



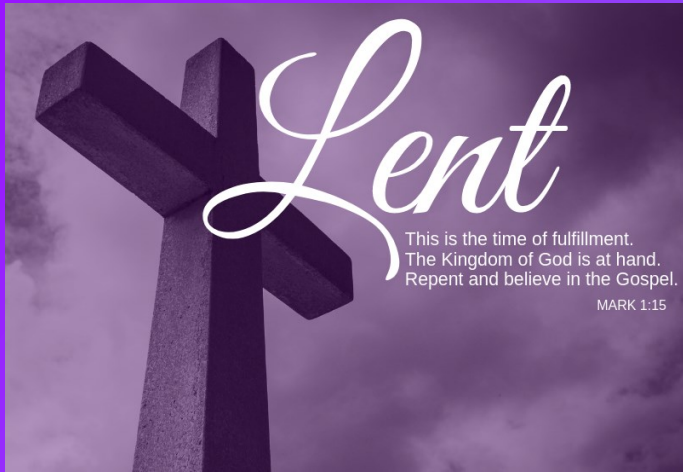
Emmanuel UMC

# The Road To The Cross

2021 Lenten Devotional



## What is Lent and why does it last forty days?



Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. Lent comes from the Anglo Saxon word lencten, meaning "lengthen" and refers to the lengthening days of spring. The forty days represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing to begin his ministry.

Lent is a time of repentance, fasting and preparation for the coming of Easter. It is a time of self-examination and reflection. In the early church, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by new converts and then became a time of penance by all Christians. Today, Christians focus on relationship with God, growing as disciples and extending ourselves, often choosing to give up something or to volunteer and give of ourselves for others.

Sundays in Lent are not counted in the forty days because each Sunday represents a "mini-Easter" and the reverent spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful anticipation of the Resurrection.

~from UMC.org

Thank you to everyone who submitted to this year's devotional. I hope you enjoy the final product and receive some inspiration from God's words during this Lenten season.

~Rick Bergmann, editor

 **Emmanuel UMC**  
11416 Cedar Lane  
Beltsville, MD 20705  
*Engaging Our Community*

# Changer: A Prayer Poem for Ash Wednesday

By Adrienne Trevathan

Wednesday, February 17

Ash Wednesday

Cover me with ashes,  
the thick-smoke soot of the earth.  
Make my breathing like the journey  
from death into life — second by second,  
prayer by prayer.

Cover me with a cloak — bring me low to the earth,  
your justice whispering to me like the gleam of red rocks,  
the colors dancing in the darkness.  
Let me know the power of sage and cedar in my bones,  
not that I may trap them there,  
but bring them forth in words.

Cover me with darkness —  
with the presence of my elders, their tears falling around me,  
reminding me of why we are here —  
sighing, groaning with our singing, longing to hear us into being,  
stretching us beyond breathing and praying and weeping.

Cover me with mercy —  
let the bones you have crushed rejoice,  
like the woman who channeled every ounce  
of courage and dignity  
to touch your cloak and find new life.  
Breathe unto me life anew,

of possibility,  
of beauty,  
of balance,  
of grace.

Cover me with mud —  
bring me to my lowest state, so that in my weaknesses  
I see your strength —  
the reflection of your eyes in the brokenness around me,  
the fullness of your love in the depths of our hearts.

Cover me with ashes —  
the ashes of my grandmother,  
who in living her days knew no strangers,  
worked tirelessly with worn hands  
and lifted grandchildren high into the air.

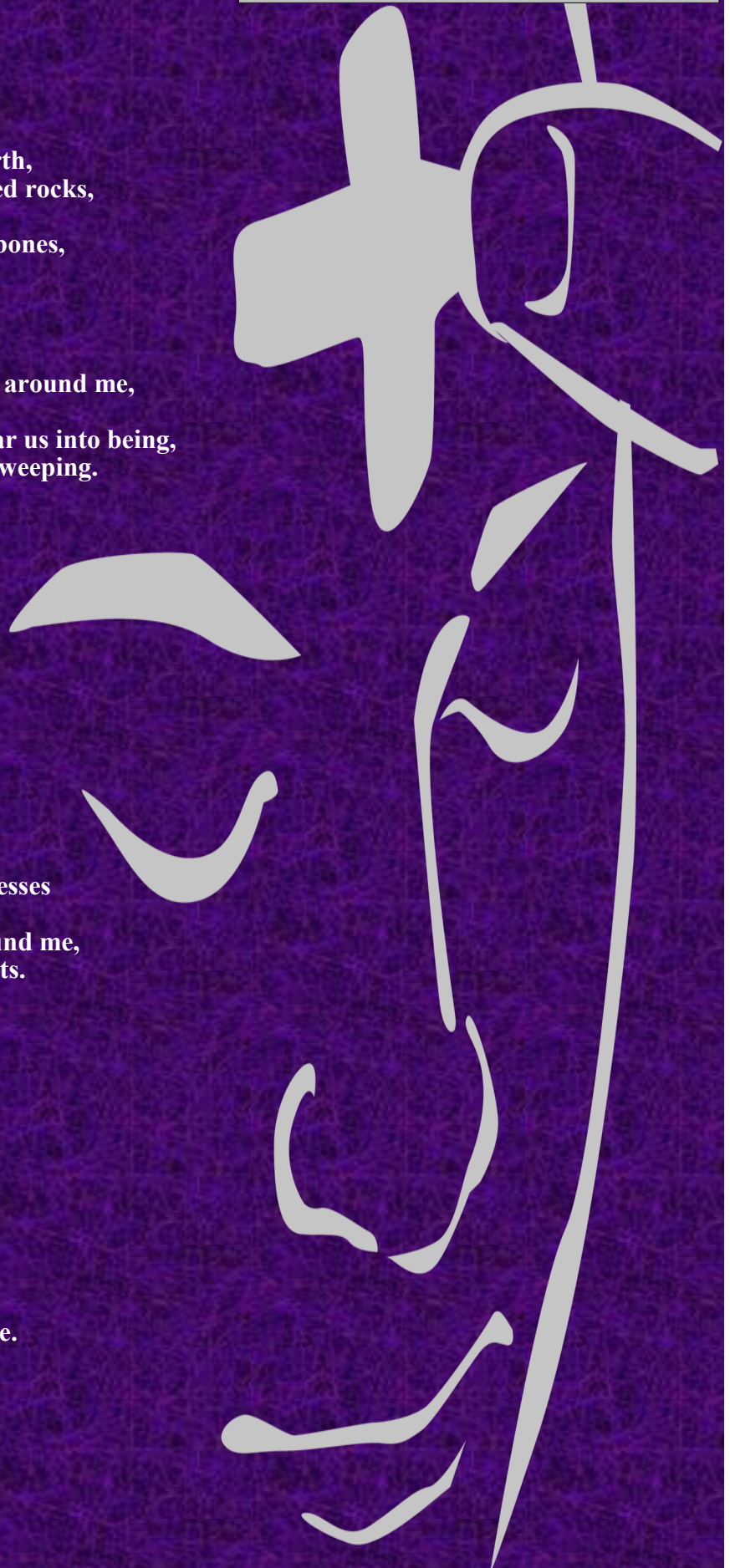
Cover me with mercy —  
let my cheek come to rest on the cold earth,  
its faithful presence a call to walk humbly  
beyond myself  
beyond my fears  
and ever on to the red road that leads to your love.

χάγας — Changer

Cover me.

Cover me with ashes.

Change me.



