

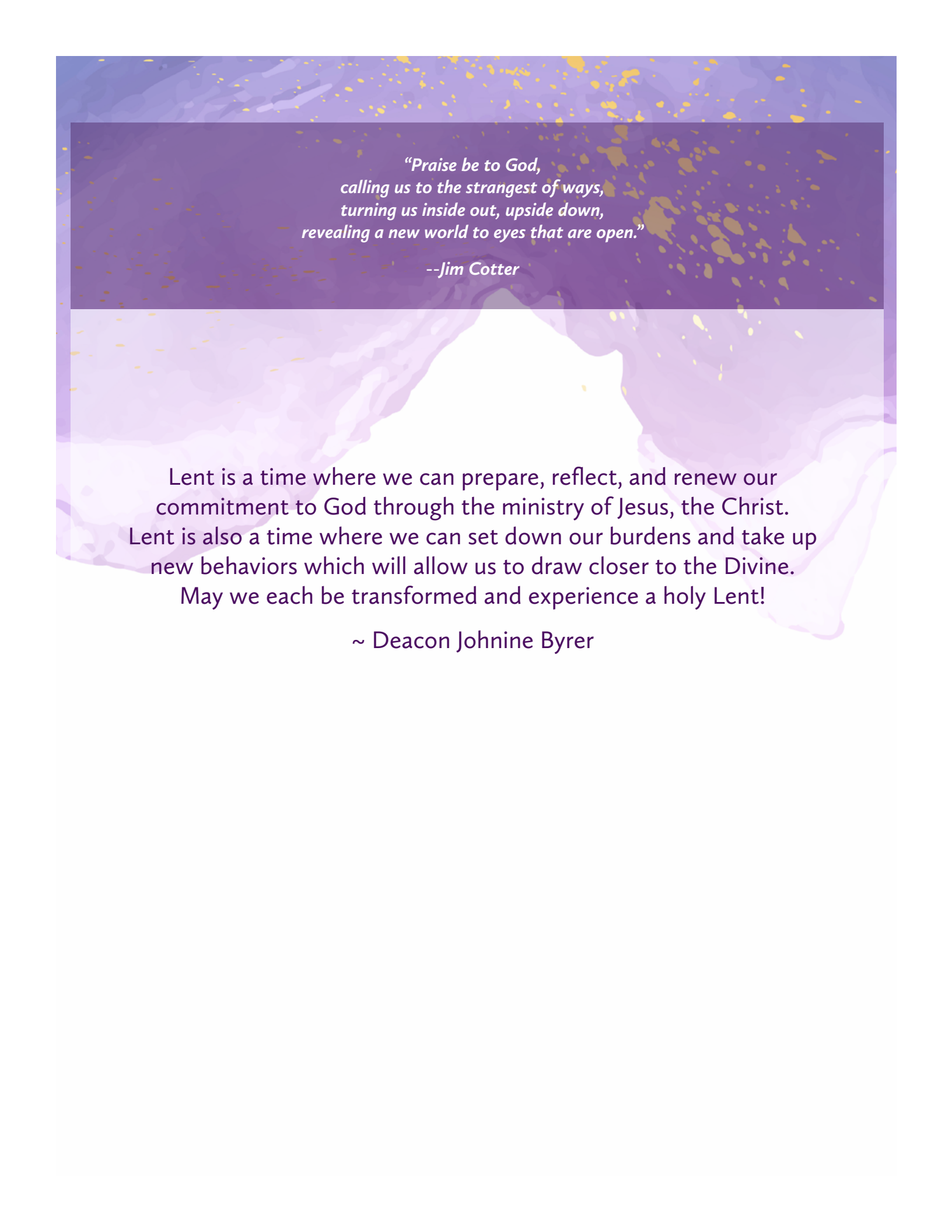
# LENT 2025

Lent, the forty days in the Christian year which lead up to Easter (Sundays are not included, for they are all “Little Easter’s” during which we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ) is a season of repentance, prayer, and spiritual renewal. In these cold, gray days that are followed by the exuberance of spring, we undertake a journey that calls us to visit, lament, repent, and open the painful places of our lives to the healing love of God.

We invite you to share this sacred season with your Church of the Holy Spirit community through worship, prayers, meditation, and spiritual engagement.

You can find all of the daily readings during lent [HERE](#).





*“Praise be to God,  
calling us to the strangest of ways,  
turning us inside out, upside down,  
revealing a new world to eyes that are open.”*

*--Jim Cotter*

Lent is a time where we can prepare, reflect, and renew our commitment to God through the ministry of Jesus, the Christ. Lent is also a time where we can set down our burdens and take up new behaviors which will allow us to draw closer to the Divine.

May we each be transformed and experience a holy Lent!

~ Deacon Johnine Byrer

*Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025*

*Psalm 103, Matthew 6:1-16*

*Reflection by Rev. Dean Bickel*

## **To Be Aware**

Our appointed Psalm for this day begins: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name!" This Psalm and the appointed Gospel lesson from Matthew 6 lift up the issue of 'personal piety'. Piety is defined as a sense of personal devotion, reverence or respect for something or someone. In many respects this word, piety, has become passe in our modern society or at the very least has changed in focus.

I grew up during the late forties and into the fifties when piety related to church matters was very prevalent. Our family were regular church attendees. We observed all religious festivals, attended Wednesday night Lenten services and all holy week services. I remember being required by my parents to attend a Thanksgiving morning service in my band uniform and later running to catch up with the band as they entered the field for the thanksgiving game! Some of us older folk remember when Pennsylvania had Sunday Blue Laws that prevented businesses from opening on Sunday and no movies or other entertainment opportunities. The picture I have attached to this devotional is a very small 3" communion cup that my grandmother carried with her for any communion service. Religious piety was often a normal part of our family life.

In this time piety has perhaps not disappeared. It has just changed focus. Our young people are pious towards sports heroes and teams as they proudly wear their team logo or shoe. They may wear a bracelet(s) in honor of their favorite singer. They may collect objects from a particular power figure... and so on.

It is important to note that Jesus, in this passage, does not negate the role of PIETY. The emphasis is on the FORM that piety takes...public or personal. It is equally important to note that Jesus attributes REWARDS to all who practice piety, reverence, respect...but suggests that the reward(s) pursued come in a different way. Extend your reading to the rest of the verses in Matthew 6 to get a clearer picture of Jesus' expectations: (20) lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven; (21) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

I have personally thought we have moved away from outward forms of piety in our religious life to the detriment of our faith life. It may be that our younger folk really are attracted to and crave ways to outwardly express their faith life. Having indicated that, Jesus does remind us through this passage to reflect upon our faith journey in a more introspective way. How is your faith life expressed...outwardly and inwardly. See you in church!



*Thursday, March 6*

*Psalm 91: 1-2, 9-16*

*Reflection by Joyce Hunsberger*

As I reflected on Psalm 91: 1-2 and 9-16, I was struck by the many terms used for “protection”...refuge, shadow, fortress, tent, dwelling place. I thought about the many homes I have lived in during my lifetime. Houses that sheltered me from rain, snow, cold, sun, wind and darkness. God promises that we can find protection from such elements. We can eat our meals, pray, sleep, bathe, drink clean water, and enjoy electricity, Wi-Fi and phone service.

The photo attached is my house in Wellesley, MA, where I spent my childhood. It was built in 1768, with additions of a front porch, breezeway, and garage by my grandfather. There were two big fields where we could play hide and seek, build snow forts, and pick wild black raspberries. While it looks like the perfect haven, that was not always the case.

My sister and I were not always protected from harm in this home. Where was God? We read God’s answer in verse 15: I will be with them in trouble; I will rescue them and honor them.”

God does not promise there will never be trouble, but God does promise to always be present and to rescue us in times of danger. May God protect us now as our country faces dangers too numerous to count. May we never stop trusting in God’s promise to deliver and protect those who know God’s name.



Friday, March 7

Psalm 91-2, 9-16

Reflection by Linda Greiser

Many of us do not believe we are worthy of God's love or help. We feel we have failed Him because we are sinners and do not deserve His love and grace. We think we do not know how to pray because we do not attend church regularly or read the Bible faithfully.

Praying is talking to God, at your level, wherever you are in your life.

God does not expect us to be the perfect believer. He knows our failings and still, He promises to answer us when we call on Him.

God's message is for all of us, especially those who feel unloved. God is there for anyone who calls out His name, the sinner, the poor and the homeless, the LGBTQ community, the undocumented, the migrant worker, the prisoner and all those on the fringes of society.

He is also there for the mighty and the powerful. If they call on Him, he will answer their prayer. He anticipates our needs before we even do and sends us help in the form of angels who walk this earth and minister to those needs, even if we don't realize it at the time.

We are not promised a life without challenges or times of sorrow and grief. What God does guarantee is that He will be there with us even in these times when it seems He has abandoned us. All we need to do is believe.

We are all His children. As a father protects his children, God will protect us and watch over us and redeem us. That is why He sent His son to suffer and die for our salvation.

Do not be afraid to call out His name. He will answer our prayer in ways we can't even imagine.

***"I only talk to God when I need a favor  
And I only pray when I ain't got a prayer.  
So who the hell am I to expect a Savior ok  
If I only talk to God when I need a favor,  
But God I need a favor.  
Amen. Amen"***

Jelly Roll. "I Only Need a Favor." Whitsitt Chapel, BBR Music Group, 2023. Spotify, [www.spotify.com](http://www.spotify.com).

*Saturday, March 8, 2025*

*John 12:32*

*Reflection by Bill Kerwin*



....."And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." John 12:32

In this simple statement, Jesus communicates the infinite scope of his mission: to draw all people. All. Not just the righteous or the careful, the rule followers or the perfect. This is a shocking statement when we read it in our current context, where we are so quick to decide who is in and who is out, who is right and who is wrong, who is deserving and who is unworthy.

Society pushes us to be tribal, judgmental, separate. Jesus, in his statement, tears down every division, every barrier, and states that we actually are all connected. We are all one, called together as one, and united by Jesus drawing us to him. We need only open our eyes to this reality - that our connection to each other is immutable, unchanging, and everlasting. And when we do, we will realize that we have never met anyone outside of the reach of Jesus.

Saint Catherine Monastery, Public domain,  
via Wikimedia Commons

Sunday, March 9, 2025

Luke 4: 1-13

Reflection by Deacon Johnine Byrer

Have you ever traveled through a wilderness experience? How were you able to cope? What sustained you? Who did you turn to for support? Our Lord faces his wilderness experience in Luke's gospel. During his 40-day journey in the desert, Jesus undergoes what we each experience during our lifetime: passion, power, and pain. However, Jesus does not allow these tests to define him or his ministry among us. Jesus by his words and example teaches us a different, radical way of fully living. When we remain faithful and keep our focus on God through Jesus Christ, we will be able to better get through the tests of our lives, our wilderness experience, fortified and strengthened and filled with God's abundant grace, love, and mercy. We can fully rely on God to be our companion during our wildness journey.



God also sends us guardian angels to help us during these challenging times. I believe that God uses each of us to comfort another person, to listen to another person, and to just be present to them when they are grappling with life's stressors. There is immense power in sharing our joys and sorrows with each other. It is very comforting to talk with another person who has experienced what we are experiencing. I have often discovered that someone comes into my life just at the right time to give me comfort and support when I needed it most. These are God incidences, not coincidences. The writer of Hebrews reminds us, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13: 2) We each are fragile at certain times in our lives and we need God as our constant companion as well as each other. My heart breaks for those individuals who do not have a faith community to share their joys and sorrows. It must be very difficult and lonely for them.

