

# 2019 Lenten Devotional



Painting by Emmanuel Nsama



So Send I You, Inc.





# So Send I You, Inc.

## Our Mission:

We exist to engage and involve African-American and Latino-American congregations in global mission(s) work and activity around the world by bringing together congregations and individuals for specific mission projects, resulting in a greater mission impact.

## Our Vision:

We envision a covenant community of local congregations committed to educating, nurturing, and cultivating missional leaders and congregations from within the African-American and Latino-American communities, resulting in a deeper level of congregational and personal involvement and participation in missional projects around the world. *SO SEND I YOU, Inc.* sees this community of local congregations more actively engaged in sharing the Good News, in word and deed, of what God has done for the world in and through the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## Our Specialties:

- Building and sustaining missional partnerships among local congregations, individuals, organizations, and the mission fields.
- Organizing, promoting, and leading short-term mission trips to give both clergy and laypersons firsthand exposure to and experience on the mission field.
- Organizing, promoting, and leading missional projects especially designed to deliver a stronger missional impact. We do this by gathering local congregations, individuals, and organizations around specific missional projects.



Proposed Michael Lee Graves Memorial Library

# INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Rev. Dr. William B. Sutton III and the members of the Board of Directors of *SO SEND I YOU, Inc.* join me in inviting you to join us on a 40-day journey from Ash Wednesday, March 6, 2019 through Easter Sunday, April 21, 2019. It is a journey that millions of Christians around the world look forward to each year, with eager anticipation.

As serious disciples of Jesus Christ, it is imperative to test and reclaim our call to discipleship. The season of Lent, which runs from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday, provides us with a wonderful opportunity to embrace this challenge. The *SO SEND I YOU, Inc.* Lenten Devotional is designed to aid and assist you in this important discipleship effort.

This devotional is designed with the disciple in mind. It is intended to be used as a tool to guide the disciple to experience spiritual renewal and refreshment through engagement with four very important but often neglected Biblical disciplines: **Engagement with Scripture; Fasting; Prayer; and Sacrificial Giving.** It is our sincere prayer that at the end of the six-week journey with us, you will be drawn closer to your Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. And, as a direct result, you will love Him more deeply; follow Him more closely; and serve Him more earnestly.

We are deeply indebted to the contributing writers of this devotional, all of whom are outstanding leaders in the broader church community. Some are pastors of local congregations; others are members of the academy, but they are all deeply committed to their own spiritual growth and development and to that of the whole body of Christ and the Kingdom building enterprise.

As you read and reflect on the daily devotionals, I encourage you to do so with a Bible in hand, so that you can read the entire suggested passage of the day. Try to step inside the passage and move around in it. Take a few minutes to



SSiY, Inc. and Dr. Lowe delivers New Playground at W.W. Brown Day Care Center in SOWETO, Johannesburg, South Africa

experience the text personally—before you read the devotional for the day. This will help you better understand and appreciate the context in which the passage is set. Then read and reflect on the devotional. Each daily reading is followed by a very brief prayer, which we invite you to make your very own.

There are several pictures dispersed throughout this devotional—pictures of men, women and children who are in some way identified with **SO SEND I YOU, Inc.** Some pictured live in Africa, India, Haiti, and/or Eastern Europe. Many of them are in desperate need of food, clothing, shelter, fresh drinking water, and/or medication. Some cry out for educational opportunities; others yearn to breathe free of gender discrimination or political and economic oppression. Despite their sometimes desperate situations, they are very open and receptive to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In your daily prayers along this 40-day journey, we encourage you to lift them up in prayer.

Moreover, as you read this Devotional, we challenge you to systematically set aside one dollar (\$1.00) for each of the 40 days of Lent. Your personal sacrifice (sacrificial offering) is absolutely critical to what we do at **SO SEND I YOU, Inc.** Your \$40.00 sacrificial offering will go a long way in providing a hot meal for a child in Swaziland or South Africa; or, it may help ease the pain and suffering of needy children, and even some adults, as we seek to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with them, in both word and deed. Our missional efforts are local, national, and international.