## A Lenten Challenge By Bryan Young

Originally published in the Upper Room, May 6, 2020

Thursday, February 18

*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. - Proverbs 3:27 (NIV)*

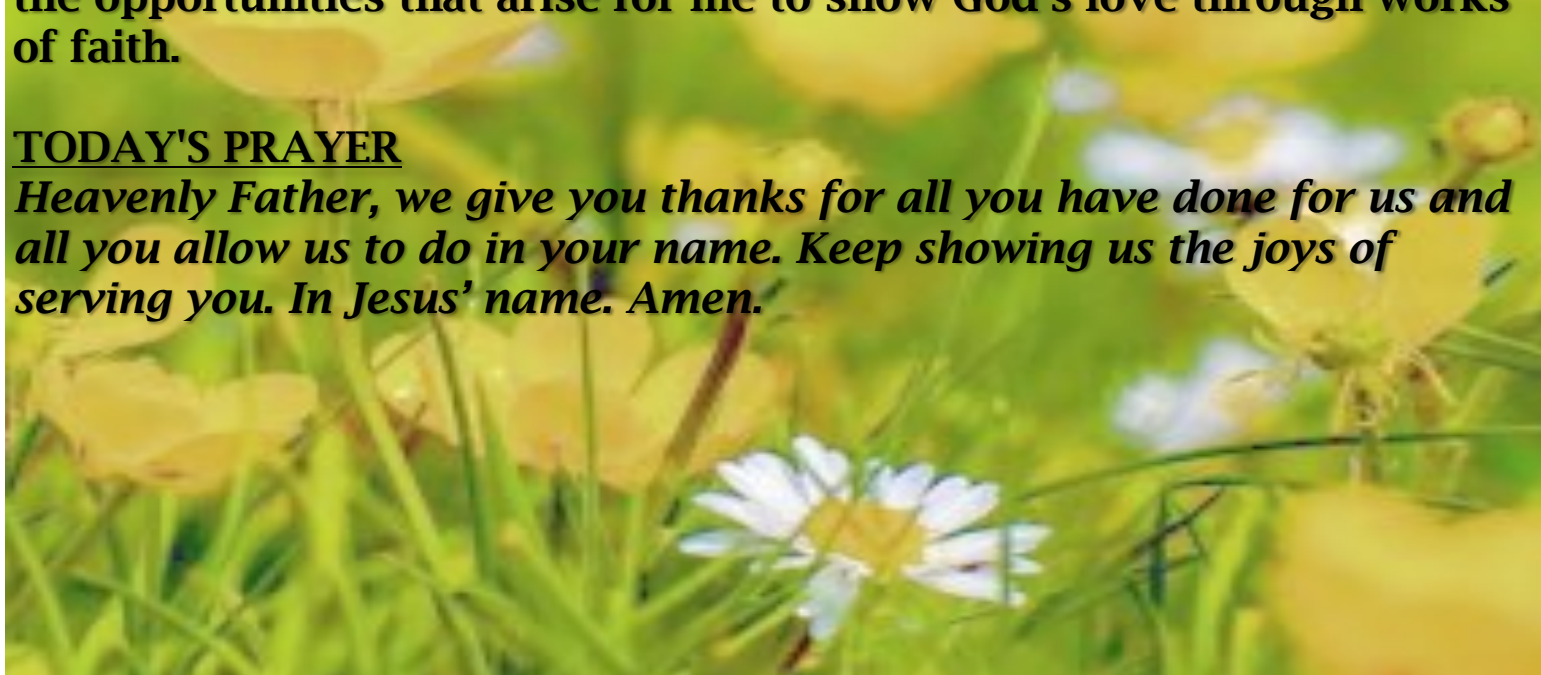
**During Lent our pastor challenged the congregation to step out of our comfort zone by faithfully tithing 10 percent, sharing the gospel with others, and helping our community through acts of service. I accepted the challenge. My first payday during Lent was the biggest paycheck I had ever received. Although it was just a few mouse clicks on my computer, sending 10 percent of that paycheck to the church was tough. Next, I posted on social media about my faith and included an open invitation for questions and for anyone to join me at church. The positive outpouring of Christian love was amazing.**

**Finally I asked around until I discovered that a group from church served a meal at a homeless shelter once a month. Now I look forward to the fourth Saturday of every month and make every effort to participate.**

**I used to think that money was too tight and that I was too busy for any of these ministries. Now I know through faith that we are all capable of doing what God's word calls us to do. I remain busy with family and work obligations, but I try my best to fit into my schedule the opportunities that arise for me to show God's love through works of faith.**

### **TODAY'S PRAYER**

***Heavenly Father, we give you thanks for all you have done for us and all you allow us to do in your name. Keep showing us the joys of serving you. In Jesus' name. Amen.***

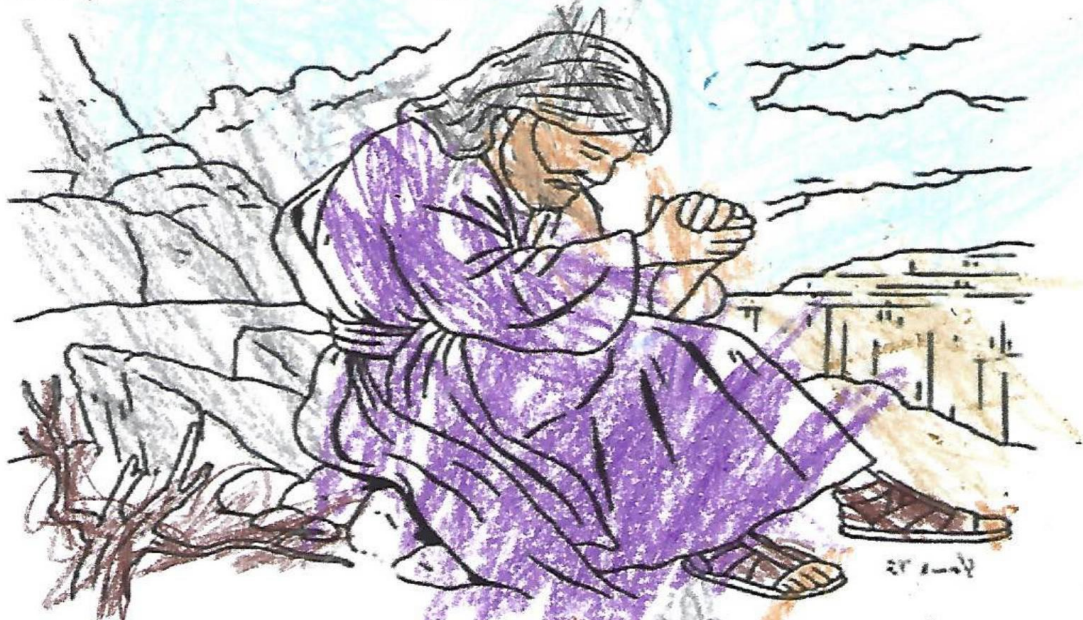


# Tempted

## BIBLE STORY

### Matthew 4:1-4 (International Children's Bible)

Then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil. Jesus ate nothing for 40 days and nights. After this, he was very hungry. The devil came to Jesus to tempt him. The devil said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these rocks to become 'bread.'" Jesus answered, "It is written in the Scriptures, 'A person does not live only by eating bread. But a person lives by everything the Lord says.'"



## PRAYER

Dear Jesus, it is good to know that when we are tempted, we are not alone.

Help us to turn to you when we are tempted to turn away. In your name we pray, Amen.