This story from Luke's gospel is a gift for us when we are in the wilderness and need comfort and support to get through all of life's tests. It is a gift that we need to seize over and over again because we often forget that we do not have the power to deal with life's challenging situations all by ourselves. We need God and each other. God's promise to be with us always is everlasting: Jesus says, "My precious, precious child. I love you, and I would never, never leave you during your times of trial and suffering. When you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

THANKS BE TO GOD!!!



*Monday, March 10, 2025*

*Psalm 19 7-14*

*Reflection by Yvonne Caputo*

***“Let the words of my mouth and the  
meditation of my heart  
be acceptable in thy sight,  
O Lord, my rock and my  
Redeemer.”***

Are the words we speak acceptable in the sight of God? How do we know? Too often when conversing with someone else, we hear what is said, but at the same time, we are thinking of what we will say in response.

What would change if we held each of those conversations as a conversation with God? Would our choice of words and the tone we use in delivery be the same or would each change? Would a deep abiding respect for the other be present? Today take each conversation you have as if you were speaking to God.



*Tuesday, March 11, 2025*

*Psalm 34: 15-22, Gospel – Matthew – 6:7-15*

*Reflection by Jane Griffith*

When you pray the Lord's Prayer, what are you thinking about? Does your mind wander to the tasks of the day, or are you able to clear your thoughts, speak to God, and listen to His words of grace. Psalm 34:17 tells us that "The righteous cry, and the Lord hears and delivers them out of their troubles." This reminds us that we are God's children, and He hears our prayers.

The Lord's Prayer is found in the Gospel of Matthew 6:7-15 and is part of The Sermon on the Mount. This prayer is part of our Christian tradition and is used in most denominations. It can be comforting to think that on any day the Lord hears this prayer from many different people and cultures throughout the world. It must be a grand symphony for Him to hear all his children praying together.

Tradition teaches us that Jesus taught this prayer to His disciples. It follows the Judaism prayer tradition of redemption and forgiveness. The prayer starts by declaring that God's name is holy and inspires awe and reverence. It asks our Father to hear our prayer and speaks to our earthly needs and concerns. Finally, in the Episcopal tradition, the doxology is added to the end of the prayer.

This prayer is said so frequently that we can forget to take the time to reflect on the power of the prayer to give us solace, comfort and forgiveness. The prayer asks for God's forgiveness and at the same time establishes a covenant with God for us to offer the same forgiveness to others in our lives. For how can we ask for forgiveness if we are not willing to forgive?

When praying the Lord's Prayer, we remember that we are on our spiritual journey to follow the word of God, and we should take a moment to clear our minds and focus on praying to the Lord and listening to hear His voice. The Lord's Prayer is a way for us to speak to God and is part of our daily communion with God.



*Wednesday, March 12, 2025*

*Psalm 51: 11-18, Gospel Luke 21: 34-, 22:6*

*Reflection by Diane Stephen*

I would like to begin my reflection with a story. There was a young 36-year-old mother who had an 18-year-old daughter. It was her only child. The mother had become pregnant as a teen. The father was not in the picture. She had no family or friends nearby. She decided to raise the child on her own as she was pro-life. She had a good job as an Executive Assistant to provide financially for herself and her daughter.

Soon after her daughter went off to college, she found that she, too, was a pregnant teen. She, however, was pro-choice. So, she decided to abort, because she didn't want her life to be altered. She also refused the possibility of adoption. The daughter didn't have any family or friends nearby either, so the mother found herself with a huge dilemma. Did she need to follow her pro-life stance, or did she need to be with her daughter in her time of dire need? She chose the latter.

When the mother gave the doctor the money, he meticulously counted it in a cold and heartless way. This experience was similar to Luke 21:34-22:6. When Judas sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver by those who wanted Christ crucified.

The mother agonized for years after her daughter's abortion. Had Satan entered her heart causing her to be complicit in the death of her grandchild?

One day, she was reading a scripture and came across Psalm 51:11-18. The essence of that Psalm had to do with blotting out her guilt, turning away from her sins, and giving her a clean heart. As she prayed that Psalm daily, she realized that Christ would forgive her transgression, giving her a sense of peace, that was beyond her understanding. She repented and believed in the Gospel.

A psychology professor once stated, "that only 5 to 12 percent of the things that we do, feel, believe, perceive, and experience are conscientious to us". We can become more purified and glorified on this side of Heaven if we pray to reveal more of our sinful nature and seek forgiveness. Christ will heal our "blindness" as He did with the beggar who cried out to have Jesus restore his sight.

In conclusion, we can go back to our story. The mother and daughter made it evident that now they were both pro-life. They took their pain and used it for a greater good by volunteering at Birthright to help other pregnant teens realize that abortion is not an option or solution.

Can we take our own pain regarding our sinful nature and use it for something good when we realize what we have done wrong and have been redeemed? We can only HOPE.

Thursday, March 13, 2025

Psalm 31:9-16

Reflection by Linda Hill



“Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also. For my life is spent with sorrow and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away. But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, “You are my God.”

Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.”

We all experience grief at some point in our lives. How we handle it, allows others to help, makes us stronger and more able to deal with it. Being supported by others enables us to share our grief. We know we are not alone. In so doing, we help others who are also grieving.

Grief often leaves us feeling sad, empty, and at a loss on what to do. I have found the following actions and thought have helped me turn my grief into fond memories.

When a friend or loved one dies, acknowledge your grief with tears and sadness but then after time, be happy knowing they are out of pain and are now in heaven. I try to remember the good times we had together plus the other times, which eventually strengthened me and our bond. In the end, we have hope of joining them some day in the future. God is always with us during these challenging times and for that I am especially grateful. God is definitely my strength during these special times.

*Friday, March 14, 2025*

*Psalm 36:5-6*

*Reflection by Pete Enns*

Whoever wrote this psalm seems to be facing hard times from powerful people who mean him no good, whom he calls arrogant, wicked, deceitful, and plotters of mischief. He then turns to words of hope of protection in God's presence.

To be honest, I don't really have the kinds of enemies this writer talks about. But I do know that I am more than capable of becoming one of them myself, and so, I read this psalm a bit differently. I read these verses not as "I've got God on my side and the bad guys don't" but "I, myself, need reminding of God's character every waking moment as I battle my demons of pride and self-interest that harm others."

God's character described here in verses 5-6 is vast, extending beyond our human boundaries of recognition, even to the heavens above and as deep as the "great deep," the primordial ocean we read about in Genesis 1. Today we might say that God reach extends to the outer rim of our expanding universe and down into the depth of the smallest Quantum particles. Paul likewise speaks of neither "height nor depth" (Romans 8:39) separating us from the love of God in Christ.

My hope is in God being all these things for me, not as I face outward toward my enemies, but as I turn inward and the face of the enemy within. I wish to see a God not bound to my prejudices but beyond what I can even imagine (Ephesians 3:20). This God's love is steadfast and poised to save—and not just humans, but also animals, who share this creation with us.

In its original setting, this psalm is an appeal to God on behalf of a righteous person seeking protection from the wicked. I see it also as an appeal of those with inner burdens and are seeking God to save them daily. I seek a God of boundless love and righteousness like this.

*Saturday, March 15, 2025*  
*Psalm 118:26-29*  
*Reflection by James Daywitt*

*26 Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord:  
we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.*

*27 God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light:  
bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.*

*28 Thou art my God, and I will praise thee:  
thou art my God, I will exalt thee.*

*29 O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good:  
for his mercy endureth forever.*

I find it interesting to read a Biblical verse for the first time and believe that I have an idea about its meaning; only to discover upon further research how much I failed to understand. The above verses from Psalms tell us much when examined in detail.

The first part of Verse 26 is spoken by greeters welcoming Jesus as he enters the open gates of Jerusalem. The second part by the priests who bless those with Jesus.

Verse 27 acknowledges that “God is the Lord” above all idols. The second part of the verse, “... bind the sacrifice with cords ...” has a prophetic double meaning because in a few hours it is Jesus that will be the sacrifice.

Verse 28 are the words of Jesus Himself praising and exalting God in full knowledge of his ultimate sacrifice and resurrection.

In Verse 29 Jesus tells us of the goodness of the Lord and that it is never ending.

*Sunday, March 16, 2025*

*Psalm 27 and Luke 13:31-35*

*Reflection by Cindy Benedict*



When I read these passages, I was moved by the images as much as the words. One theme is courage in the face of evil, in the face of enemies, undeterred from God's mission. David found courage and patience. Jesus did not allow foes to change his actions, and highlighted peoples' misguided expectations. What is my mission? What is ours? What is God's?

In the psalm, David displayed a range of feelings – strong, courageous and invincible with God as his light and salvation yet human with doubts and struggles as the psalm moves toward a humbler, pleading

tone. The psalm ends with David accepting limitations and uncertainty but maintaining inner strength and patience because of his trust in God.

In Luke, Jesus courageously called out the Pharisees and likened Herod to a fox. He used the image of a hen protecting unwilling chicks. Predators and prey. By many names, something greater than we, God, good, love, physics will prevail, but when will we see clearly?

Can we recognize the fox? The hen? The chicks? Who are they? Who are we? When do we stand up to the fox? When are we like foxes? When do we take refuge and rest under a hen's wing? When can we be the protective hen for those more vulnerable?

In high school art class, my classmate Diana asked me "How do you know the Bible is true? Have you read the whole thing? How can you believe this or that?" Diana provoked me, and I read nearly the entire Bible wanting to challenge her back. I was on a mission and so was Diana. Diana seemed like an evil fox at the time, but she caused me to think and to grow. Diana expanded my views and dislodged me from certainty, launching me on a long winding path. Parts of my mission changed, and parts continued. Today we encounter people and circumstances which challenge us, individually and collectively. Do we stay the course, or do we find a better one?

We can live courageously, humbly, patiently, even with limited knowledge, even with an unknown future. The second half of Luke 13 is largely about people missing the point. I missed the point arguing with Diana but that is not the end of the story.

Monday, March 17, 2025

Luke 6:-27-38

Reflection by Rev. Richard Miller

## “The (Im)possible Dream”

Follow me, today, back sixty years to Broadway. A new show is opening. It’s called “Man of LA Mancha.” It’s about a strange little fellow whose name is Don Quixote. He imagines himself to be an extraordinary knight. And he is out to change the world. He tells people that he is “following the quest.” His friend, Aldonzo, asks him what he means by “following the quest.” Don Quixote replies with lyrics we have come to know as “The Impossible Dream” or “The Quest.”

The words of this song are moving. They captured the imagination of many who heard them back there in 1965. Hear them again:

To dream the impossible dream, to fight  
the unbeatable foe, to bear with unbearable  
sorrow, to run where the brave dare not go.

To right the unrightable wrong, to be  
better far than you are, to try when your arms  
are too weary, to reach the unreachable star.

This is my quest, to follow that star, no  
matter how hopeless, no matter how far, and  
I know if I’ll only be true to this glorious quest  
that my heart will be peaceful and calm  
when I’m laid to my rest.

Stirring words, these. And they came to my  
mind when I read the words of today’s scripture.  
For surely if there are any words of the New  
Testament which describe “an impossible dream,”  
these are they. Just look at them! Listen to what  
they are telling you and me, as followers of Jesus  
Christ, to do.

“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate  
you . . . if anyone strikes you on the cheek,  
offer the other also . . . give to everyone who begs  
from you . . . do not judge and you will  
not be judged . . .”

We live in a world where words like this cause  
many to just shrug their shoulders. They see  
them as describing an impossible dream. But  
think about it. Would God ask us to do anything  
that he believes we are not capable of achieving?  
Indeed, the history of humanity is dotted by the  
lives of women and men who realized that this  
“quest” is possible; it is not a dream. They often  
had to “bear with unbearable sorrow.” Yet their  
goal ever remained that of the magi – “to follow  
the star” that would lead them to the place  
where Incarnate Love was to be found.