The envelope provided in the back of this Devotional is designed to encourage you to deposit your \$1.00 per day offering for the 40 days of Lent (Sundays excluded). Remember to deposit your \$40.00 offering in the envelope. Make your check payable to **SO SEND I YOU, Inc.** and return the envelope to your church on Easter Sunday, April 21, 2019 or mail your envelope to:

SO SEND I YOU, Inc.  
P.O. Box 1699  
Lincolnton Station  
New York, NY 10037

Also, again this year, we encourage you to join us on the Lenten weekly prayer call each Thursday evening during the Lenten season, beginning on Thursday, March 7, 2019, at 8:00 PM Eastern Standard Time and 7:00 PM Central Standard Time. **Our conference call-in number is: 641-715-3580 and the access code is 512125. (Please do not announce yourself when you dial-in.)**

Finally, to make a donation electronically or to learn more about **SO SEND I YOU, Inc.**, please visit us at: [evensosendiyou.org](http://evensosendiyou.org)

*This is done,  
Because of Calvary,*

*Dr. J. Albert Bush, Sr.  
Founder and CEO, SO SEND I YOU, Inc.*

# THE MEANING OF LENT

Rev. Dr. Don Darius Butler

During the season of Lent, we practice our faith with renewed intentionality and introspection. We approach the 40 days with thoughts of “giving up” something so that we might be drawn closer to Christ. Everything from sweets to meats to bread to television to using social media is sacrificed for the cause. While these abstentions nurture our spirits and fortify our faith, they do not quite cultivate in us the kind of piety that Jesus calls us to observe in His teaching on the Mount in Matthew 6. The abstentions fall short in social piety.

Whether in almsgiving, prayer, or fasting—mainstay practices of the season—we are pushed to consider more than ourselves, more than our personal needs. The challenge is one of reorienting our perspective so that others are naturally considered when we practice our faith. Our acts of generosity should be genuine and without public trumpeting, unlike wealthy patrons who promote their own interest and influence through civic charity. Empathy and compassion must motivate our kindness to others. Likewise, prayer should not be a *pro forma* activity of religious people who wish to display the depth of their spirituality. Rather, prayer must summon the faithful before the presence of God to seek ultimate transformation of the world in which we live. The same goes for fasting. While foregoing food, we should consider how imbalanced our world truly is, and enter into solidarity with those who hunger on a daily basis.

Jesus leads instruction in each practice with the word “when” as to insist on the fulfillment of a sacred obligation. It is not optional, but rather a duty. As we perform these duties, we should be mindful that we benefit others when we serve God. May we be ever diligent in our Lenten practice and faithful in our sacred charge!



SSFY, Inc. responding to Ebola with shipment of food to Suehn Mission, outside of Monrovia, Liberia

# GUIDELINES FOR THE LENTEN FAST

*“Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast...” Joel 2:15*

*“And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, ... but when you fast put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” Matt. 6:16-18*

## What is a Fast?

The Hebrew word for “fasting” means, “to cover the mouth.” The Greek word for fasting means, “not to eat.” Fasting means to abstain from food, turning away from things the body craves so that the “inner spirit” may focus more on the things of God. Fasting is a form of spiritual discipline and sacrifice. Fasting does not change God’s will or impress God. Fasting changes the individual. It allows us to focus more on our spiritual needs than our physical needs. Fasting helps align our hearts, minds, and wills with God’s Heart, Mind, and Will.

## Benefits of Fasting

- Strengthens one’s prayer life.
- Provides the opportunity to spend more time in the presence of the Lord.
- Helps the believer become more sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
- Enhances one’s ability to discern and to understand spiritual matters.
- Helps to focus more on God as the source, supplier, and sustainer of our lives.

## Techniques of Fasting

There are different ways in which observers of Lent fast. Some fast each day of Lent or just one day of the week. Others fast by eliminating one meal a day or eating only one meal a day. Whatever fast regimen you choose, it should be based on your physical health, your physician’s permission if you have health issues and your personal covenant with God.

## Preparations for Fasting

- Seek God’s Will for you regarding the fasting regimen you choose.
- The week prior to the beginning of your fast begin eliminating snacks and eating after 7:00 p.m.
- Increase your intake of fruits, vegetables, fish, and water.
- Cut back on sweets, breads, meats, coffee and other “pleasurables.”
- Begin to pray for strength, discipline to be focused, and faithful adherence to your Lenten fast.

- If you are pregnant, diabetic, taking prescribed medication, under a doctor's care, or have experienced illness on a previous fast, consult your physician before starting the fast.