Levi Martin

# DO YOU WANT TO FAST THIS LENT?

*In the words of Pope Francis*

- Fast from hurting words and say kind words.
- Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
- Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
- Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.
- Fast from worries and have trust in God.
- Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.
- Fast from pressures and be prayerful.
- Fast from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy.
- Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.
- Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
- Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.

## Today's Prayer

Lord God, you are my strength. Hold my hand in my weakness and teach my heart to fly. With you, there's nothing to fear, nothing to worry about. Hold me tight in your embrace, so that I can be stronger than the challenges in my life. Amen.

Sunday, February 21  
The 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent

## PRAYER FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

GOD OF THE DESERT,  
FILL OUR HUNGRY HEARTS  
WITH FAITH IN YOU.

WHEN WE FEEL ALONE,  
HELP US SEE YOU THERE WITH US.

GIVE US THE COURAGE  
TO CRY OUT TO YOU.

AMEN.

Monday, February 22

Cartoon submitted By  
Judy Dietrich



Therefore, as God's choice, holy and loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other. And over all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.  
~Colossians 3:12-14

### Today's Prayer

Lord, as Your child, I am holy and loved; therefore, I should clothe myself in kindness and gentleness at all times. I know I fail at this, God, so I am praying that You instill in me the kindness and gentleness I need.  
Amen

Throw  
kindness  
around like  
confetti



Tuesday, February 23

**Miracles By Helene Hill  
Submitted by Jane Grays**

**Lent means warm days and mild weather! Green fingers push through the earth. They will become iris and tulips. daffodils and lilies.**

**It is not a surprise that the celebration of Jesus' resurrection takes place now.**

**There is new life everywhere!**

**His walking out of the grave is a miracle. A wonderful surprise unheard of ever before-but not so unreal in the world of the God we know.**

**Our God brings to bud and flower Oaks and maples and giant sequoias. Babies and chattering children, who grow to be men and women with great spirits-All from tiny seeds.**

**Thank you, God for miracles.**

**Today's Prayer**

**Perform miracles in my life Lord to display your power and glory.**

**Increase my faith to trust in you. May my whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless to the end. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.**



# *God is with You*

*By Emily Matthews*

*Submitted by Karen Mackey*

*Although each day  
brings challenges  
and things that are unknown*

*You needn't face them by yourself  
or deal with them alone:*

*For others care about you  
and will keep you  
close in prayer*

*Above all,*

*God will guide you--  
for His love is  
always there.*

## *Today's Prayer*

*O Lord my God, your power endures throughout all generations. In the difficulties that I face, may I know that you go before me and fight for me. ... Now to you who are able to do far more abundantly than all that I ask, be glory throughout every generation. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen*



Thursday, February 25

## When I say ... "I am a Christian"

By Carol S. Wimmer

© 1998

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not shouting, "I'm saved"  
I'm whispering, "I get lost!"  
"That is why I chose this way"

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I don't speak of this with pride  
I'm confessing that I stumble,  
and need someone to be my guide

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not trying to be strong,  
I'm professing that I'm weak,  
and pray for strength to carry on

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not bragging of success,  
I'm admitting that I've failed,  
and cannot ever pay the debt

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I'm not claiming to be perfect,  
my flaws are way too visible  
but God believes I'm worth it

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I still feel the sting of pain  
I have my share of heartaches  
which is why I seek His Name

When I say ... "I am a Christian"  
I do not wish to judge  
I have no authority,  
I only know I'm loved!

SUBMITTED BY RICK BERGMANN

### Today's Prayer

Guide me lord, you are my heart  
you are my strength, you are my hope.  
Teach me Lord, and guide my way  
I love you more each passing day. Amen





## The Best Friend of All\*

By G.M. Bills

Do you seek for a friend who is always seeking the same,  
Who will answer your sigh and your call?  
There is such a Friend, I will tell you his name---  
It is Jesus, the best friend of all

Would you lean on an arm that is able to quell  
All the forces of ill that abound?  
Grasp the hand that was pierced to remove Satan's spell,  
And thy soul's dearest refuge is found.

Would you walk day by day in a halo of light,  
In the smile of the angels of God?  
Would you know the repose that no sorrow called blight?  
Choose the path your Redeemer has trod.

Would you dwell evermore in the mansions above,  
Mid the glories that fade not away?  
Would you drink endless bliss from the fount of His love?  
Give your heart to the Savior today.

*Submitted by Emmy Lear*

*\*Originally published in *When I'm in his Presence: Devotional Thoughts on Worship for Women* by Anita Corrine Donihue*

### Today's Prayer

**May God the Father bless me.**

**May God the Son protect me.**

**May the power of the Holy Spirit enlighten me, and forgive all my sins.**

**Amen.**

# WORDS WISDOM

Shared by Margie Mock

What you are is God's gift to you--  
What you make of yourself is your gift to God.

Be careful how you live.  
You may be the only Bible some people will ever read.

God's presence within me is my inspiration.

You make friends with the qualities you display  
But you keep friends with the qualities you possess.

People may not remember exactly what you did or what you said--  
But they will always remember how you made them feel.

We make a living by what we get;  
We make a life by what we give.

SMILE--it costs so little but adds so much to your fave value.

Some people, no matter how old they get, never lose there beauty--  
they merely move it from their faces into their hearts.

Kindness is a language that the deaf can hear  
And the blind can read.

*For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come  
knowledge and understanding.*

*Proverbs 2:6*

Sunday, February 28  
The 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent

A Prayer For The  
SECOND SUNDAY IN  
LENT



God of purpose and grace,  
fill us with a longing  
for the life  
you created for us.  
Give us strength  
to endure suffering  
and difficulties,  
and joy in the midst of them.  
Help us to walk in your way  
and to seek your mercy  
when we stumble.  
Amen.

Monday, March 1

# Angels Wings

BY DR. C. DAVID HAY  
*SUBMITTED BY TED LADD*

I AM THE COURIER OF FAITH,  
TOGETHER WE HAVE FLOWN,  
AND WHEN YOUR WINGS GROW WEARY  
YOU'LL NEVER BE ALONE.

I AM THE LAMP UNTO YOUR FEET,  
THE SHIELD FROM DARK AND FEAR;  
KNOW THAT YOU ARE SAFE  
AS LONG AS I AM NEAR.

I AM THE GUARDIAN ANGEL  
OF ALL THAT HEAVEN BRINGS;  
ALTHOUGH YOU CANNOT SEE ME  
YOU'LL FEEL THE BRUSH OF WINGS.

I AM THE MESSENGER OF GOD  
WHO BESTOWED ETERNAL CARE,  
AND WHEN YOU NEED MY HAND—  
YOU'LL FIND THAT I AM THERE.

## TODAY'S PRAYER

LORD, HELP ME NOT TO LEAN ON MY OWN UNDERSTANDING  
BUT IN EVERYTHING ACKNOWLEDGE YOU SO THAT YOU CAN  
DIRECT MY WORDS, THOUGHTS, AND ACTIONS. IN JESUS'  
NAME, AMEN.