Lent is a special time for reflection. About the  
world. About ourselves. About one another.  
Yes, even about our enemies. What shall we  
do with these words of Jesus which lie before  
us on the open pages of scripture this day?  
Shall we simply read them and then move on  
to (hopefully) a less difficult challenge? I hope  
not. Read them again. About whom are they  
speaking who is a part of your life right now?  
Who is that person with whom you are at odds?  
Who is that individual whose words have smarted  
like a slap on the cheek? Who is the person you  
see each day who is in some dire need? Is it an  
impossible dream that you would reach out to  
them and make love incarnate again by your own  
words and actions?

I wonder how Jesus’ hearers reacted when they  
first heard these words of our Lord? Perhaps it’s  
best not to know. More important is how you  
and I will respond to them, transforming our Lent  
into the time of repentance and renewal it is  
meant to be.

*Tuesday, March 18, 2025*

*Mathew 23: 1-12*

*Reflection by George Cabot*

## **GREATNESS THROUGH HUMILITY**

Jesus speaks to a gathering crowd and his disciples, intensively criticizing the Scribes and Pharisees. Jesus uses the word "hypocrites" with denunciation and lament. He disapproves of the lack of respect for spiritual authority and leadership. Jesus teaches that we are not to seek titles like "Rabbi" or "Father," strongly emphasizing that we are all brothers and sisters being one. It is such a strong verse that it makes me stop and meditate. How do we react to this? Thinking about my actions, getting deep inside my heart to see myself as others may see me. Am I seeking God with a strong desire to honor him in all ways? Jesus emphasizes that we are to embrace humility by following his example. I see this as a self-examination of what the season of LENT is all about. It is a time of correction in the eyes of God.

Jesus is pointing out that these same occurrences are extremely evident daily in racial discrimination, lies, and individuals believing they are superior to others, often manifested through actions by those in positions of authority. Some talk with excessive pride and self-satisfaction about their achievements, possessions, and abilities. It seems to be the thing today. I have read about Holy Humor, and I wonder if God is watching us and seeing how ridiculous we can be and when we will wake up to see the light.

These twelve verses strongly teach that humility and service to our brothers and sisters are the way to true happiness. As Jesus Said, True greatness comes from humility and service. "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." It is a time to assess our motives and actions, ensuring we are sincere, living authentically, and practicing true humility and love.

When I found the Church of the Holy Spirit, I knew I was on the right path back to God. We are doing God's Work here. It shows in all the goodness and light.



Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Luke 13:22-31

Reflection by Al and Rose Stevens

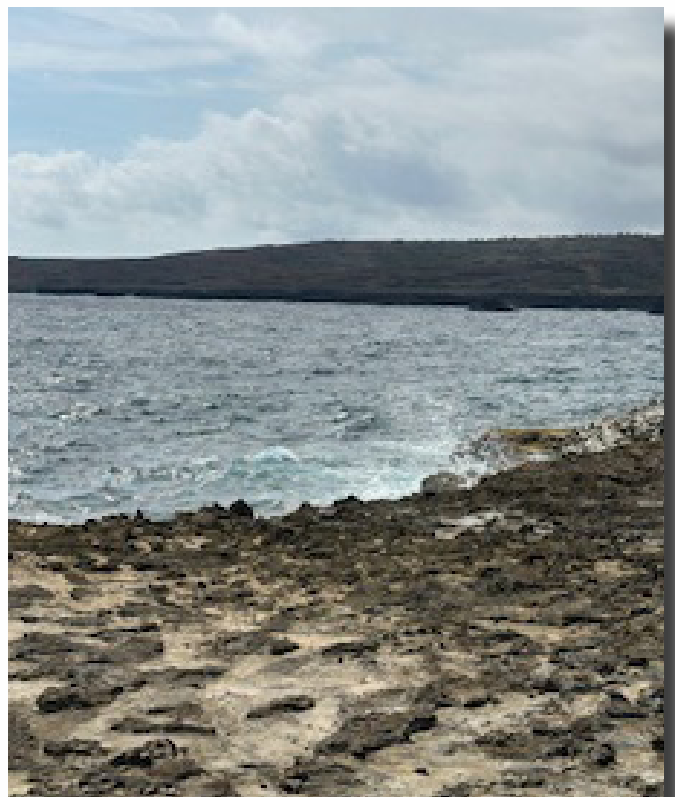
## THE NARROW DOOR

In Luke 13:24, Jesus says, “Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able.”

Luke 13 focuses on Jesus’ teaching about salvation. He teaches that to be saved, we are to follow him in all our lives—not just when it is convenient or when we are in need, but always! Jesus teaches us that the door to heaven is “narrow,” and for us to enter through this door, we are to dedicate our lives to him and live by his teachings.

Striving to follow Jesus means being committed to his teachings and recognizing that we are all God’s children, regardless of race, gender, education, economic status, or ability. All God’s children have an equal opportunity to enter through the “narrow door” of heaven. We will earn a place in God’s Kingdom through our deeds, not merely our words. We should not assume that we will be guaranteed a place in heaven because we attend church regularly, pledge generously, or pray daily. To enter through the “narrow door” requires an unwavering commitment to Jesus and his teaching and to live our lives according to his words.

Luke’s gospel reminds us that Jesus is the only sure way to heaven. However, we are to be Christ-like in all we do. If not, we may not be allowed through the “narrow door.”



Thursday, March 20, 2025

Psalm - 1; Gospel - Luke 16: 19-31

Reflection by Vanessa Levy



What does it mean to be “righteous?” Growing up, I thought that was someone who was very religious, someone who read their bible a lot and didn’t sin much. That would show someone as “righteous.” It’s a word that has felt uncomfortable to me, as how would I be so presumptuous to claim this word! But it really just means someone who is “right with God.” When we are right with God, it makes us bear good fruit in the world and become successful. It still makes me nervous, though. So many people use this passage in the Bible to justify Prosperity Gospel teachings which are so far from the real Christian message. I guess it just means that we can do our best to follow Jesus’ teachings and bear the best fruit we can in the world.

*Friday, March 21, 2025*

*Matthew 21: 33-34*

*Reflection by Al LaTourette*

In this reading, the “Parable of the Tenants”, Jesus tells the story of the landowner who planted a vineyard, built a stone wall around it, dug a wine press within it, and a watchtower to protect the fruits from thieves and animals.

He rented some farmer tenants to grow the vines and fruits while he went away on a journey. As harvest time approached, he sent some servants to collect the fruits of the harvest from his tenant farmers.

The tenants indignantly refused to let the servants have the bounty of the harvest and instead beat, stoned, and killed the servants. The owner then sent his son to collect his harvest, and the tenants simply threw him out of the vineyard and killed him too saying to themselves, that they shall inherit the vineyard.

At this point in his telling of the parable, Jesus then asked his listeners as to what they thought the owner would now do to the tenants. They responded that the owner would likely punish the tenants deservedly and give the land to new tenants who would give him his share of the crop come harvest time the following year.

Jesus then recites the story of a capstone or building stone from Psalm 118, that was rejected by builders. The capstone is accordingly Jesus himself, rejected by the Israeli leaders. In the parable of the tenants, the son is Jesus, and the tenant farmers, the Israelis who ruled the land. Those who do not follow his teachings in the end, despite their attempts to stay in power, will be thwarted and the bounty of the Lord will be given to those who do.

I so much wish for this to be true, for in our world around us, I see way too many instances of our lack of reverence for our earth’s bounteous gifts. So much is taken for granted and treated without regard to its origins and finiteness.

How much longer can the earth’s citizens plunder these God given resources before we will be cast asunder? Will Jesus save us in time? One can only pray and hope.



*Saturday, March 22, 2025*

*Psalm 63: 1-8*

*Reflection by Rob Young*

Most scholars feel that Psalm 63 was written by David while he was in the desert wilderness of Judea. When I hear “desert”, the first thing that comes to my mind is dry and barren. Just thinking about being in a desert makes me feel thirsty. I don’t know why it makes me feel that way...I’ve never actually been in a desert....but if I was in one, how would I stay hydrated?

Early in Psalm 63, David mentions that his soul “thirsts” for God. Throughout the Psalm, David also writes about seeking, being with and praising God.

My mind keeps coming back to the word “thirsts”. As we know, thirst can be either a noun or a verb - an action word. Thirst has many synonyms: long, yearn, hanker, hunger, pine, crave to mention a few. I usually associate “thirst” with some liquid, especially a life giving and sustaining one, namely water. The synonyms for “thirst”, bring to light feelings of strong desire that go beyond simply finding something to drink. A strong desire for something needed for life to continue. There are so many things that we do long for, yearn for, hunger for... you get the idea.

David, like so many of us, is longing to know God, craving to feel God’s presence, yearning to feel God’s love, thirsting to walk with God. Quite simply to be with God in good times, be with God in those not so good times, and be with God in the bad times.....thirsting, longing, hankering, hungering, pining and craving to be with God in ALL of the times. God is indeed a life sustaining liquid that can keep us all hydrated.



Sunday, March 23, 2025

Luke 13:1-9

Reflection by Rev. Robert Mittman

## OOPS!

One little word that signifies a mistake. One little word that would be the last thing we could want to hear the surgeon say just as we are drifting off into never-never land. Oops.

In situations as above, oops may be an unwanted word. But perhaps it is a word that we might choose to utter more often. It indicates that we acknowledge having made a mistake, a poor judgment, an affront to another. Oops may not be a strong enough word depending on what we have said or done.

Jesus declared, "You may not be as sinful as someone else, but own up to your own sin. Prune yourself a little, surround yourself with the manure of repentance and the promise I give to you of forgiveness. You can, and will, bear fruit for me."

Manure, I love that word!. It reminds me of my Dad bringin a carload of it to our first parsonage to spread new life into our freshly-tilled garden. Its acrid smell is evidence of the richness it brings to the soil. And sure enough, we had quite a vegetable garden after that.

Acknowledging our sin, turning from it, and making things right with others gives a sometimes painful richness to our lives, but it cleans things up. It is potent manure for living a life of faith.

Every time we gather for worship and confess our sins we have opportunity to be reborn, fertilized by the love of Christ. This causes us to commit to making things right with others and with GOD. And each time the priest offers the absolution at the conclusion of confession, s/he acts as GOD's representative setting us free from the guilt of our sin. We ought to be leaving worship dancing, joyful that we have been honest with ourselves and set free by the Author of forgiveness. No more oopses-go and bear fruit for him.



Monday, March 24, 2025

Psalm 42: 1-7, Gospel: Luke 4: 23-30

Reflection by Janet Paul

*“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.(1)*



Having chosen this Lenten Reflection at random, I was blessed to see that the scriptures included this particular verse. As it turns out, “As the deer...” was the lullaby I sang to my three daughters. Its lyrics continue with, “You alone are my strength, my shield. To You alone, may my spirit yield.” It was more a balm for my own soul as a young mother usually exhausted and longing, than it was a song for my babes. Having carried on the tradition with my grandchildren, my 5 year old granddaughter will occasionally request it for her own bedtime lullaby.

In this neck of the woods, we see a lot of deer, though I must admit to never seeing a deer actually panting in longing for water. I usually see them on the side of the road, either caught in indecision- “do I stay or do I go?”, or laid out

having successfully “crossed over to the other side”, both literally and figuratively. I can imagine though, with my mind’s little eye, a spooked deer getting safely into the woods, heavily panting as the adrenaline rush slowly wears off, very much in need of refreshment, looking for a cool stream of running water perhaps.