### **Additional Fasting Hints**

- Avoid starches, breads, sweets, red meat, and coffee.
- Drink water, herbal teas or seltzer during the day. If you get lightheaded, drink a glass of apple juice, orange juice, or tea with honey.
- If you eat only one meal for the day, you should try to eat fresh fruits, steamed vegetables, salads, and/or steamed or broiled fish. One of the benefits of fasting is cleansing and detoxing your body.
- If you are eating only once a day or not at all, it is recommended that you do not exercise during your fast.
- If you experience headaches, fatigue or weakness, faint feelings, nausea, fever, and/or extreme hunger, eat fruit, raw vegetables, or drink hot tea with honey.
- Avoid nibbling. If you feel hungry, drink water, tea or seltzer and pray.
- Remember to be in prayer daily during your fast. Start each day of your fast in prayer, asking God to give you the strength to keep your fast.
- If you "fall off" the fast, do not condemn yourself, get back on. Be thankful that in Christ there is always forgiveness and restoration.
- It is best to break a fast by eating fruit, broth, steamed vegetables or a light salad. Don't immediately eat heavy foods following a period of fasting.
- **Be Strong in the Lord and in the power of His Might!**

### **Lenten FASTER's Prayer:**

*Lord, make me ready for the coming time of fasting, prayer, and sacrificial giving. I know that with you I can do all things. I am expecting to experience you in a new and powerful way during these 40 days of Lent. Thank you, Lord, for the success of my spiritual fasting, prayer, and sacrificial giving during this season of Lent. Amen.*



# SIX-WEEK PRAYER GUIDE

During the six weeks of Lent, we encourage our fellow pilgrims on the 40-day journey to join us in praying for missionaries and mission projects and issues and concerns around the world. In particular, pray for a greater level of awareness and a more energetic involvement in Christian missional activity on the part of African-American and Latino-American congregations.

Each week during this season of spiritual renewal, we invite you to join us in prayer for six of the seven continents of the world where there is active missionary work. Each Thursday evening at 8:00 PM, we will change the focal point of our prayer concerns from one continent to another. We would love to have you follow us on the journey by dialing in on the **weekly prayer call-in number: 641-715-3580** and the access code is **512125**.

## First Week: Thursday, March 7, 2019

We pray for missionaries, missional projects and opportunities in North America, the fastest growing mission field in the world. This includes Canada, the USA, Jamaica, Haiti, and other Caribbean nations.

- For missionaries who work in Native American and Latin American communities, and the challenges they face in sharing the gospel.
- For an increase in the number of fulltime missionaries to serve in these communities.

## Second Week: Thursday, March 14, 2019

We pray for missionaries, missional projects in South America, including the following countries: Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Trinidad and Tobago, French Guiana, Guyana, and Venezuela.

## Third Week: Thursday, March 21, 2019

We pray for missionaries, mission projects and opportunities in Europe, especially we pray for:

- Missionaries who work with and among the refugees and migrants fleeing war and violence in Syria and the horn of Africa.



SSIY, Inc., delivers bicycles to 95 Pastors at PIM in Malawi

- For those who work and witness among the poor and marginalized in Eastern Europe.

#### **Fourth Week: Thursday, March 28, 2019**

We pray for missionaries, mission projects and opportunities in Australia, and especially for those who work among the Aboriginal Indians.

#### **Fifth Week: Thursday, April 4, 2019**

We pray for missionaries, mission projects and opportunities in Asia, especially in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, the Palestine, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

#### **Sixth Week: Thursday, April 11, 2019**

We pray for missionaries, mission projects, and opportunities in Africa, and especially for those persons who work and witness in Muslim communities. Pray for the following countries and projects in Africa:

- The Lott Carey Mission work in Liberia and Ghana.
- The Providence Industrial Mission and the associated churches in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zambia.
- For the W.W. Brown Mission in SOWETO, the Daycare Center and for the churches in South Africa and their struggle to witness in the post-Apartheid era.
- For the Swaziland Kitchen and for the children who come there to be fed daily.

In addition, please pray for the following current ***SO SEND I YOU, Inc.*** projects:

- The Michael Lee and Eleanor Graves Library to be built in Malawi.
- New Saint John Baptist Church in Malunje, Malawi.
- The renovation of the W. W. Brown Daycare Center in SOWETO (Johannesburg), South Africa.