# WHO ARE MY NEIGHBORS?

From *"I'VE GOT TO TALK TO SOMEBODY, GOD"*

by Marjorie Holmes

*Submitted By Carrie White*

Tuesday, March 2

**Who are my neighbors, Lord? Who are truly my neighbors?**

**They exist in their great houses, set so apart on the commanding hills, and if they need or want me or we might enjoy each other, I don't know it. And I am afraid to go seeking them out lest I intrude.**

**Who are my neighbors, Lord? Who are truly my neighbors?**

**Others cluster close, too close for comfort, up and down the street. I watched their antlike coming and going, puzzled and unsure. They are so frantically busy about nothing, or so it seems. They talk, talk, talk about nothing.**

**I am afraid of getting too close to them, for I don't want to be gobbled up in the empty talk and the empty activity.**

**Yet I am hungry for neighbors, Lord, true neighbors on whom I can depend and who can depend on me. I've long for their occasional companionship, for their understanding, for the knowledge that they are there, willing and wanting to share joy and sorrow with me.**

**Dear Lord, help me to know who are truly my neighbors, and bring us together so that we can help each other in the timeless ways that neighbors always have.**







**Wednesday, March 3**

**Through the eyes of children...**

**My father passed away in 1990 after being diagnosed with lung cancer in 1989. Our daughter, Erin, was 2 years old when he passed. She was the light of her grandfather's life. She adored him, too.**

**Dad passed a week after Easter. Following the funeral, people were invited back to my mother's house for a reception. A neighbor had kept Erin there during the funeral.**

**The weeks before Dad's death, Erin attended Sunday School at Emmanuel and had learned the meaning of Easter and the resurrection. She amazed me, when people arrived at the reception and said how sorry they were that her grandfather had died. She easily replied, "Pam-Paw is with Jesus in Heaven".**

**-Kathy Mellott**

***"Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.***

***Matthew 18***

**Today's Prayer**

**Loving Lord, may I pray this day as a child does, with an open heart, plain talk, and complete trust in you.**

**Amen.**

WE ARE ALIVE IN A FEARSOME TIME,  
AND WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN NEW THINGS  
TO FEAR.

WE'VE BEEN DELIVERED HUGE BLOWS  
BUT ALSO HUGE

OPPORTUNITIES TO REINFORCE OR  
REINVENT OUR WILL,

DEPENDING ON WHERE WE LOOK FOR  
HONOR AND HOW WE NAME OUR  
ENEMIES

THE EASIEST THING IS TO THINK OF  
RETURNING THE BLOWS.

BUT THERE ARE OTHER THINGS WE  
MUST THINK ABOUT AS WELL,

OTHER DANGERS WE FACE.

THE CHANGES WE DREAD MOST MAY  
CONTAIN OUR SALVATION.

~BARBARA KINGSOLVER

*SUBMITTED BY KATHRYN GRIFFIN*

**Thursday, March 4**

**PSALM 9:9-10:**

THE LORD IS A REFUGE FOR THE OPPRESSED,  
A STRONGHOLD IN TIMES OF TROUBLE.  
THOSE WHO KNOW YOUR NAME TRUST IN YOU,  
FOR YOU, LORD, HAVE NEVER FORSAKEN THOSE  
WHO SEEK YOU.



**TODAY'S PRAYER:**

O GOD, THE SOURCE OF ALL HEALTH: SO FILL MY HEART WITH FAITH IN YOUR LOVE, THAT WITH CALM EXPECTANCY I MAY MAKE ROOM FOR YOUR POWER TO POSSESS ME, AND GRACEFULLY ACCEPT YOUR HEALING; THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.

***Promises in Uncertainty*** By Adam Weber  
***\*From the Upper Room, January 27, 2021***

Friday, March 5

***How priceless is your unfailing love, O God!***

***People take refuge in the shadow of your wings. - Psalm 36:7 (NIV)***

**When the future seems uncertain and I don't know what I can hold on to and trust, I find it helpful to remind myself of three of God's promises from scripture.**

**First, God's love is constant. Our jobs, statuses, and relationships can change in a moment. But when life gets hard or we mess up, God is there showing us limitless and unfailing love.**

**Second, God's protection is certain. Psalm 36:7 reminds us that God is our shelter and refuge. No matter the storm, God will protect us and faithfully remain by our side. We can always hold on to God.**

**Third, we can count on God's provision. Jesus tells us that we don't have to worry because our heavenly Father knows our needs and will provide for us. (See Matt. 6:31-33.) For me, God's physical and spiritual provision have always been there.**

**Though life might not always be great, God is faithful to God's promises. Amid changing circumstances, we can hold on to these promises from our unchanging God.**

### **TODAY'S PRAYER**

**Dear God, thank you for your promises to us. Help us to hold on to your faithful presence when we face uncertainty. Amen.**

Saturday, March 6

# S-T-O-P\*

SUBMITTED BY EMMY LEAR

At times we feel we have a corner on all our off days, mixed emotions, and concerns in our lives. The wonderful part is how much God understands how we feel. After all, He made us.

He knows us through and through. He cares about every area of our lives and is willing to help and guide when we ask.

Our lives aren't too minute for Him to care , because He loves us more than anyone in this world can possibly love. He is all knowing, just, and understanding. He sees what is best for us even when we don't recognize the answers ourselves.

The next time an off-day hits, remember to S-T-O-P:

Stop and pray.

Tell Him how you feel, then listen to Him.

Open your heart to His presence.

Praise Him for His help and understanding

\*Originally published in *When I'm in his Presence: Devotional Thoughts on Worship for Women* by Anita Corrine Donihue

## Today's Prayer

Dear Father, So often I come to you with lists and demands. Like a tornado I spew them out as commands. To the next task, I move on with my day Completely missing what you might have to say. The noise of the world clogs my ears and clouds my mind with fog and fears. I need you to clear my senses, O Lord! Give me a heart in tune with your Word. May I be ever eager to hear your voice; May listening continually be my choice. Amen



Sunday, March 7  
The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent

# A Prayer for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent

*God at the well,  
teach us to come to you  
when we are thirsty  
and to welcome all who come to drink.  
Show us how we judge others  
and uproot it from our hearts  
so we, with Jesus,  
might offer water to all who are thirsty,  
life to all who fear death.  
Amen.*

# Lighten the Load by Kevin L.

Monday, March 8

Thomas

*Originally published in the Upper Room, May 14, 2018*

*Cast all your anxiety on God, because he cares for you. - 1 Peter 5:7 (NRSV)*

Several years ago, I decided to start living in a healthier way. After eating better and exercising I lost a total of 50 pounds. I slept better, my knees and feet stopped hurting, and my cholesterol dropped. But I didn't know how big a difference I'd made until I went on a backpacking trip. We hiked 18 miles in three days with all of our supplies on our backs. My pack weighed 50 pounds. As I walked along the trails, I was amazed that I had carried that same amount of weight every day for years.

Just as I was carrying too much physical weight, many of us are weighed down by guilt and shame. Broken relationships leave us clinging to grudges. The weight of our struggles piles on so gradually that we often don't realize how it is affecting us. We are not designed for this weight! The season of Lent grants us the opportunity to lighten our loads. As we take a closer look at ourselves these 40 days, we can find weights to lay down. Today's verse reminds us that giving our worries to God can heal us. Through prayer, we can let go of what holds us back and find the freedom that comes in Jesus.

## Today's Prayer

Dear Jesus, help us surrender our burdens to you so that we may live joyfully. Amen.



*Psalm 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble*

<u>You Say</u>	<u>God Says</u>
I can't figure it out.	I will direct your steps.
I'm too tired.	I will give you rest.
It's impossible.	All things are possible.
Nobody loves me.	I love you.
I can't forgive myself.	I forgive you.
It's not worth it.	It will be worth it.
I'm not smart enough.	I will give you wisdom.
I'm not able.	I am able.
I can't go on.	My grace is sufficient.
I can't do it.	You can do all things.
I can't manage.	I will supply all your needs.
I'm afraid.	I have not given you fear.
I feel all alone.	I will never leave you.