My thoughts go to how often my indecision, the “should I stay or should I go” of it all, causes me to end up in that adrenaline infused longing for calm and refreshment. Raising 3 children, born 3 years apart from oldest to youngest, certainly had its moments of indecision, chaos and longing. And even now with them all grown, I can find myself infused with the adrenaline of worrying about the future if I spend too much time listening to outside voices. I’m also reminded that sometimes our longings are not immediately met with that stream of running water. Sometimes we live consistently in “fight or flight” mode, longing for periods of “rest and digest”. Sometimes we ask the question, “Where is your God?” or we say, “Why me?”, or “What in the world is going on?!?” These questions are allowed. These questions are real. Pondering them can lead to our longing, deep unto deep, for a blessed assurance.

As the Psalmist goes on to model for us, we can find rest as we “Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.” Psalm 42:5b Putting aside (or leaning into) our indecision, our fight or flight mode, and our questions, we can rest in hope. Rest and refreshment can be found in the confident expectation of what God has promised and God’s enduring faithfulness.

(1) <https://bible.com/bible/111/psa.42.1.NIV>

Photo: Whitetail Deer Wood Puzzle, 2025, Outside InsideTM

Tuesday, March 25, 2025

Psalm 39 4-5

Reflection by Chris Detweiler

Each year, most of us find a special way to commemorate our birthday. Sometimes it includes a colorful iced cake with a few candles to blow out. Did you ever wonder about the tradition of making a wish before we blow out the candles on our birthday cake? Is it a sign of creating a positive intention as we mark another milestone? As we inhale, the light of the candles shines brightly. As we exhale, the light transforms into glowing embers on each wick and slowly the trails of smoke end in darkness. We usually do not think too deeply about blowing out the candles because there is the anticipation of eating the cake! Maybe there is a deeper symbolism here...

If you were given the chance, would you want to know the day and hour when you would take your final breath? It would be the opposite bookend of your birthday. What would be an appropriate name for that day? If you are afraid to know when your last day will be, would you live any differently if you knew how you would die? Notice the clarity of 'you will die' which is very different from 'if you die'... That is the reality of life. Just like a candle, our light will transform. Will your life-light transition while you are lying on a hospital bed with your hand being held by a loved one? Are you in the front seat of a car that is crumpled like an accordion? If so, would you live your life or drive your car any differently?

My mother shared a story with me that changed my life and allowed me not to be so afraid of my death-day. She recalled that as her grandmother drew close to death, she saw four beautiful angels standing by the corner posts of her bed. They were waiting patiently to take her 'home' to heaven. A broad smile remained on her face after she breathed her last on this world. She was at peace to be on the other shore. She knew that her days were numbered and lived them out accordingly while she anticipated a welcome embrace into the great beyond.

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Would you live any differently if this was your last Lenten season here on earth? Our days ARE numbered, and they are fleeting by! This reality need not make us depressed but can rather awaken us to the precious nature of each day and every breath we take. Don't miss the chance to say, "I love you" or to offer forgiveness and resolve a relational rift or misunderstanding. It's not too late to start that next thing on our 'bucket' list before it gets kicked over. This is the day that the Lord has made – we can rejoice and be glad!

In prayer: *Thank you, Lord, for the opportunities of this day. Help me to release all of my worrisome burdens before you so that I may humbly begin each day as if it were my last – as a gift from You! Give me grace to live in a way that prepares me to have no regrets when I take my last breath...whenever the angels appear and patiently wait to lead me 'home' to heaven. Amen*



**"Angel of the Resurrection"**

A marble sculpture by Giulio Monteverde at the tomb of the Oneto family in the Cemetery of Staglieno, Genoa, Italy

*Wednesday, March 26, 2025*

*Psalm 39, Luke 13:18-21*

*Reflection by Laura Styer*

We all start out with good intentions. We try seeing the silver linings in the rain clouds, try making lemonade out of the lemons of life, but what do we do when the weight of those lemons falling from the sky is simply too much for us to handle. We lash out, we lament, we yell at anyone around us. We can no longer hold it back, for we are mere humans, we do not possess the strength to see us through these trials of life. So, it is then, that we finally come around to seeking the strength of our Father.

But as many of us are apt to do, we try like a young child to manipulate Him and have our will become His, we beg, barter and plead and finally we see the Light. We know that our faith is small and can only be nurtured by the grace and love of God. So it is that we acknowledge the brevity of our life and pray for the wisdom needed to carry us through.

When we look at the way He works in our lives, we can notice that His will starts not as a raging fire within us, but a small ember that He nurtures and it grows, if we allow it. If we begin to extinguish that ember, He does not simply turn away and say "Ok, maybe another day", but like the small amount of yeast that a baker adds to her dough transforms the lump into bread, He transforms us to accept His will and guides us in encouraging that ember to take hold and burn into the fire needed to preform His will.

During our last ice storm, the kids were all home, my husband was working from home, and it was already going to be "one of those days". At 8:00 in the morning the power company sent notice that they would be shutting off our power for several hours for "an emergency repair". For a few seconds I thought about the crew that would be out in this weather to do the work, but then I thought how in the world is this going to work? How am I going to survive? Why did this have to happen today? I went onto Facebook to lament and had, to my satisfaction, several friends who agreed with my feelings. Then, one of my friends wrote, "Be grateful for what you have." You see, hearing this from most people in my friend circle would have probably had me rolling my eyes. But this friend spoke from a place of truth, she is a bit older than me, but has been a widow for at least 8 yrs. She had 4 children but buried one son last year after he took his own life. Her words gave me pause and turned me from lamenting the day, to thanking God and seeking wisdom.



Thursday, March 27, 2025

Psalm 95: 6-11

Reflection by Angee Bartholomew

Reflecting on these verses, I'm struck by the balance between the joyful call to worship and the serious warning against hardening our hearts. It's a reminder that our relationship with GOD is not static. It requires active listening, a willingness to follow his ways, and a humble heart that remains open to his guidance. It reminds me that every day is an opportunity to choose GOD, to soften my heart, and to walk in his ways, so that I may experience the fullness of his rest.

This call to soften my heart feels particularly relevant right now. Life has thrown some heavy blows, and honestly, there have been moments where I felt my heart beginning to close off, to harden as a means of self-protection. It's so easy, especially when experiencing pain, to build walls around ourselves. But these verses remind me that even in the midst of hardship, even when the world feels chaotic and uncertain, GOD's call is to remain open, to remain connected. It's a call to trust that even in the valleys, He is still the shepherd, and I am still part of his flock. It's a call to bring my brokenness, my anxiety, my anger, my exhaustion, and lay it all at his feet, trusting that He can heal and restore. It's a call to choose love, even when it feels impossible, and to remember that it is through that love, through that vulnerability, that I can truly experience the peace and rest He promises. It won't always be easy, but these verses remind me that the choice is mine, every single day.

And sometimes, it's in the simple beauty of a sunset that I feel that gentle reminder most acutely. After a particularly challenging day, when I feel my heart beginning to close, watching Day turn into Night with color brings a sense of peace and softness. It's a moment where the chaos fades, and in witnessing the beauty He's created each evening, I feel GOD's presence, drawing me back closer to Him.



*Friday, March 28, 2025*

*Psalm 81: 8-14, Mark 12: 28-34*

*Reflection by Jim Druckenmiller*

Last fall, I was thrilled to learn that a rare comet would be visible in the evening sky for anyone to see, provided they knew where and when to look. The comet is called “Tsuchinshan-ATLAS” or A3 for short. Astronomers calculated that this comet, unseen for 80,000 years, would not return for another 80,000. I did not want to miss it!

One clear, cool evening, armed with the simple instruction to look west about an hour after sunset, I scanned the sky from my driveway. At first, I saw nothing. Was it too early? Too late? Was I looking in the wrong direction? Minutes passed, and I almost gave up. Then, as I continued searching, I spotted a faint mist. Suddenly, like a picture sharpening into focus, there it was: A3. It was incredible—a bright, icy dot with a long, vertical, wispy tail stretching into the sky. Once I saw it, I couldn't unsee it. I couldn't believe I'd almost missed something so large and beautiful, exactly where it was supposed to be. I just needed to follow the simple directions. What a gift!



This experience reminds me of the commandments emphasized in this

Psalm and excerpt from Mark; the foundational information we need to thrive as children of God. Like the comet's location, the core principles of loving God and loving our neighbors as ourselves provide the essential coordinates. Mastering these basics isn't easy. It takes practice, perseverance, and the willingness to try again when we stumble. But by focusing on these two simple yet profound directives, we can stay on course and never lose sight of the great reward gifted to us through Jesus. **AMEN**

Saturday, March 29, 2025

Luke 18: 9-14

Reflection by Sadie & Emmy Sweeney

Sadie (4) and Emmy (2) listened to the story Jesus told about the Pharisee and the tax collector. It got me thinking about what my girls are learning about God and how they see the world. They're still little, of course, and their prayers are mostly thanking God for the many people we love and who love us. But even at their age, they grasp some pretty big ideas.



The story of the Pharisee and the tax collector really resonated with them, in their own way. The girls understood that it's important to be kind and share. They picked up on the idea that we should try our best to be good, to live "God's way," as they put it. They know that sometimes they make mistakes, like when they don't share or when they say unkind words. Sadie & Emmy understand that it's okay to ask for forgiveness when that happens. They even connected it to loving Jesus and loving each other, which is something we talk about a lot.

It's interesting how they focused on the tax collector. They seemed to understand that he wasn't perfect, but he knew he needed God's help. The girls didn't really focus on the Pharisee's pride as much. I think, at their age, they just get the simple message: it's better to be humble and ask for forgiveness than to try to make yourself seem better than others in your own eyes, in others' eyes, or in the eyes of God.

I asked Sadie to use colors in this image that she liked and did not like, to represent the character in the parable she feels we should like and not like. Sadie's favorite color is purple, which she colored the tax collector in the image, and she does not like lime green, which she colored the Pharisee.

Sunday March 30, 2025

Psalm 32 and Luke 15: 1-3, 11b -32

Reflection by Doug Eschbach

“But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion...” “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

Mess up in your life. Big time. Do it publicly so that everyone knows. Don't just embarrass yourself; do something really dramatic to bring shame on yourself in front of everyone.

After that, you'll never read the story of the Prodigal Son the same way.

Jesus' parables can follow you throughout your life. They are deceptively simple and can seem perfectly clear. But as our lives collect experience, we feel more depth in them each time. This is especially true of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. As our years help us be more honest with ourselves, we can see ourselves in each of the sons and, so, become always more grateful for the father's response.

When younger I thought that this parable was incredibly unfair to the elder son. He had, after all, done as he reminds his father; he stayed home and lived a responsible life. He worked hard. He followed the rules. He supported his dad while his little brother was out carousing. Where's the reward for responsibility? I thought he made a good point.

But people who are so sure of their own goodness “deceive themselves and the truth is not in them” (as the confession says). The elder son is one-dimensional and counts only his achievements. He was probably not much fun at his brother's party anyway.

We can see ourselves like that. Little mis-steps here and there but, overall, pretty great people. We'd never behave like our little brothers or make the choices they make. Until we do. And once we do, if we look at ourselves honestly, we can be shocked at what we see. Maybe we're not what we always thought we were.

Maybe it's a blessing to realize that.

Maybe it's a blessing to see that we are, at the same time, caring and uncaring, selfless and selfish, kind and hurtful, faithful and errant. Luther referred to

this duality as “simul justus et peccator” – at the same time, justified and sinner. Maybe we would say, “human,” instead of something in Latin.

The younger son returned drenched in his own humanity, stripped of pride in himself, less than even his father's servants. Whatever high-horse he rode out of town, he returned home walking in shame and stood before his father to acknowledge that he had no claim on honor.

While we may see ourselves in each of the brothers, the parable really isn't about them. The parable is really about the father and how his forgiveness and gracious welcome reflects the same radical joy with which God welcomes home those who have deceived themselves, and returned.

