rode in on a colt
This healer of the lost
Teacher to the forgotten.

He rode in on a colt.
Bearing love in his heart
Hearing he was the King.

He rode in on a colt.
Their triumph short lived
His to last forever.

Monday, March 26

Psalm 51 • Lamentations 1:1-12 • 2 Corinthians 1:1-7 • Mark 11:12-25

Recently I partook of an exercise consisting of two parts: “If you could ask any question of Jesus, what would it be?” and “What do you know absolutely to be true of Jesus?” While I can think of a hundred questions to ask, what I know to be true is this—Jesus is going to answer me in parables. There will be no easy yea or nay, true or false. Instead, there will be mustard seeds and sheep and strangers lying broken and bloody on the road. And while not actually a parable, today’s reading has that same sensibility, for we get a fig tree. Jesus, hungry and in a fit of temper, curses the fig tree because it will not bear fruit out of season for him to eat. The story of the fig tree frames the story of Jesus throwing the money lenders out of the temple, and the story within a story is followed by his urging his disciples to have faith in God, saying “whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”

Wait, what? Where did that last come from? It doesn’t follow. So many questions.

If what he said is true, why didn’t Jesus just ask that the tree bear fruit even if it wasn’t in season? Why didn’t he just make the temple clean and holy? Why didn’t he just imbue the priests and scribes with compassion and mercy, replacing their malice and anger?

Why doesn’t he just do any of that for me? Why do I have to be that blasted, cursed fig tree?

Maybe I begin to see. It is for *me* to ask for that holy fruit and then to believe it resides in me. Asking is the easy part; believing is something else. Too often, I see all my shortcomings in magnificently minute detail—pettiness, anger, disappointment. I forget that I possess other attributes, those gifts that are fruits of the spirit, or I doubt their strength. I let them get overshadowed. For whatever reason, it is so much easier to believe that I lack and not that I have. But Jesus Christ assures us that the darkness need not define us—what we ask for in him is so much more powerful. We need to remember that it is there. We need to believe.

— Michele Allen

Tuesday, March 27

Psalm 6 • Lamentations 1:17-22 • 2 Corinthians 1: 8-22
• Mark 11:27-33

It must have seemed to Israel, captive in Babylon, that God had indeed forsaken them. Reading the news, we could perhaps be forgiven for feeling the same way. Continued school shootings, a rapidly warming planet, and an increase in hate group activity, all combine to leave us feeling adrift and uncertain in a hostile world. We take to the streets to confront the new face of one of the 20th century's greatest evils, and lament lives lost to hatred, intolerance, and callous negligence. We sort our recycling and plant new trees, hoping to turn back the rising waters before it's too late. Like the Psalmist, we ask "O Lord—how long," uncertain what answer we will receive.

But as Paul reminds us, "in [Christ] every one of God's promises is a 'yes'." As a Resurrection People, we know that even death itself cannot overcome God's promise to redeem the world and bring us into God's own presence at the end of the age. "Weeping endures for a season, but joy comes in the morning," even if we don't know at the time how long that season will be. God's time is not our time, and our cries for justice can sometimes feel as if they're falling on deaf ears. But God's love is stronger than any worldly hatred, and God's kingdom is brighter than the deepest darkness. And so, we wait, and watch, and pray throughout this Lent, knowing that "the light still shines in the darkness," and that the longed-for Resurrection will someday come.

— Beth Molmen

Wednesday, March 28

Psalm 74 • Lamentations 2:1-9 • 2 Corinthians 1:23 –
2:11 • Mark 12:1-11

Lamentations 2:1-9

This passage contains language that is both strong and rare in the Hebrew Bible. While the prophets regularly interpret contemporary events as God's discipline or chastisement, in these verses the author goes further and describes God as an enemy who is waging war on the people of Israel. The book of Lamentations is a series of poems and laments composed after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of its temple at the hands of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The trauma of this event in the hearts and minds of the authors of the Old Testament cannot be overstated. If the sovereign creator of the cosmos has abandoned Israel and allowed Solomon's temple to be razed, then the only explanation is that God has abandoned, or perhaps, turned on God's people. The world is turned upside down. There is no recourse or relief when one's own God has become an enemy. Passages like this one in Lamentations give us language and license to voice similar concerns. Sometimes it feels like God has turned on us. Scripture tells us that our suffering, our grief, our loss, our mourning, despair, and anger can be voiced to God. Indeed, with the author of Lamentations, we can scream about them. We can shout to God when it feels as if this same God is against us. However, fortunately, Scripture doesn't provide us words of lament so that we can merely wallow in our misery. The Psalmist writes, "For his (God's) anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime" (Ps. 30:5). And indeed, though on the cross our Lord cries, "My God, My God why have you forsaken me," in his resurrection, he is "Declared to be the Son of God" (Rom. 1:4). The pain of the present is real and it can be powerful, but following Christ we know the cross of death is backlit by the glow of life. This Lent we are invited to confess. So let's confess. Let's voice not only our sins, but also our laments. God already knows our hearts, and we have nothing to lose by baring them. But let us lament so that we can begin to see the hope that waits on the horizon. Easter is coming.