### Today's Prayer

Holy Lord, Thank You for grace. Please help me move beyond the hurdles that trip me up and give me the strength and wisdom to look up and see the hope I run toward in Christ. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Submitted By Judy  
Dietrich

Wednesday, March 10

*I said  
a prayer  
for you  
today*

I said a prayer for you today  
And know God must have heard -  
I felt the answer in my heart  
Although He spoke no word!  
I didn't ask for wealth or fame  
(I knew you wouldn't mind) -  
I asked Him to send treasures  
Of a far more lasting kind!  
I asked that He'd be near you  
At the start of each new day  
To grant you health and blessings  
And friends to share your way!  
I asked for happiness for you  
In all things great and small -  
But it was for His loving care  
I prayed the most of all!



Thursday, March 11

# Morning Prayer

## By Marianne Williamson

DEAR GOD,

I GIVE THIS DAY TO YOU.

MAY MY MIND STAY CENTERED ON THE THINGS OF SPIRIT.

MAY I NOT BE TEMPTED TO STRAY FROM LOVE.

AS I BEGIN THIS DAY, I OPEN TO RECEIVE YOU.

PLEASE ENTER WHERE YOU ALREADY ABIDE.

MAY MY MIND AND HEART BE PURE AND TRUE,

AND MAY I NOT DEVIATE FROM THE THINGS OF GOODNESS.

MAY I SEE THE LOVE AND INNOCENCE IN ALL MANKIND,

BEHIND THE MASKS WE ALL WEAR AND THE ILLUSIONS OF THIS WORLDLY PLANE.

I SURRENDER TO YOU MY DOINGS THIS DAY.

I ASK ONLY THAT THEY SERVE YOU AND THE HEALING OF THE WORLD.

MAY I BRING YOUR LOVE AND GOODNESS WITH ME, TO GIVE

UNTO OTHERS WHEREVER I GO.

MAKE ME THE PERSON YOU WOULD HAVE ME BE.

DIRECT MY FOOTSTEPS, AND SHOW ME WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE ME DO.

MAKE THE WORLD A SAFER, MORE BEAUTIFUL PLACE.

BLESS ALL YOUR CREATURES.

HEAL US ALL, AND USE ME, DEAR LORD, THAT I MIGHT KNOW

THE JOY OF BEING USED BY YOU.

AMEN.

Submitted by Dela Martin

**Friday, March 12**

Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light to my path.  
~Psalm 119

**WALKING WITH THE LORD**  
by Father Mechal Judge, FDNY  
Died 9/11/01

Lord, take me where you want me to go;  
Let me meet who you want me to meet;  
Tell me what you want me to say;  
And keep me out of your way.

**Submitted by Kathryn  
Griffin**



Saturday, March 13



*I had a job once where my boss went out of his way to be mean to me. He'd try to get me to drop things and mess up. Each day, I dreaded going to work because of him. He was never friendly to me, and always seemed to have a grudge against me, for no reason.*

*Every day at work, I challenged myself to do what this verse said. I didn't react, or respond to him in anger. I wasn't mean back to him. I was always kind even though he was so mean to me. It didn't happen immediately, but eventually, my boss stopped giving me such a hard time.*

*Sometimes the best response to someone who isn't nice is to do what this verse says. Be kind to those who aren't nice to you, forgive them when they don't treat you right. You can do this because God did the same thing to you. He forgave you even when you didn't deserve it. So even when it's hard to treat others with kindness, it's the right thing to do in light of what God did for you.*

*Originally printed on [studentdevos.com](http://studentdevos.com)*

### Today's Prayer

*Jesus, You have been kind to me by providing a way for me to go to Heaven and giving me a family who loves me. Will You please help me be kind to people around me? Help me be kind even to those who are mean to me and pick on me. I want to show other people the kindness You showed me. I want them to see You through me. Amen.*

**Sunday, March 14**  
**The Fourth Sunday in Lent**

A Prayer for the Fourth Week of Lent  
A Prayer for Lenten Grace

Loving God,  
During the sacred season of Lent, bring me closer to you.  
Prepare a place in my home and heart for silence and  
solitude, so that I may re-discover the grace of a  
prayer-full life.

Help me to fast from those things that threaten the  
well-being of body and soul and remind me of the  
grace of simplicity.

Enlarge my heart so that I give to those in need and, in  
so doing, re-discover the grace of gratitude and  
generosity.

May this season be a grace-filled time to  
rekindle my love for and faith in you.

Amen.



Submitted By Susie Mendelsohn

Monday, March 15

Today's Scripture John 16:33

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

peace.

It does not mean to be in a place  
where there is no noise, trouble  
or hard work. It means to be in  
the midst of those things and still

be calm in your heart.

(unknown)

Today's Prayer

Loving God, please grant me peace of mind and calm my troubled heart. My soul is like a turbulent sea. I can't seem to find my balance so I stumble and worry constantly. Give me the strength and clarity of mind to find my purpose and walk the path you've laid out for me.

Tuesday, March 16

## **BRING US TOGETHER**

**From *“I’VE GOT TO TALK TO SOMEBODY, GOD”***

**by Marjorie Holmes**

***Submitted By Carrie White***

**Oh, God, we go through life so lonely,  
needing what other people can give us, yet  
ashamed to show that need.**

**And other people go through life so lonely,  
hungering for what it would be such a joy  
for us to give.**

**Dear God, please bring us together, the  
people who need each other, who can help  
each other, and would so enjoy each  
other.**

**Today's Scripture Matthew 25:41**

**'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'**

**Making a Difference**

A man was walking along the beach one day and off in the distance he saw a small figure who appeared to be tossing something into the ocean.

He was curious about what was happening so he picked up speed to catch up with the person. As he drew closer he realized it was a young boy.

He yelled out to him: "What are you doing?" The boy said "throwing starfish back into the ocean." You see, the tide is going out and the sun is up so if I don't throw them in they'll die.

"But young man don't you realize that there are miles and miles of Starfish on the beach?" You can't possibly make a difference."

The boy listened politely then bent down, picked up another Starfish, threw it into the ocean and said "it made a difference to that one."

**Today's Prayer**

Help me never be tired of doing good. In all, I am going to do today, help me to do above my limit. Let my reward be in abundance. Amen.



# **THE ORB WEAVER'S MONSTRANCE**

**SUBMITTED BY RICK WHITECOTTON**

Thursday, March 18



I TOOK THIS SHOT ON MY FARM ON JULY 17, 2016. THE SHOT IS TOWARD THE EAST, IN THE MORNING. IT IS SHOT ON A MOTOROLA PHONE, AND I TOOK SOME OF THE BRIGHTNESS OFF THE SHOT. THIS, AND OTHER WEBS WERE IN ABUNDANCE ON A RIPARIAN STRIP BESIDE AN INTERMITTENT CREEK. IT SIMPLY CAUGHT MY EYE THAT MORNING. THE DEW ON THE WEBBING MADE IT STAND OUT.

THIS IS A TYPICAL WEB OF AN ORB WEAVER. MANY SPIDERS OF THAT TYPE SPIN THESE INTRICATE WEBS AND DAILY WILL CONSUME AND DIGEST THE WEB MATERIALS, THAT PROCESS MAY TAKE MORE THAN AN HOUR. AFTER SOME REST, THEY WILL SPIN ANOTHER WEB IN A NEARBY LOCATION.

WHEN I SAW THE WEB, IT FELT SPIRITUAL AND REMINDED ME OF AN ALTAR PIECE I HAD ONLY SEEN IN MOVIES AND HAD TO RESEARCH. THAT IS CALLED A MONSTRANCE.

THE MONSTRANCE IS USED WITHIN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TO HOLD THE HOST (COMMUNION WAFERS).