I have a print of a painting entitled “Return of the Prodigal.” It was painted in 1958 by Frank Wesley, a fourth-generation Christian from India for the Hiroshima Christian Social Center while he was studying at the Art College of Kyoto University. The image shows the father embracing his younger son with both of their faces obscured by the embrace. The son is filthy. His broken body hangs in his father's arms like a dead man while his father, in full white robes buries his head in the son's shoulder and supports him. You can barely look at the son in the image...except to see him as his father sees him. The love there needs no explanation.

I don't know of any paintings that portray the father with the elder son. Isn't that interesting? Maybe the basis of their relationship might be harder to capture on canvas. I wonder if, when we can't see our own nature, we can't fully see the nature of the father.

Perhaps we see God most clearly when his love and forgiveness welcome us home to the banquet he prepares for each of us... when we go from dead to alive, from lost to found.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” (Ps. 32)

Monday, March 31, 2025

John 4: 43-54, Psalm 30: 1-6, 11-13

Reflection by Jen Wager

In John 4: 43-54, Jesus performed a miracle by healing an official's son who was close to death.

MIRACLE: A surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws.

In February 1983, my father had unexpected surgery complications, and I received a call that I should go to him immediately. That day, the flight from Allentown to St. Louis, normally 5 hours, took 11 hours due to a winter storm departure delay and a mechanical delay with the connecting flight. I arrived at my dad's hospital bedside at 2:00 AM. I said, "I'm here." He looked at me clearly and the light went out of his eyes at that moment.

I believe my dad waited for me to get there. That belief has been a comfort to me. Psalm 30 is a reminder of God's power to comfort believers.

We think of miracles as big events. The miracles of Jesus left no doubt they were miracles. However, I've learned along my life path to keep my expectations in perspective. I did not expect my elderly dad to come alive again. The "moment" miracle I was blessed to receive was only seconds, but it was big for me and I thank God for that moment.



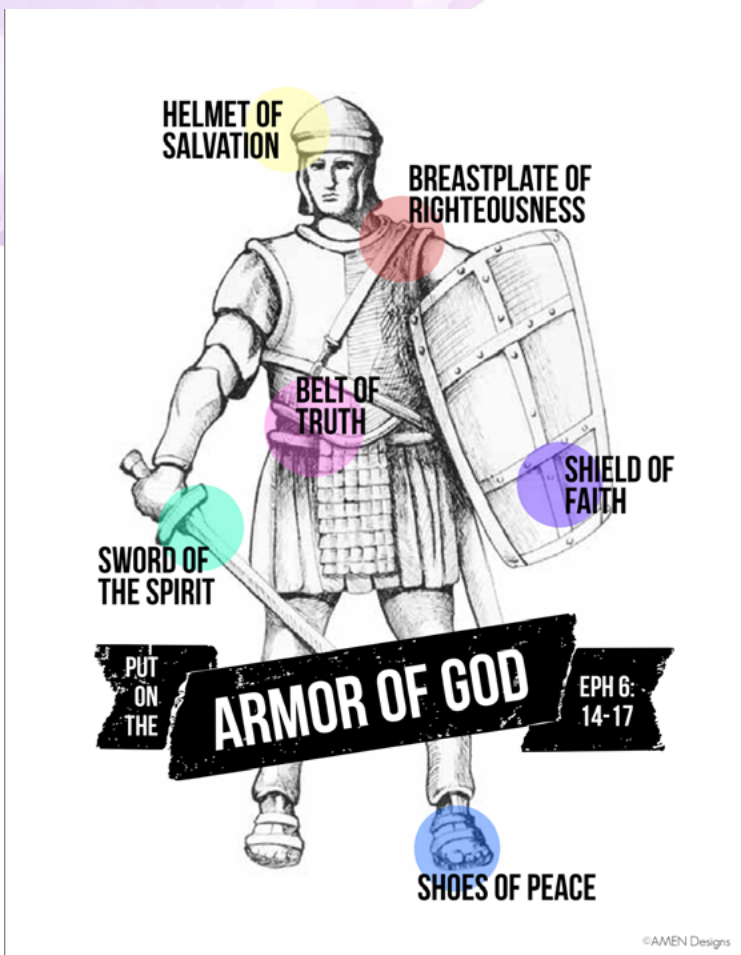
Tuesday, April 1, 2025

Psalm 46:1-8

Reflection by Louise Ann Beebe

## God is our Fortress

Who hasn't experienced struggles, calamities, and awful situations that have stressed us to the maximum and sometimes overwhelmed us? We are called to be just, merciful, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8) but the fight against evil seems to be losing. A common thread from Biblical role models and the examples below is to maintain trust and faith in God, pray diligently, and take action fighting evil with good until it is overcome.



In today's reading, inspirational Psalm 46:1-8 is attributed to the Sons of Korah in the temple. There was national crisis as the Assyrians successfully attacked Israel and Judah.

<sup>1</sup> *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.* <sup>2</sup> *Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea.* <sup>3</sup> *though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah.* <sup>4</sup> *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.* <sup>5</sup> *God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.* <sup>6</sup> *The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.* <sup>7</sup> *The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah.* <sup>8</sup> *Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth.*

Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses in 1517 to protest the selling of

indulgences. He endured intense persecution by the Catholic Church, refused to recant his position, was excommunicated in 1521, branded an outlaw/heretic, went into hiding, and feared for his life. Luther then translated the New Testament into German for the public and composed the song "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" (known in its time as the "The Battle Hymn of the Reformation").<sup>3</sup>

Tuesday, April 1, 2025

Psalm 46:1-8

Louise Ann Beebe cont'd

Pope John Paul II endured heavy Russian oppression and religious persecution in Poland growing up and as a priest. His 2005 World Day of Peace speech was based on Romans 12:21 <sup>4</sup>.

*“...<sup>3</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good’. Evil is never defeated by evil; once that road is taken, rather than defeating evil, one will instead be defeated by evil. The great Apostle brings out a fundamental truth: peace is the outcome of a long and demanding battle which is only won when evil is defeated by good. If we look to the present state of the world, we cannot help but note the disturbing spread of various social and political manifestations of evil: from social disorders to anarchy and war, from injustice to acts of violence and killing. To steer a path between the conflicting claims of good and evil, the human family urgently needs to preserve and esteem that common patrimony of moral values bestowed by God himself...This fight can be fought effectively only with the weapons of love. When good overcomes evil, love prevails and where love prevails, there peace prevails”.*

When will fights against evil be won and peace return? Only God knows. Preparing for this reflection was personally valuable. Reading about historical figure’s struggles (Susan B. Anthony, Dietrich Bonhoffer, Martin Luther King, etc.) answered my question “how can I fight the darkness?”. It begins with prayer, putting on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18), developing a strategy, and trusting God will eventually be - visibly - victorious as we “endure to the end” (Matthew 24:13).

<sup>1</sup><https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2021/06/30/using-psalm-46-in-counseling-part-one/>

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic\\_figures/luther\\_martin.shtml#:~:text=In%20January%201521%2C%20the%20Pope,into%20hiding%20at%20Wartburg%20Castle\).](https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/luther_martin.shtml#:~:text=In%20January%201521%2C%20the%20Pope,into%20hiding%20at%20Wartburg%20Castle).)

<sup>3</sup><https://www.hymncharts.com/2023/04/12/the-story-behind-a-mighty-fortress/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://aleteia.org/2021/01/15/st-john-paul-iis-formula-for-defeating-evil-in-the-world>

Wednesday, April 2, 2025

Psalm 145, Verses 8-9

Reflection by Judy Morice

*8 The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

*9 The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.*

---

When it was the bad times,  
the nearby forest awaited  
my running feet,  
as the inhale, exhale  
of my heavy breathing  
carried me deeper and deeper,  
over fences, across creeks.  
When, breath exhausted,  
I collapsed upon a bed  
of earth and soft grasses,  
ringed by glorious trees,  
and warmed by sunshine,  
I came to know your  
compassion leads me  
to peace, to love,  
there in your creation  
where you cared for me.

--Judy Morice

2025-02-17





Thursday, April 3, 2025

Psalm 106: 6-7, 19-2, Gospel John 5:32-47

Reflection by Wendy Toth

### **Psalm 106: 6-7, 19-23**

“They forgot God.” Forgetting God? How could anyone forget God? And yet. Forgetting is easy. It is something humans slide into, little by little. It requires no thought, no intention, and no action. In Psalm 106 God’s people forget first. They backslide into idolatry second. They show us that idolatry is where the momentum of forgetting takes us. If we don’t do the hard work of holding space for God, other things will quickly fill that space. And we will be the ones to suffer for it.

So what does Moses do in this situation? He doesn’t simply let things continue on. Moses takes action! He sets an intention to save God’s people. He stands up bravely in the face of God’s wrath. The bottom line: He prays, and his prayers are answered.

Psalm 106 shows us that prayer is an action. A powerful one! When we aren’t sure what else to do, prayer is right there for us. It keeps us from forgetting God. It holds God’s space in our hearts and minds, and it brings us home to God’s love when we inevitably do forget.

Image: A “fairy bridge” of Bundoran, Ireland, where I traveled years ago. This natural arch, carved out of a cliff reminds me to “hold space” for God. It is a popular place for tourists to reflect, pray, and hope.

### **John 5, 32-47**

In John 5, Jesus does not simply claim great things about Himself to anyone who will listen. He brings forth the testimony of John, of His own works, of the Father, of the Scriptures, and of Moses. He lays this all out for the religious leaders, handing them everything they need to believe. It’s like he gives them a map to His house and permission to move right in! But even with every detail taken care of, they are still not willing to come to Jesus.

So, what is stopping them? What holds them back from taking this simple action? One that will make their lives whole.

They are too caught up in their lives to even realize what they are missing! They forget to look to God; They have already done that same old human backslide into a bunch of busy work that misses the point entirely. They are too concerned with looking at one another, following the specific rules of the time, and basking in the recognition of being “religious,” to make such a drastic change. They are too caught up in getting attention and praise from other humans to hold that space for God.



Friday, April 4, 2025

Psalm 34: 18-19

Reflection by Margaret Enos

*“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.”*

*“If your heart is broken, you’ll find God right there. If you’re kicked in the gut, he’ll help you catch your breath.”*

When our daughter Megan was a baby, she needed to receive intensive treatment for the seizures she was having. For eight weeks that fall we gave our child twice daily shots of human growth hormone. This protocol aimed to reboot Megan’s brain, allowing it to develop more typically, and to quiet her seizures. The shots also dismantled Megan’s immune system, and so we needed to keep her away from people during that time.

We were socially distancing 25 years before we would all be charged with doing so during the pandemic — and it was particularly challenging because our home at the time was a part of the freshmen boys’ dorm at the boarding school where we lived.

The walks Megan and I took are what I remember most clearly about that autumn. I would zip her into her bunting, snuggle her into the sling, and retreat to unpopulated areas of campus. Our favorite place was the stage of the outdoor auditorium. Tall pine trees lined the back of that space. The pines seemed to me to be a “thin place” - a setting where heaven easily touches down and our connection with God is more clearly recognized. I have always felt closest to the Holy Spirit among the three persons of the Trinity. I am always grateful to feel Her presence offering comfort in those hard times. And thin places of deep peace and calm beauty are where the Holy Spirit is most visible to me.



*Saturday April 5, 2025*  
*Gospel – John 7:37-52*  
*Reflection by Ben Gorton*

What strikes me very deeply from John's gospel is he immediately speaks of Jesus crying out "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the scriptures said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

The words are vibrant and inviting. They are direct and subtle at the same time.

The meaning for comes from a period in my life this past year. A year filled hardships and challenges. A year that tested my faith on more than one occasion.