SSIY, Inc. building 1,500 desk for Student at PIM in Malawi

# DAY 1

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

## COME, THIRSTY ONE

Rev. Dr. Marvin A. McMickle

Revelation 22:17

*17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.*

Revelation 22:17 offers two different glimpses at the word "COME". One glimpse deals with what was believed to be the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ that would bring to an end the present historical era and establish the reign of God upon the earth. That is the message of in verse 20 where Jesus says, "Yes, I am coming soon." That is followed by the familiar response, *Maranatha* or "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." The Advent season that precedes Christmas is based upon that expectation. The people of Israel had to wait 700 years for the appearance of their Messiah whom Christians say came with the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. What every Advent season does is position us to wait for his Second Coming.

The second way to understand the word COME as found in Revelation 22:17 moves us from Advent to Lent, and shifts the focus from when Christ is coming to whether or not we will be ready to face Christ when He does finally come. The challenge in this passage is that we come to the right fountain in order to satisfy our thirst. Revelation 22:17 is an invitation to drink from the fountain that will never run dry. It is an invitation to drink from Living Water that can give us everlasting life. It cautions us away from the false theologies and false gods of any moment in time or place. Cults and charismatic cult leaders come and go. This passage invites us to discern what is true and authentic and reliable, and having done that work of discernment to COME to Jesus "while you have time".

Come, Thirsty One does not mean come to church, it means come to Christ. The issue is not church attendance, but, faithful adherence. As Isaiah 55:1 affirms, "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without cost."

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, empower and inspire us to come to you and receive the pardon from sin you have promised. Amen.*

# DAY 2

Thursday, March 7, 2019

## THE EVER-RECRUITING SATAN

Rev. Macford B. Chipuliko

Genesis 3:1-5

*1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4 "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

We learn from the first two chapters of Genesis that everything was good and in a perfect condition when God created. The first parents of all mankind were in the Garden of Eden and they enjoyed all that God had given them. But in chapter 3 of Genesis, we are introduced to our chief enemy, Satan, whose tempting work brought ruin to life in the Garden of Eden and brought suffering to all mankind. Satan is introduced as "more cunning than any of the creatures of the field the Lord God had made." In the story the snake does not sound as a trickster as he verbally seduced the woman into breaking God's commandment by eating the forbidden fruit, he spoke very friendly. In recruiting the woman to his thinking, Satan said, the forbidden fruit was to make them "like gods knowing good and evil." As a result, Eve allowed the serpent to have equal footing with her and took its word over God's commandment. Adam obeyed his wife instead of obeying God and the whole creation is in bondage to sin up to today.

In the Bible Satan is referred to as adversary, the accuser, an enemy, an opponent, the devil, the serpent and a dragon whose sole focus is to deceive, divide and destroy God's people and defeat the purpose of God in them. The devil tempted Jesus and departed for a season or for a time, Matthew 4:11. But, all his promises are deceitful. Satan used lies to deceive Eve in the garden, and cultivated anger in Cain to kill his brother, stirred Judas to betray Christ and incited the Jews to kill the Messiah. Since Satan departs for a season, we shall never be out of his reach until he is removed from this present evil world. Satan is ever recruiting people and he is a dangerous opponent of every Christian. His goal is deception, division and destruction. However, we can prevail if we know our adversary by following God's instructions in His word. With God's help through our Lord Jesus Christ, we can successfully overcome our adversary.

*Prayer: O Lord God, by the blood of your Son, our Savior, give us victory over Satan. Make us see the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in our everyday life. Help us cherish the finished work of the cross that disarmed Satan and took the sting out of death, and teach us how to fight by faith against the power of sin. Amen.*

# DAY 3

Friday, March 8, 2019

## SELF-IDENTIFYING LOVE

Rev. Byron E. Williams, Sr.

Matthew 3:13-16

*13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. 16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.*

What football coach would have the selfless audacity to enter the stadium wearing his team's football uniform? What basketball coach would come to the NBA Finals wearing the uniform of his team? In the secular realm, leaders identify themselves by wearing outfits markedly different from that of their team players.

In the spiritual realm, Kingdom ministry works in the very opposite way. Our Christ has come to this planet bearing such a powerful and unique love that He dares defy secularism and identify with one of us as one of us. While the humility of this identification is clearly seen in His incarnation, the self-identifying greatness of it is seen in His baptism. Having come into this world as a sinless Savior to deliver us from sin, He identifies with us by going through the ritual of baptism by John that was required for repentance, a grace that our Savior obviously did not require. Yet He says to John, "Suffer it to be so now. My actions are a part of a divine scheme of things which you are not able to comprehend. The Father has ordered this baptism. Because it is on His divine agenda, you and I both must cooperate with God's righteousness."