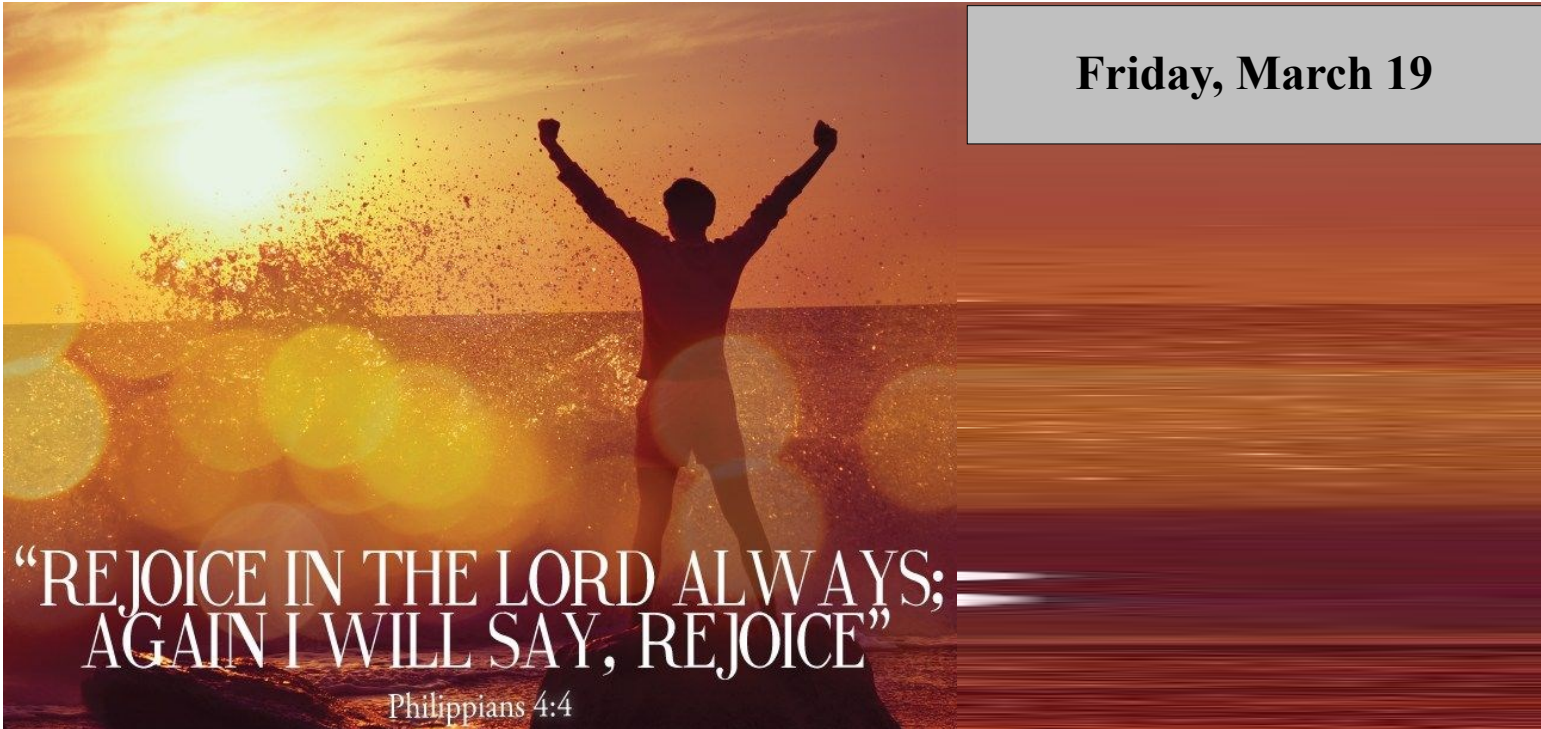
SPIDERS ARE VERY DIVERSE, WITH OVER 40,000 SPECIES. THEY FILL ECOLOGICAL NICHES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. THE INTRICATE SKILL THEY USE TO BUILD THEIR WEBS HAVE BEEN MODELS TO HUMAN ENGINEERS INSPIRING DESIGNS AND CONCEPTS.

SPIDERS ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE WORLD. COMMUNION WITH GOD IS ESSENTIAL TO CHRISTIANS.





Friday, March 19



**“REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS;  
AGAIN I WILL SAY, REJOICE”**

Philippians 4:4

**Today's Scripture: Phillipians 4: 4-7**

**Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

**As you breathe in the Spirit of God today, watch for small sparkles of delight and joy. Notice the beauty and energy of God present in the world. In Phillipians, Paul invites us to give thanks to God in everything. What, who, where and how are you grateful today? Breathe in gratitude and hope. May the peace of God which is greater than anything we can comprehend, fill you with all the promises of life. You are held in our prayers today in gratitude for who you are. Your congregations are held in our prayers today in gratitude for all the faithful, spirit-filled people who give and serve others in Christ. Thank you, God. Thank you, God. Thank you, God.**

**Today's Prayer**

**Lord Jesus, forgive me for not saying “Thank You.” I repent of focusing on the things I don't have, instead of the blessings You have given me. I want to be like the one who returned to express gratitude. Thank You for saving me, forgiving me and providing for my needs each day. In Jesus' Name, Amen.**

# Washing Our Hearts

Saturday, March 20

## Today's Scripture: Proverbs 4:23

**“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”**

Coronavirus is so microscopic that it's invisible to our naked eyes. And yet, it makes people sick, kills people and wreaks havoc on our social life and economy. There are spiritual viruses that are invisible and yet, make our soul sick, disturb our peace of mind, and destroy our family, church, and society. They are dishonesty, greed, hatred, injustice, negativity, and godlessness. As we wash our hands to keep us healthy, we need to wash our hearts by self-reflection, repentance, humility, and selflessness.

## Today's Prayer

Let us pray for farmers, fishermen, and grocers: Dear Lord, farmers, fishermen, and grocers provide us with foods that sustain our life. We are thankful for their service. They deserve their due wages. Help us to work for a more economically just and compassionate country. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

Sunday, March 21  
The 5th Sunday in Lent

*Prayer for the  
Fifth Sunday of Lent*

Father of mercy,  
bring us face to face  
with our own weakness  
when we are tempted  
to judge others.

May we find peace and life  
in simply stepping back  
and allowing you  
to be the merciful Judge of us all.

Amen.

**Today's Scripture: Psalm 23: 1**

*"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."*

During these Pandemics, we have heard many people voicing what they desire. Those voices are important. I was taught, by observing my mother, that we should have a song and scripture that gets us through challenging times. The Pandemics have presented many challenges. This motivated me to ask Shirlene, Breanna, and Zoey for their motivating scripture so that I could write the reflections for them all. It is important to remember that the Lord will help us find a way out of our situations. We must have an active faith that sustains us in the meantime.