These words from John reminded me that if I could stay thirsty in my faith, stay focused on my faith and my spirituality and most of all my love of God, that there was light beyond the dark of those very heavy stressful days.

The words "rivers of living water" are so expressive! How could I not want to feel that? Rivers of living water flowing through me...

And what I realized through this Psalm is that my "thirst" was quenched with "rivers of living water" as I chose to maintain my faith and ask God to be with me and help me see the light beyond the darkness.

I have meditated many times on this. And he did help in so many ways. I am humble to say that YOU, the people of Holy Spirit are the Living Waters brought to me and my family this past year to strengthen my faith and my love of faith. Even the strong need that "thirst quenching" guidance and a shoulder to lean on sometimes.



Sunday, April 6, 2025

Gospel – John 12: 1-8

Reflection by Dave Boorse

**Collect:**

*Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen*

**Gospel from John 12:1-8**

*Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. Judas Iscariot...said, <sup>5</sup> “Why was this fragrant oil not sold... and given to the poor?” <sup>7</sup> But Jesus said, Let her alone; she is doing it against my burial.*

There are several stories, important stories nested in the first eight verses of this chapter in the Gospel of John.

To say that the above four phrases constitute the essential ideas from today's reading is not to slight the other characters intentions or activities. It's merely an attempt to find a part of the story we can grasp in today's meditation.

**Nard** refers to a group of flowering plants, some of which give an intensely fragrant oil, or it may refer to the salve made from it. Some nard flowers form spikes when they bloom, hence the alternate name.

It's used as a perfume, to show love or generosity, as a medicine, and to demonstrate wealth. The amount Mary used represented one year's wages for a laborer.

Why did Mary do it? A good question...

At least Judas thought so, and said “Why?”

But Jesus didn't seem to think the question worth it or maybe he was just reacting to Judas' hypocrisy: “Let her alone”, said Jesus.

Much has been said about the significance of the rest of Jesus' sentence, “she's done it against my burial.” Some see it as a metaphorical, pre-death embalming. I prefer to think of it as a pre-death eulogy—tell them you love them while they are still alive, sort of thing.

Perhaps, more important than why, is what happened because of Mary's act? “...and the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.”

To ponder today:

How long would Mary's hair retain the fragrance of nard?

What encounters of beauty have we experienced, by giving or receiving?

What is the Beauty of Holiness?

Monday, April 7, 2025

Psalm 23, Gospel: John 8:12-20

Reflection by Brian Bingaman

Psalm 23:4 memorably makes a reference to walking through the valley of the shadow of death.

The words can be taken both literally (I associate the 23rd Psalm with funerals), as well as figuratively. “The valley of the shadow of death” can symbolize the times in your life when you’re feeling particularly stressed, anxious, overwhelmed, hopeless, confused, or lonely. They’re the times when, out of desperation, you feel like crying out, *“If I could only find a way out of this!”*

In John Chapter 8, Jesus boldly proclaims himself to be the light of the world. “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life,” He says in verse 12.

At times, it’s hard to fully believe what Jesus says here because it can feel like we’re walking in darkness even when we think that we’re faithfully following Him. But the bottom line is to come to Jesus with what’s weighing heavily on our hearts and minds, repent of our sins (a recurring theme throughout Lent), and rely on Him to be our spiritual Light and hope in the midst of darkness – even when we’re struggling with unbelief.

Ultimately, the Light will show us the way out of the valley of the shadow of death, and to a place of strength where we can be the light of Christ for others. To close out services at Church of the Holy Spirit, Deacon Johnine often commissions us to do just that, so that all can see the Light in us. Reflecting the Light should show us to be God-honoring, trustworthy, sincere, earnest, and honest in all that we do.

It isn’t easy, but as Jesus says in Matthew 19:26, “With God, all things are possible.”

Tuesday, April 8, 2025

Psalm 102: 15-22, John 8: 21-30

Reflection by Eric Frankhouser

In the psalm verses for today, we hear the psalmist describe a victorious and compassionate God. Reading the whole psalm, the author is turning to a God who will deliver them from their dire straits. Turning to God always, including when times are tough, is a nice message. One that we can never hear enough, though sometimes easier said than done. But it's hardly a message I can add to in today's reflection.

Turning to the Gospel, we hear Jesus paint a bleak future with "you will die in your sins", and a continuing message full of judgment and condemnation. Although he does give us a way out if we "believe that I am he." Note that some Greek translations read "I am he" as "I am", a description of God we first hear in Exodus. Declaring that the only way to avoid dying in our sins is to believe that Jesus is the I Am is a difficult concept for me, as I believe that our God is ever-loving, and loves unconditionally despite our "sins", always nudging us toward fully living. This applies to all of creation, and none of this requires me to have a correct belief system. If the only way that God would love me, and help transform me from my misguided ways, is if I have a proper belief system of a God who is beyond my fully understanding, then that is not the unconditional love I believe in, and I may be in trouble!

Sure, I can create an interpretation that makes these verses fit my theology of a God of All, believers and non-believers. But that would be like turning a square peg so that it fits a round hole. There must be something else in what Jesus is saying that doesn't resonate with me on my journey today. Perhaps there is something in these verses that resonates with you?

In reading verses like these, I can only let go of my preconceived notions, my theology, my beliefs of who I think God is, and listen in silence. Listen for a God who wants to transform me from my sins. In my spiritual practice of Centering Prayer, this is often accompanied by inner healing. It is in life's traumas that I form beliefs that will give me a sense of certainty and safety; this so I can protect my wounds. But this protection closes me to many things, including the potential healing from God that transforms me, releases me from the grip that leads to what we call sin, and allows me to fully live as a human. So, I sit and ponder – God is I Am. I let go and let God steer the ship for a while.



Desolation

Wednesday, April 9, 2025

Canticle 13, John 8: 31-42

Reflection by Ruth Konrad

Jesus talks of sin, and as you know we speak words of repentance in our Sunday services for:

*“sins we have committed, sins committed on our behalf, and for the sin of not doing things we should have done.”*

From the Gospel lesson we get Jesus' point that sin is a pretty weighty, or heavy subject...with great consequences.

With that in mind, I beg forgiveness for recounting a brief experience in my life which was the first thing that came to mind after I read this Gospel lesson:

When inducted into the Marine Corps one goes through a battery of tests, some medical and others physical. The most memorable for me was the swimming test (Marines are by definition aquatic-related, attached to the Navy so this was no surprise). The first part of the test was to see if we could swim at all...dog-paddle or otherwise, and almost all of us made it through with no problem. The next level included treading water and survival skills like inflating one's clothes to help stay afloat (If you've had a lifesaving course in your youth, you'll recognize that). Finally, the last and most difficult test involved an Olympic-sized swimming pool, and a 13lb weight with a rope-loop attached. (This was to simulate the weight of an M-16, and to truly test our swimming strength.)

Of course, this part of the test was supervised by a BIG, MEAN, and TERRIFYING drill instructor that obviously scared the tar out of us. One by one, we were expected to jump into the pool, put the loop over our heads and then swim breaststroke around the perimeter of this huge pool. Not many made it all the way around and I watched first one, then another, and another girl drop the weight and come back to the surface gasping. It was NO surprise that the drill instructor was LESS than happy about this because he then had to get in the pool and retrieve the weight for the next person. He let everyone who dropped the weight fully understand his displeasure! So...then it was my turn. First let me say that breaststroke is my weakest stroke, involving a frog-kick with the knees that has never been strong, so I was anxious. I hopped in the pool, took the weight and put it over

my head and around my neck and started off. For the first little bit I was ok. The weight was heavy but with each stroke of my arms I could come up to the surface for a breath and then back down for the next stroke. Well, coming around the first corner I found that it now took two strokes to come up for air... and shortly after that, three strokes to come up for air... I have to say that I really don't (and I mean DON'T) like being yelled at so I kept swimming until I finally faced the big question: Drop this weight and take my punishment...or drown. (and I really had to think about that!) Obviously, I dropped the weight, got an earful from the Drill Instructor, and carried on.

This seemed the perfect analogy to the weight of Sin-- we think we are fine, we get deeper and deeper almost without knowing it and perhaps eventually we come to the same question: succumb to sin as a way of life and bear the consequences, or repent and follow the teachings of Christ and have everlasting life.

Jesus tells us, rather nicely, that a slave has no place in 'the household' and offers this:

*“If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”*

In this freedom we join him as a true family member and have a place in God's household.



Thursday, April 10, 2025

Psalm 105: 4-11, Gospel – John 8:51-59

Reflection by Suzanne Detweiler

I really did not want to do this, but my conscience won.

Then at first, I wasn't thrilled after reading the Psalm (all of it) and the portion of John. The Psalm seemed like a shortcut to reading Genesis and Exodus and the reading in John was like our current broken world where we have lost our relationship with truth.

John 1:17 says, "*The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came from Jesus Christ.*" However, in the reading of John, Jesus, whose miracles could not be denied, was in a crowd which first asked Jesus if he had a demon and secondly who in the world he claimed to be. Finally, Jesus told them the truth: "*Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.*" The response from the crowd was to get ready to stone him.

I was looking for words that would touch me, like the versus three and eight in Psalm 138: "*When I called, you answered me; you increased my strength within me. The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever.*"

Those versus became important to me. Now I felt that I must go back to Psalm 105 since I had made fun of it and reread it. Versus four and five were what I was looking for and needed. "Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually. Remember the wonderful work he has done, the miracles, and the judgments he has uttered.

As we attempt to walk the Way, GOD has given us what we need to keep walking as we have a companion for the trip.

*Glory to GOD whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine:  
Glory to him from generation to generation in the church and in Jesus Christ for ever and ever.  
Amen Ephesians 3*



Friday, April 11, 2025

Psalm – 18:1-7

Reflection by Pat Spess

**I love you, Lord, my STRENGTH: Indeed I do. The Lord is my ROCK: My shield of my salvation.**

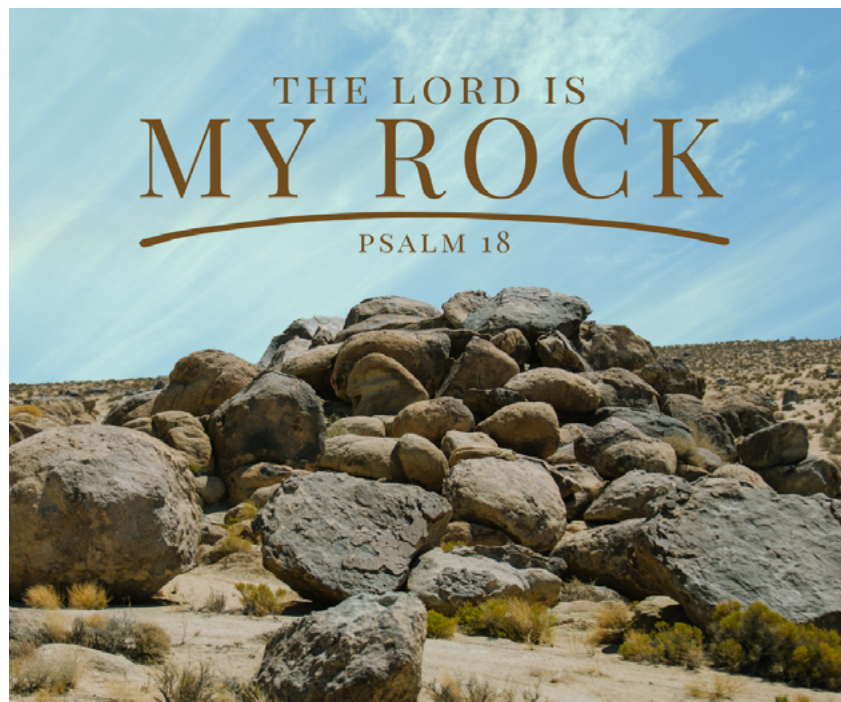
In reading this Psalm multiple times and sleeping on it, these two statements kept circling in my thoughts. For many years I would pray and speak to the Lord, however not really knowing if I was heard or not, I was stuck.