— Peter Morris

Maundy Thursday, March 29

Psalm 142 • Lamentations 2:10-18 • 1 Corinthians 10:14-17, 11:27-32 • Mark 14:12-25

*One of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.
Take; this is my body. This is my blood of the covenant.* Mark

The Kiss of Judas

A reflection on *The Kiss of Judas*, a 16th century German miniature oak sculpture.

It is the face of Jesus
The moment before the kiss
Of betrayal
An embrace that holds him
With a hand on his heart
An arm around his shoulder.

It is the eyes of Jesus
Almost closed
That see the eyes of Judas
Watching
That see the lips of Judas
Forming the kiss
Of betrayal.

It is the hand of Jesus
Raised in blessing
A forgiveness
Already given at
Passover supper.

It is the face of Jesus
The agony of
love's compassion
The moment before the kiss
Of betrayal.

— Betsy Daniel

Good Friday, March 30

Psalm 22 • Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 • Hebrews 10:16-25 •
John 18:1 – 19:42

Lost and Found

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Ps. 22:1) These words are not the psalmist’s alone. As a Jew, Jesus knew them, too. According to Matthew and Mark, Jesus uttered these as his final words when he was dying on the cross. These are words of a person in deep suffering who is teetering on the brink of despair. Despair is the combination of suffering and hopelessness: there is no remedy or relief for current pain, physical and/or existential. Despair is the cry for help that the sufferer hears as unheard by anyone who can help. Despair is the belief that no matter how much you have been told that you are loved and your life matters, your condition screams otherwise. Such suffering is wildly disorienting. The needle of your life-compass spins as a blur. You feel like you belong nowhere and to no one—not even God, because God seems absent. This is absolute exile: “O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest” (v.2). I find the last phrase of verse 11 particularly gut wrenching: “and there is none to help.”

This is Jesus on the cross. Jesus—God—gives himself over to the depth of human tragedy, the irremediably lost, all bearings now meaningless. As Yeats put it, “The center does not hold.” Life becomes a violent, centrifugal whirl. The prophets tell us that this can happen to a people, too. And although God seems absent or at best remote, on the cross God finds us. On the cross, God lives the suffering of abject hopelessness to the point of belonging nowhere and to no one. There is no prospect of help or relief. But on the cross, despair does not have the last word. Despite what may well have looked and felt like failure to Jesus, he did not abjure his mission. God loved us and loves us too much to abandon us in our hopelessness; rather, God is with us and saves us even in our despair.

— The Rev. Dr. Heather Warren

Holy Saturday, March 31

Psalms 31:1-4, 15-16 • Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24 • 1
Peter 4:1-8 • John 19:38-42

Nicodemus first showed up to question Jesus under cover of darkness. Later, taking counsel with his fellow Pharisees, he offers a modest opinion, favorable to Jesus, but he doesn't own up to any loyalty and no one listens anyway. Joseph of Arimathea is likewise "a secret disciple."

When Jesus was alive, these two kept their distance, understanding the danger that associating with Jesus would involve. Now that he's dead, they're bolder. Joseph requests custody of the body from Pilate, and Nicodemus shows up in broad daylight with enough burial spices for a royal funeral. No sneaking around, no denying or equivocating about what they're doing. Have they gained the courage of their convictions?

Holy Saturday is the only day in the year that invites us to contemplate a world in which Jesus is dead. Scheming, betrayal, abandonment, and violence reach a horrific crescendo on Good Friday. The sky goes black at midday. And then on Saturday the sun comes up and the world goes on. We could live there. We could honor and remember Jesus, talk about how wonderful he was, and say what a shame it is that it all went so horribly wrong. We could take comfort in the sense of relief that comes when the worst is past, and get on with the business of accommodating the ways of the world, ways that can be relied on to bring the worst about again.

We could live there. We often do. But living in that Saturday daylight, we keep our distance from the mystery that takes place in the depths of the darkness of Saturday night. It is, after all, easier—not to mention safer—to be associated with a dead Jesus than a living one. But only the living Christ can give us life.

— The Rev. William Peyton

WORSHIP SERVICES IN LENT

Ash Wednesday (Feb. 14)	7:30 a.m., 12:15 p.m., 5:30 p.m.
Sundays @ 8 a.m., 10 a.m., 5:30 p.m.	Holy Eucharist
Mondays @ 9 p.m.	Chanted Compline
Tuesdays @ 12:15 p.m.	Holy Eucharist in Chapel
Wednesdays @ 5:30 p.m.	Evening Prayer in Chapel

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Palm Sunday (March 25)	8 a.m., 10 a.m., 5:30 p.m.
Monday in Holy Week	9 p.m. Chanted Compline
Tuesday in Holy Week	12:15 p.m. Holy Eucharist
Wednesday in Holy Week	7:30 p.m. Solemn Tenebrae
Maundy Thursday	5:30 p.m. Eucharist with Foot Washing
Good Friday	7:30 a.m., 12:00 p.m., 5:30 p.m.
Holy Saturday	7:30 p.m. Easter Vigil
Easter Sunday (April 1)	7:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 11:15 a.m., 5:30 p.m.