**Today's Prayer**

Lord, help us to embrace our faith by using your words for daily inspiration. Thank you for helping us realize we do not need as much as we thought. And we trust you to help us find a way to get the basics. In Jesus' name. Amen

Submitted By Shirlene Chase

Tuesday, March 23

Today's Scripture: Psalm 19:14

*"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O' Lord, my strength and my redeemer."*

*As Christians, we learn that relationships are important. Our relationship with the Lord, and the agape love that is placed in our heart, is the foundation for all relationships. When we meditate on his words, the Lord strengthens us. That strength builds healthy bonds and foundations with family and friends. When those bonds are challenged, the Lord redeem us through His word and gives us the words to say. It is the meditations of our hearts that others hear in our words and sees in our actions.*

Today's Prayer

*Lord, thank you for leading us and making the words that you place in our heart, shape the words that come from our mouths. We want to always be a good and acceptable example of your love for and in us. In Jesus' name. AMEN*



Wednesday, March 24

*Submitted By Breanna Williams*

**Today's Scripture: Proverbs 31: 25**

*"She is clothed with strength and dignity,  
and she laughs without fear of the  
future."*

*We like to watch awards show. Do you notice that society likes to talk about a man's resume and a woman's wardrobe? We love to discuss clothes and that is fine. But just as clothes do not make the man, it also does not make the woman. God gives us the strength to be appropriate in all situations. That strength gets us through our days. We face our daily challenges with dignity, knowing that our worth is not measured by a name brand. Those godly clothes give us a sense of pride as we face uncertain futures. One size does not fit all, it is in proportion to our needs. And strength and dignity do not go out of style.*

**Today's Prayer**

*Lord, we proudly wear the strength and dignity that you adorn us in. Thank you for making us shine and boldly go into our futures unafraid. In Jesus' name.*

**AMEN**

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: PSALM 23: 4

*"EVEN THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE DARKEST VALLEY, I FEAR NO EVIL, FOR YOU ARE WITH ME; YOUR ROD AND YOUR STAFF – THEY COMFORT ME."*

DARK TIMES OFTEN HIDE THE TRUTH. WE FEAR THE DARKNESS BECAUSE WE MAY NOT LIKE WHAT WE SEE. THE NEWS IS NOT SHOWING OUR NATION IN OUR BEST LIGHT. THE CHALLENGES WE FACE AND THE EVIL WE SEE CAN BE IMPROVED. THAT IS WHY WE ARE GLAD THAT GOD IS THE LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS, AND WE DO NOT WALK ALONE. WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO SEE IT NOW, BUT WE WILL BE COMFORTED AT THE END OF THIS POINT ON OUR JOURNEY. GOD'S ROD AND STAFF CLEAR THE WAY AND MAKE THE VALLEY BEARABLE UNTIL WE CAN GET TO THE MOUNTAINTOP.

TODAY'S PRAYER

*LORD, WE DO NOT KNOW WHERE THIS JOURNEY LEADS. WE MAY EXPERIENCE LOSS ON THE WAY. THANK YOU, LORD, FOR BEING OUR COMFORT IN TIMES LIKE THESE AND FOR BEING THE LIGHT THAT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS. WE ARE NOT AFRAID. IN JESUS' NAME. AMEN*



# What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Romans 8:31 KJV

*"If God be for us, who can be against us?"*

*By Rick Bergmann*

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" Shouldn't we ask ourselves this question daily? Paul's writings seem to be designed to prove this point: God loves us, he sent his only son to die for our sins, and he gave us a guide to remind us of Jesus's teachings in the form of the Holy Spirit. How can anything possibly be against us?

The knowledge of God's love is awesome. The understanding of God's love changes our lives. When you realize that God's love is so astonishing that everything else seems frivolous.

Just asking ourselves everyday "if God be for us, who can be against us" should give us comfort, a sense of peace, and a feeling of joy. What is better than having God on our side?

If he is there, no matter what happens, we will be ok. So, begin your morning each day by asking yourself "if God is for me, who can be against me?"

## Today's Prayer

Gracious and loving God, I am blessed to know and understand that You love me and nothing can or will separate me from You. Thank you for the knowledge and strength you provide for me each day. Amen.



**IF GOD IS FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?**



# Not Far Away

Saturday, March 27

## Today's Scripture: Mark 12:34

*When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.*

It is easy to put black hats on people. When we read the New Testament about the Pharisees it is easy for us to picture them as bad guys. After all Jesus calls them hypocrites, snakes and whitewashed tombs full of bones. But in this instance, Jesus says this young Pharisee was not far from the kingdom. The reason for this is that this Pharisee saw that there was a difference between burnt offerings and loving your neighbor and loving your neighbor was better.

Jesus gives us a great example here of not labeling people and not lumping people into a category. And although we do not know for sure, it is very possible, that this young man did come to know Jesus as his Savior. He may have been part of the crowd on the Day of Pentecost. It doesn't matter where a person is in life, God's word can penetrate a heart and bring them to him. The writer of Proverbs writes that God says I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.

So, here is to not be throwing black hats on anyone but let's show everyone the love of Christ. We may not be able to read hearts like Jesus, but we can treat everyone with compassion.

## Today's Prayer

Father, please help us to have compassion for all who seek you. Help us keep an open mind towards those who seek you. Amen

Sunday, March 28  
Palm Sunday



# Blessed

IS THE ONE  
WHO COMES  
IN THE NAME  
OF THE LORD.  
—*Matthew 21:9*

# Signs of Hope

By Syd Hielema

Monday, March 29

## Luke 4: 14-21: Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”* Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, *“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”*

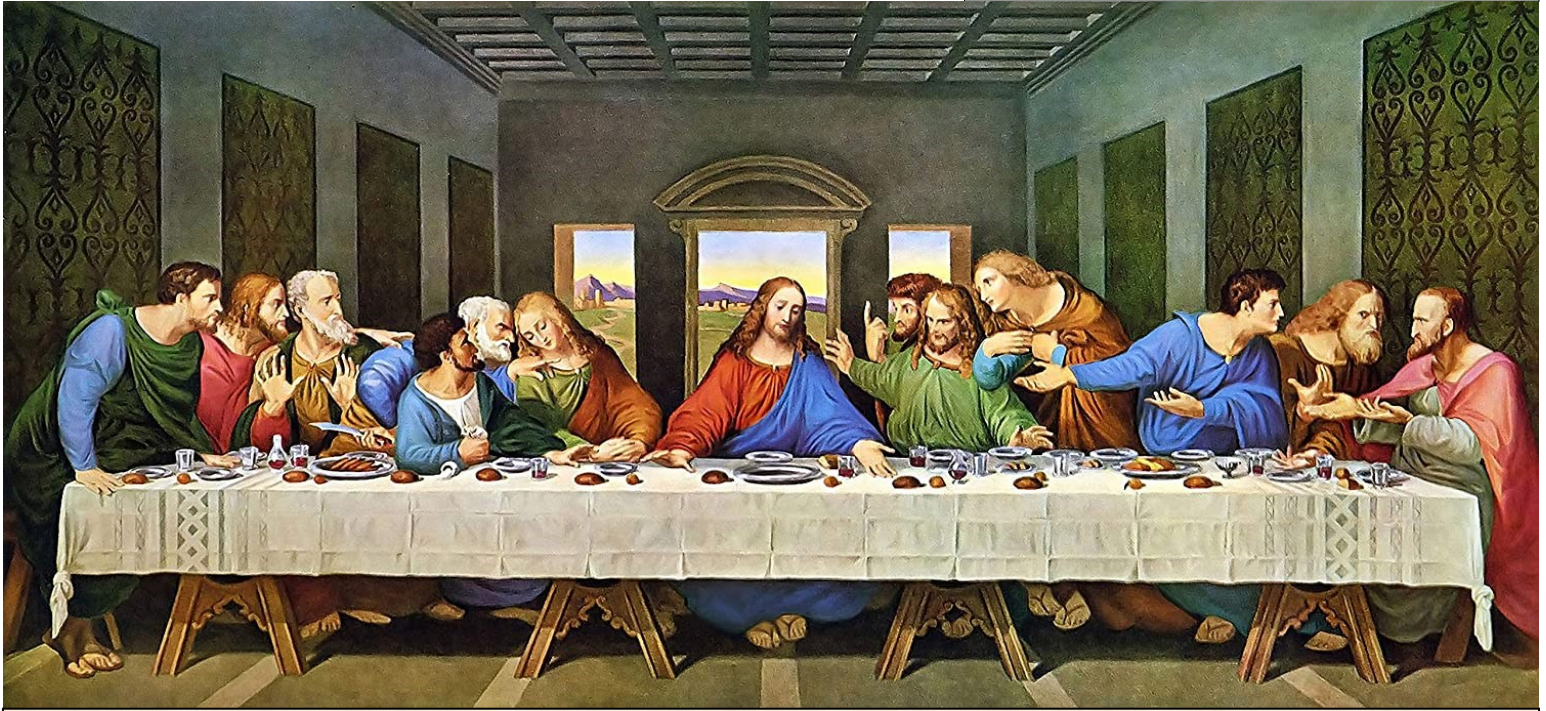
Sometimes I worship with a congregation in a maximum security prison. The good news of God’s grace moves powerfully and deep in that congregation. The worship often includes testimonies of changed lives. The preaching hits straight to the heart, mixing humor with seriousness. The singing is passionate, even boisterous, led by the musically skilled jailhouse band. Worshipers from every race come together in unity to pray, praise, and be ministered to.