Once I found and learned to really understand the power of prayer and all that goes along with it, I began a new path of praying, speaking and thanking the Lord. Each morning I begin with a hot cup of coffee and get settled in my comfy chair in my 'she shed' – no noise and not to be disturbed. I read my Jesus Calling book and the scriptures from my Bible that correspond with that day's reading. I thank my Lord for all my blessings, my struggles and God's listening to and hearing my prayers. Our prayers can be answered immediately, tomorrow and someday. We need to just believe and have faith and hope, the Lord always hears us.

My Faith, Hope and Trust are in the Lord, my Savior, my Creator, my Sustainer. I know He is always with me to guide me, support me and love me unconditionally and He will never forsake me. Thanks be to God!

The power of prayer and being thankful throughout our day will strengthen us and bring us peace in all situations.

I rejoice because we have been rescued!



Saturday, April 12 2025

Gospel: John 11: 45-53

Reflection by Alice Kohler

I have often wondered what it would have been like to walk the earth when Jesus was here. Would I have been a believer, recognizing him as the Messiah? Or would I have been skeptical, a critic? This passage from John's Gospel is helping me reach a conclusion.

*"Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary [Lazarus' sister] and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done." (John 11:45-46)*

What Jesus had done was call Lazarus out of the tomb. This reminded me of a homily delivered by the Rector of my church many years ago, during which he spoke about the possibility that Lazarus was reluctant to come out of the tomb. Reluctant or not, Lazarus did answer Jesus' call and came out of the tomb—and he did so willingly. Lazarus had a choice as we always do.

The people who witnessed Jesus' miracle also had a choice, to believe or to be afraid. The political situation at that time was tense. Some Jews became believers. Others were afraid that, if too many people believed in Jesus, the Romans would come and destroy both their "holy place" and their

nation. (John 11: 48) After meeting with Caiaphas, the high priest, the choice was made to sacrifice one man and save the nation. *"So from that day on they planned to put him to death."* (John 11:53)

This reminded me that there are many examples in the Bible when God asked people to be obedient, to surrender to his will—and to do so willingly. The first person who came to mind was Mary, who was asked by the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation to be the mother of Jesus—and to do so willingly. Mary also said, "Yes." *"Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."* (Luke 1:38)

Mary's decision was made in an environment that was more cultural than political. She was betrothed to Joseph but not yet married. She must have violated the cultural norms of the day if she were already pregnant. To keep those norms intact, she would have to be sacrificed. In fact, Joseph *"planned to dismiss her quietly" because he did not want to expose her to public disgrace.* (Matthew 1:19)

In spite of the potential consequences, Mary still chose to say, "Yes."

I was also reminded of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, pleading with God *"to remove this cup"* from him. (Mark 14:36) Ultimately, his choice was also to say, "Yes"—and to do so willingly.

The impact of these individual decisions was major. What if the witnesses to Lazarus' coming out of the tomb had **ALL** become believers? What if Mary had said, "No"? What if Jesus had decided not to save humanity by restoring eternal life through his crucifixion and resurrection?

So now my thoughts turn to the times that God has asked me to hear his voice, to listen, to obey. Have I? Will I? Will you? Who knows what the impact could be?



Sunday, April 13, 2025

Psalm 31: 9-10

Reflection by Priya Eddy

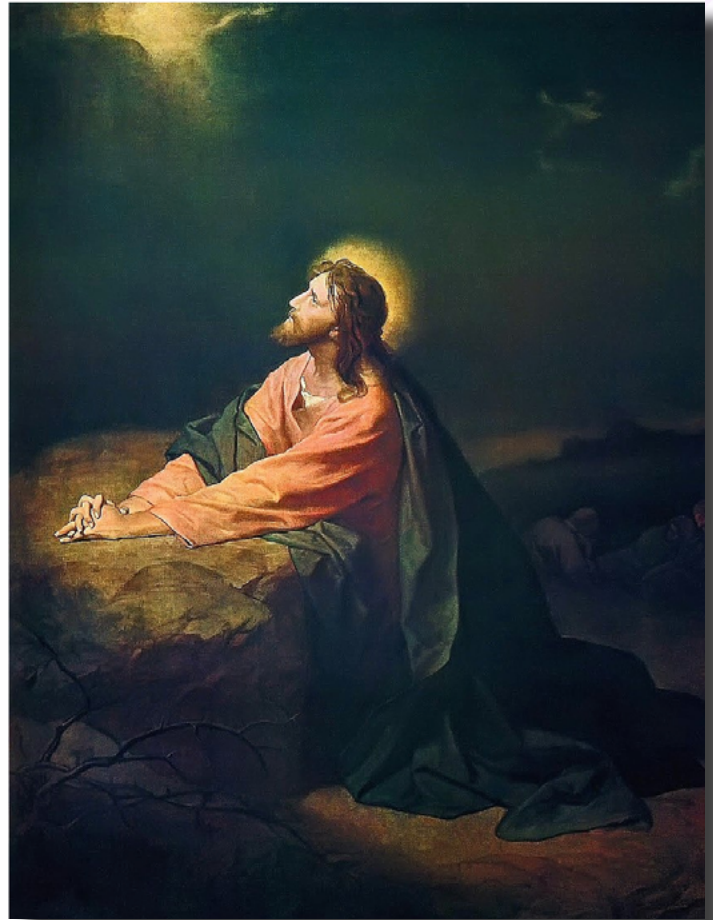
***<sup>9</sup> Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief.***

***<sup>10</sup> My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak.***

King David is attributed to writing Psalm 31. It was written most likely while David was in hiding and fleeing from being persecuted and killed by Saul. The psalmist is crying out in anguish facing intense despair and affliction from facing emotional struggle of disbandment. David persistently calls out to God, pleading for mercy and deliverance, yet demonstrating unwavering faith even when surrounded by hardship that God will deliver him from his troubles and affliction.

We see a similar cry of anguish from Jesus as he faces death. In the gospel reading in Luke Chapter 22, after celebrating the Passover meal with his disciples, he retreats to the Mount of Olives to pray. Jesus cries out to God to remove this suffering and extreme pain of facing death. In verse 44 (Chapter 22) Jesus being in anguish, prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. But Jesus surrenders to God's will and not his will. Jesus was willing to make this sacrifice of facing death on the cross, offering for us and the world, God's love, compassion, and hope, providing a path for us in "being in a relationship with God".

Just as Jesus and the psalmist, we face adversaries, struggles and anguish of in our lives such as discrimination due to age, hatred, jealousy, religious bias, racial, sexual discrimination, and health problems. We can cry out to God and let God take control. It's not our will but God's will be done. We are assured that the Lord hears our cries for help and saves us from our adversaries and knows what is best for us, just as David said in Psalm 31 v 14: But I trust in you, Lord; I say, "You are my God."



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***Prayer: Almighty God, open our hearts this Lent season to go to you at all times in prayer, especially when facing adversity and anguish and to surrender our lives to your will, knowing that you will work with us for the best outcomes. All this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.***

*Monday, April 14, 2025*

*Psalm 36: 5-11; Gospel John 12 1-11*

*Reflection by Geri Duesberry*

The story of Mary and Martha has always intrigued me. As one of five girls in my family it was always our job to set the table, serve the food, clear the table and wash dishes after. There were often squabbles about who washed, who dried and who was responsible for putting everything back in the China cabinet perfectly thereafter. Needless to say, dishwashers were not optional appliances then.

Our holiday dinners (most often prepared by my father who was a wonderful cook) was the highlight of so many special meals and happily served to our large family, friends who were without family and our parish priests. The trick was to see how quickly we could be done in the kitchen to go enjoy the company. This was the beauty of those days.

In the Gospel narratives (more elaborate in Luke 10:38) Martha is very annoyed by Mary's choice to sit at Jesus's feet and anoint him. However, Jesus calms her, reassuring her that Mary has made the better choice by spending her time with him instead of busying herself with the day's chores.

For me, this is the delicate balance. Jesus and all those at the table would not eat without the work Martha offered to prepare the meal. But it is not the only food that sustains us as Christ's own as we walk along our path to salvation.

The daily grind of our lives easily gets ahead of our time to slow down, pray, contemplate and focus on who we are and whose we are. I am especially prone to this as we are bombarded with our own troubles, the constant turmoil in our nation and the excruciating plight of those suffering in the world.

So, what is the answer? I can only say for myself that I hope to make this Lenten season a time to "hunker down" and commit to quiet reflection, prayer, hope and love. It's not easy but the rewards are infinite.

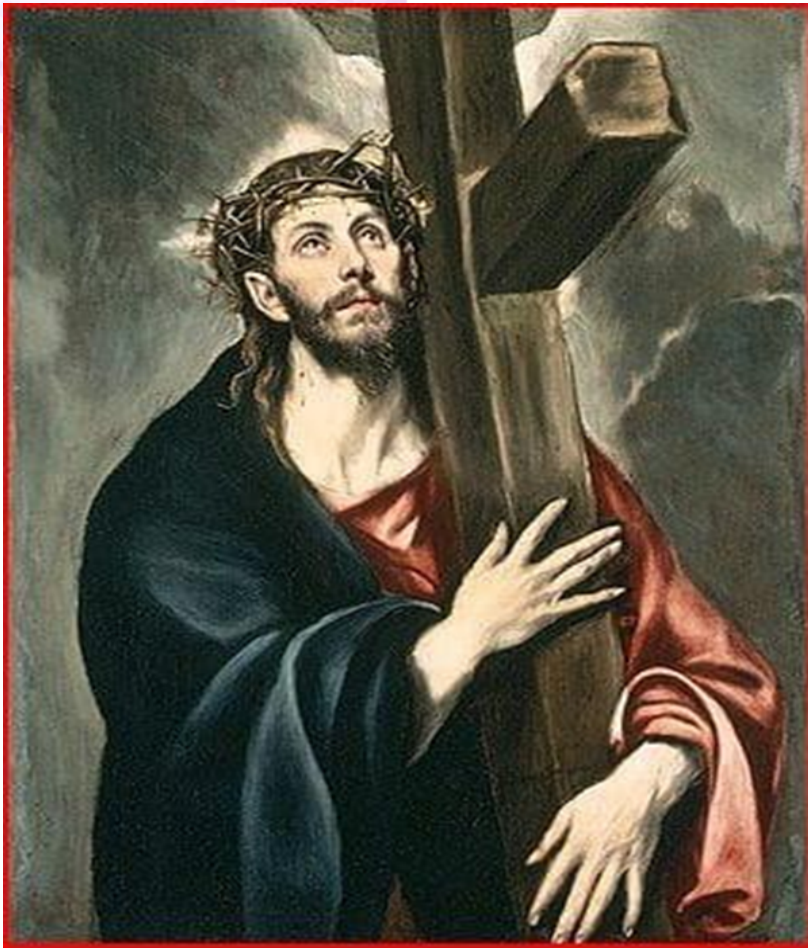
May God bless us all in this beloved community and beyond.

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

Gospel John: 12:20-36

Reflection by Fr. Christian Brocato

“Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also.”



The request to “see Jesus” is an extraordinary one to be sure in the Gospel. Note that Greeks were not Jews and were likely presumed to be people without faith in Jesus. The request travels word of mouth until Jesus responds with a profound summative theology of what was to come, his death and his resurrection. The image of grain is a familiar one to many of us, as it echoes texts about seeds being sown. Such texts represent the flowering of the Gospel in the hearts of those who embrace its message.