These verses from Luke 4 remind me of that community. And while many of the worshipers there have life sentences, as I think about Jesus’ words “to proclaim freedom for the prisoners,” I realize that these worshipers are truly free! Their eyes shine with gratitude, their voices let loose in praise, their hands reach out to one another in tangible expressions of the communion of saints.

Every worship service ends with the community forming a large circle, holding hands, and singing, “My friends, may you grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior. . . . To God be the glory. . . .”

Pondering why the worship blessings there are so rich, I am drawn to the phrase “proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” I realize how easily I like worship to match “my favor.” And I have learned that the saints in that prison are my role models for worship, for living out Jesus’ declaration of free, new life. Thank you, brothers!





**SCRIPTURE:** After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, “Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. John 13: 21-22

**DEVOTION by Rev. David Bell:** I find it very interesting that when Jesus told his disciples that one of them would betray him, they were “uncertain of whom he was speaking.” Perhaps they couldn’t believe that any of them would do such a thing. Perhaps they had suspicions about more than one of their brothers and weren’t sure which one it actually was. Perhaps they questioned their own commitment and wondered: “Could it be me?” Certainly, before this evening was over each of them would run away when the soldiers arrested Jesus. It makes me wonder how often I betray Jesus by failing to stand up for him, by trying to “play it safe” and not risk anything for him. Following Jesus is serious business. It demands our full devotion and our complete surrender. Today I will confess my sins of betrayal and ask God to help me serve him more faithfully.

**PRAYER:** Loving God, I confess that I have betrayed you by things I have said and done and by things I have left unsaid or undone. Forgive me, Lord. Help me to faithfully follow you and to lovingly serve you, that in all things your name may be glorified. Amen.

## A Lesson From A Butterfly

One day, a small opening appeared on a chrysalis.  
A man sat and watched and waited for the butterfly for several hours  
as it struggled to force its body through the tiny opening.

Then, it seemed to stop making any progress.  
It appeared as if it had gone as far as it could and it could not go any  
further.

So the man decided to help the butterfly:  
he took a pair of scissors and opened the chrysalis.

The butterfly then emerged easily.  
But it had a withered body, it was tiny, and its wings were shriveled.  
The man continued to watch.  
He expected that, at any moment, the wings would open, enlarge and  
expand to be able to support the butterfly's body, and then become  
firm.

Neither happened!  
In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its short life crawling around with  
a withered body and shriveled wings.  
It was never able to fly.

What the man, in his kindness and his goodwill did not understand  
was that the restricted chrysalis, and the struggle required for the  
butterfly to get through the tiny opening were God's way of forcing  
fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings, so that it would be  
ready for flight once it achieved its freedom.

Sometimes, struggles are exactly what we need in our life.  
If God allowed us to go through our life without any obstacles,  
it would cripple us.

We would not be as strong as we could have been . . . .  
never being able to fly.

I asked for strength . . .  
And God gave me difficulties to make me strong.  
I asked for wisdom . . .  
And God gave me problems to solve and become wise.  
I asked for prosperity . . .  
And God gave me a brain and ability to work.  
I asked for courage . . .  
And God gave me obstacles to overcome.  
I asked for love . . .  
And God gave me troubled people to help.  
I asked for favours . . .  
And God gave me opportunities.  
I received nothing I wanted . . .  
But I received everything I needed.



**SCRIPTURE:** I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13: 34-35

**DEVOTION by Rev. David Bell:** Holy Thursday is also known as Maundy Thursday. The word comes from the Latin word *mandatum*, which means commandment. It is based on these words from Jesus: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. After washing

the feet of the disciples, Jesus told them they should be willing to wash each other's feet. Following Jesus means loving others through humble acts of service. This is the hallmark of the Christian life. Jesus said that is the way others will know who we are. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Everyday should be lived in the spirit of loving service. It is the inner orientation that should guide our thoughts and behavior. That is what it means to be more like Jesus. That's what it means to "have the mind of Christ."

**PRAYER:** Gracious Lord Jesus, you come among us as one who serves. Help me to humbly serve you and to see you in the people I encounter today and every day. Forgive my sin of pride and use me as you see fit. Amen.

BUT WE HAVE THE MIND OF  
CHRIST.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:16

Friday, April 2  
Good Friday

**Father,  
forgive  
them, for  
they do  
not know  
what  
they do.**

**Truly, I say to you,  
today you will be with  
me in Paradise. Woman, this is your son.**

**This  
is your  
mother.  
My God,  
my God,  
why have  
you  
forsaken  
me  
I thirst  
It is  
finished  
Father,  
into your  
hands I  
commend  
my spirit**

A photograph of a man with a beard, wearing a red hoodie, embracing a young child in a grey sweater. The man is looking down at the child with a gentle expression. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

Saturday, April 3

Jesus, cleanse our hearts. Pry into the cracks of our hardened hearts and help us to allow you to hear us. In the midst of our brokenness, show us where we can imitate you, offering the humble service you modeled to those most in need. Amen



Sunday, April 4  
Easter Sunday!

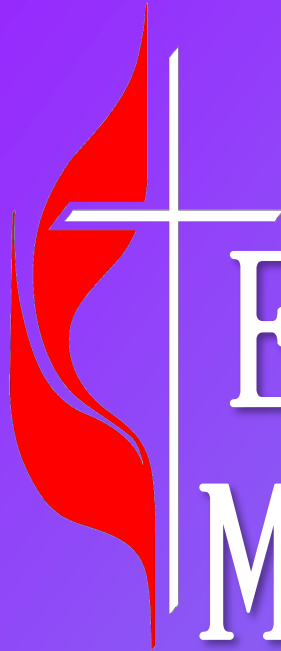
# An Easter Prayer

Christ the Lord is risen  
And, as all the world rejoices,  
Singing of His glory  
With such joyful hearts and voices,  
May you find that Easter brings you  
Peace and faith and hope anew,  
And may these blessings fill your heart  
With joy the whole year through.

---

Happy Easter

# Devotional Produced By



## Emmanuel United Methodist Church

11416 Cedar Lane

Beltsville, MD 20705

Engaging Our Community

**Rev. Dr. Jalene Chase, Pastor**  
**Pastor Lenora Whitecotton, Student Intern**  
**Deaconess Jane Grays, Worship Chair**  
**Rick Bergmann, Editor**