The real news of the Gospel is that faith in Jesus means to follow him and fully embrace his Gospel. To follow means to take Christ’s Gospel of love, empathy, compassion, mercy and forgiveness into the world to help make it a better place. The spirituality of Holy Week invites us to journey with Jesus, to live with him and in him, to die with him and to rise with him.

That’s Good News in my book of life,

and I pray good news for you as well. Blessings during this week of weeks we claim as holy. Indeed, it is ‘holy,’ and we are ‘holy’ when we walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

*Wednesday, April 16, 2025*

*John 13: 21-32*

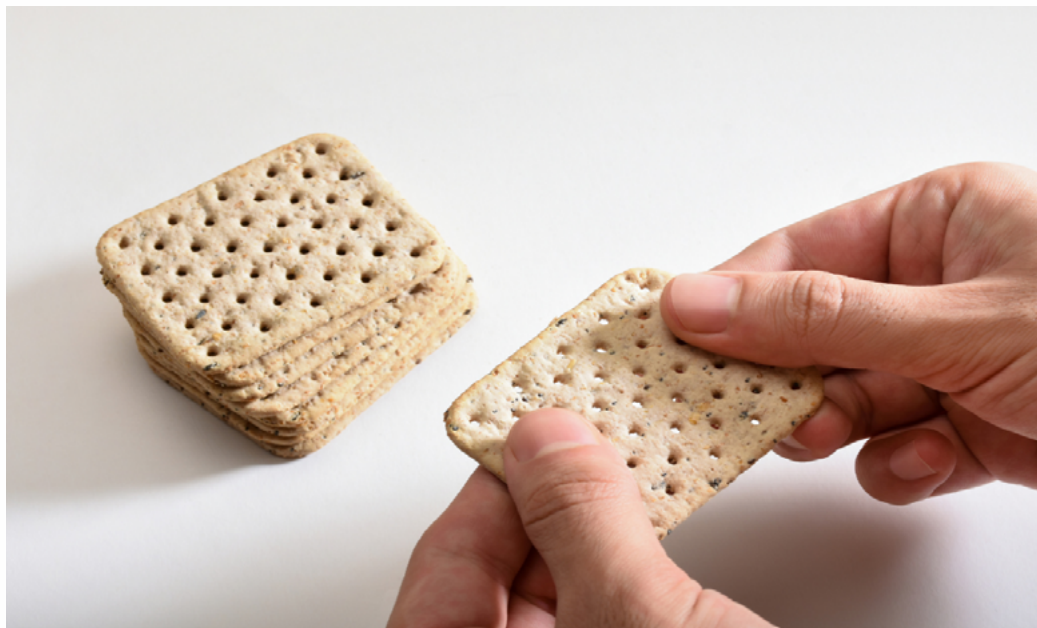
*Reflection by Lynn Bingaman*

Have you ever felt the hurt or pain caused by the betrayal of a dear friend, close colleague, or a favorite relative? Can you imagine telling this person something in confidence, knowing that they were going to betray you?

It is believed that Judas was a beloved friend of Jesus because at Eastern meals it was customary for the host to offer one of the guests a morsel of bread as a gesture of special friendship. Some biblical scholars believe that Judas' betrayal of Jesus was all part of GOD's plan, and that Jesus was also aware of the plan and wanted His disciples to realize He knew it. It is also believed that Jesus wanted to encourage Judas to carry out the plan.

I'm not sure that Judas knew that his betrayal would lead to Jesus' crucifixion. Perhaps he thought his actions would force Jesus' hand and perhaps raise up an army who would overthrow the Romans, ultimately crowning Jesus as the King of the Jews. We know the outcome from the real story as presented In the Bible.

I think we need to be mindful that if we are tempted to betray a confidence that it could result in consequences that we never expected.



Thursday, April 17, 2025

Psalm 22

Reflection by Susan Daywitt

How do you answer this: “My GOD, my GOD, why have you forsaken me?”

After nights in thinking about this and praying about Psalm 22, (one of the most touching psalms in the Bible, often referred to as a “lament psalm” have just become really quiet in prayer reflecting on how it would feel to be in the body of Jesus’ in an up-and-coming deliverance.

So, I prayed and reflected, then I took some time to consider my prose, and decided to sleep on this profound reflection for several weeks. Then I began to consider the breath this subject holds and how important this topic is for all of his people. For even before the time of Jesus, the Psalm was often read as a desperate prayer to GOD in time of trouble. The Psalm captures the extreme suffering, pain and agony he was in, while also highlighting the glory of GOD. Now, I am a researcher at heart and love to dig into the history of what the words and versus mean from a historical perspective.

*“While there is no definitive date for the composition of Psalm 22, it is traditionally believed to have been written by David during a time of personal distress, perhaps during a period when he was fleeing from King Saul or facing other crises. Scholars generally place the Psalm’s composition somewhere around the 10th century BCE, though the exact time is not certain.”<sup>1</sup>*

But what does this mean to me; after all, I am reflecting on this Psalm on how Jesus was feeling. Now while I cannot imagine the unbearable pain and suffering Jesus had, I know severe pain both mentally and physically and have many times reached to the skies and asked “WHY” knowing there is a power greater than myself.

But there was a time back in 2019, after my father had passed that year and my mother was gone ten years prior where I was now feeling like an orphan left alone on this earth. Basically, I was in a distressing and very messy state for many months, but gave my parents my word that upon each of their deaths I would cremate them and then take their ashes to a trail and tree within the Rocky Mountains outside of Fraiser, Colorado to spread their ashes with the family they knew that truly loved them.

My family went with me on this trip, and we hiked out a mile after we found the mile marker and then headed straight up to an overlook where my parents first saw a young Ponderosa Pine sprouting in 1967. They would eat lunch overseeing the rocky ledges of the mountains for over 40 years talking about everything all while engaging in a beautiful love affair which lasted for 67 years. Both of them decided that this location would be their burial place. I went to this location often with my parents many times, so I knew the land, the crispness of the air, the tree they fell in love with and the tremendous talks we had about life, children, men, GOD and wisdom.

The nine of us had planned a simple service for my folks, as they wanted it to be intimate and without fanfare. The skies were cloudy, the air was crisp and there were twinkles of snow in the midst that Saturday. We all said prayers together of love, kindness and the goodness of GOD. My brother circled the ashes of my Dad to the left and at the bottom of the tree; together we said a prayer. I then placed my mother’s ashes on the right side of the tree mixing some of the ashes together and stepped away. As the nine of us surrounded the tree, we said the Lord’s Prayer. When that ended suddenly to the left of where I was standing

*Thursday, April 17, 2025 - cont'd*

*Psalm 22*

*Susan Daywitt cont'd*

a swirl of wind came from a tree about 100 yards away which encircled the bottom of the tree swirling the ashes around and around and turning the wind into a smokey white combining my two parents' ashes and with a swoosh took those ashes up the entire tree and out to the Rocky Mountains.

We all dropped our jaws because was it my Dad waiting for my Mom (because he told me once he would be with her no matter what it took) or was it GOD putting the two of them together? Nevertheless, there was a white light within the wind that circled that tree and nine of us saw it. None of us can forget the force of wind that encircled that tree; we felt it was GOD showing his hand. I turned to my husband and just smiled because I knew they were together again and said I knew WHY.

I truly bow my head in reverence for what happened and relate to this Psalm significantly because I ask "WHY" a lot now, because I believe GOD wants that from us.





Friday, April 18, 2025

Psalm 116: 1, 10-17, Gospel: John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Reflection by Bruce Troetschel

First some back story- Matthew and Luke tell us that as Jesus entered Jerusalem, some disciples were jockeying for prime spots in his future reign. In their defense, they had been brought up to expect a warrior Messiah flanked by his top lieutenants. That was their culture. This was not what Jesus was really all about. However, the disciples could be dense sometimes, and they obviously hadn't been paying attention.

In today's gospel reading from John, Jesus decides that it's time for an object lesson. Wearing just a towel, he washed the disciple's feet. This was shocking! In the desert, dirty feet were the norm. So, if you went to someone's house for dinner, you might get your feet washed- by their lowliest servant. Such an act was WAY below the social stature of their Lord and Master!

"I'm setting you an example," he told them. "If I can empty myself to perform sacrificial service, you can too. It isn't about you; it's about sharing the Good News."

Later in today's lesson, Jesus said to love one another as he loves us. We all love that line- it feels really good to bask in God's love, and to pay some of it forward. However, if we're paying attention, we see that Jesus took things a couple of steps further.

He said to love AS HE LOVES US- right after giving a powerful example of humble and sacrificial service. Jesus didn't give till it felt good. He gave till it hurt, with nail prints to prove it. He calls us to step outside our personal comfort zones as well.

And, he said to love ONE ANOTHER. He didn't just say to love the other guy. Loving one another requires mutuality- it means allowing that other guy space to love you back.

I can buy warm clothes for a homeless woman, and that's great. But, if I go those couple of steps further, and humbly and sacrificially take time to get to know her as a fellow child of God, what blessings will she share with me?

Saturday, April 19, 2025

Psalm 31: 1-4, 15-16 and Matthew 27: 57-66

Reflection by Vera Ewing

*Today the world is still. The way dark.  
Our Lord is waging war in Hell.  
We tensely wait for his successful return.  
Stay awake. Keep watch. Be silent.*

Holy Saturday is always a bit of a shock to me. What do you do on this day between the high drama of 'good' Friday that ends in a completely silent dark vigil and the joyous drama of Easter morning when we celebrate our Christ rising from the dead?

The disciples hid in fear of arrest. The modern church is curiously silent on the topic. As I pondered, the concept of a holy silence came to me. . . and it's actually a thing.

*"Holy silence is a spiritual discipline often propagated by the Catholic Church, though it extends to other Christian traditions and has its counterparts in religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. Holy silence is associated with contemplative prayers, which differ from simply praying with one's mind. Contemplative prayer involves steps geared to silence the mind and heart to listen to God. The aim of holy silence is to foster deep intimacy with God, listen for His guidance, and enhance self-reflection." (1)*

Holy Silence. As a musician and lay worship leader, I'm more frequently putting final touches on Sunday's special effort music presentations and trying to make sure the 'scene is set' for others to have a magical day, than paying attention to this vital time.

Holy Silence. There is an old proverb, "*Speech is silver, but Silence is golden.*"(2) The article found on an attorney's website is a thoughtful discussion of how silence may gain you more than filling it.

Holy Silence. Jesus took time for silence when he spent 40 days in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11)(3). He was frequently mentioned to be in prayer (Mark 1:35, 1:45, 2:23; Luke 5:15-16, etc). Holy, silent times

when he sought communion with his father. Times when he could rest from the social expectations of being a traveling rabbi with a large following and just be.

Holy Silence. Today's world finds silence among practices like meditation, contemplation, breathe work, and others. It's a time of either profound stillness or profound thinking. A time when you can let go of the restrains of work or play and be one with your divine mentor. Sounds like something Jesus would do, yes?

Holy Silence. Like the time between the high dramas of Friday and Sunday. It's a time to pause and reflect on the lessons learned during this season of Lent. A time pull it all together in a concluding present to yourself. What did the last 40 days teach you? Were you faithful to your chosen lesson in abstinence? How did the discomfort lead you to new realizations?

Holy Silence. Listen for God's voice. In the silence, you can hear it.

### Resources

(1) "What is holy silence?" [GotQuestions.org](https://www.gotquestions.org/Catholicism/Catholic-Beliefs). Under Catholicism/Catholic Beliefs.

(2) "Silence is golden and a Great defense" by Kevin Hickey. 17 May 2021. [hickeyandhull.com](http://hickeyandhull.com)

(3) Also, Luke (4:1-13) and Mark 1:12-13



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