How blessed we are to have a Savior whose love is of such a magnitude that He willingly takes on our guilt and sin—not only at Calvary, but also at the Jordan. He became like us so that we might become like Him.

*Prayer: Father we thank You for the identifying love you have shown us in Jesus Christ. May Your willingness to become what we are enhance our willingness to ever be sons and daughters of righteousness.*

# DAY 4

*Saturday, March 9, 2019*

## THE SECOND ADAM

Rev. Terry E. Mackey

I Corinthians 15:22

*22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.*

Everybody wants to be first. Because first is believed to be better than second. Who doesn't want to eat first-class meals, ride in first-class cars and live in a first-class neighborhood? We desire to be first. However, there are some instances when second is better than first. One such example is lifted in I Corinthians 15:22 where Paul tells us about The Second Adam, Jesus Christ. Paul declares in this pericope that in the first Adam "we all die, but with The Second Adam, we shall all be made alive." According to David Guzick, here in this passage, the Apostle Paul communicates the same ideas found in Romans 5:12-21. Adam by man is one "head" of the human race and all humankind was brought under death by Adam. But The Second Adam is the other head of the human race and Jesus brings resurrection to all under His headship.

The first Adam not only brought about death but he also is responsible for condemnation and separation from Almighty God according to the scriptures. But, I am grateful for the second Adam because since Jesus came "there is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk after the Spirit and not the flesh." In essence, the first Adam messed us up, but The Second Adam cleaned us up, lifted us up and fixed us up. Our Second Adam is proof positive that sometimes second can be better than first.

According to Rev. Johnny James, since The Second Adam is better than the first Adam, then we should also rejoice that our second birth is better than our first birth and that His Second Coming will be better than His First Coming. Because when He came the first time, He was a baby, but when He comes back, He will be a man. When He came the first time, He had some power, but when He comes back, He will have all power; when He came the first time, I was not with Him, but when He comes again, I will be with Him. "...and when the saints, go marching in...

*Prayer: Lord may we ever be reminded that although you are our Second Adam, you are first-class in every way imaginable! There is no one like you! Amen.*

# DAY 5

Monday, March 11, 2019

## REDIGGING OUR FATHER'S WELLS

Rev. Dr. Amos Jones, Jr.

Genesis 26:17-18

*17 So Isaac moved away from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar, where he settled. 18 Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had given them.*

The Hebrews of the Bible disclose to us traditions they sought to preserve. They were faced with oppositions. A brief statement in the Book of Proverbs, 22:28 is a classic example: "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set." What Hebrew fathers established was significant enough for future family members to preserve and perpetuate into the future.

This was the case with Isaac and the wells his father Abraham had dug. In the land of Gerar, Isaac found opposition from the Philistines. His father, however, had dug wells there that produced life-giving water. Out of jealousy and strife, however, the herdsmen of Gerar stopped up the wells. Intent on making productive once again wells that his father had dug, Isaac dug again the wells. Each time Isaac dug again his father's wells, the herdsmen of Gerar filled them up, plugging them to the extent that they gave not refreshing water. Finally, Isaac's herdsmen dug one of Abraham's wells. There was no opposition. Isaac named the well "Rehoboth" for he said, "For now the Lord hath made room for us" (Genesis 26:22).

Isaac had a sense of appreciation for the history of his father's accomplishments, viz., digging wells so his family and his flock could have life-giving water. The Negro of American history, slaves displaced from their homeland of Africa, knew the significance of the literal and historical wells their fathers had dug. Perennially, they sought to dig again wells dug by their fathers. They were persistent in their effort. They sang:

I ain't gon' let nobody turn me 'round, turn me 'round  
I ain't gon' let nobody turn me 'round, turn me 'round  
U'm agonna keep on walkin', keep on walkin' walkin' up the King's Highway.'

Though in pursuit for a new and different future for his people, Isaac was not pleased to leave past accomplishments behind. Thus, he had a sense of mission, to dig again the wells of his father. For, in so doing, room would be made from him. More than a hundred years ago, our forbears dared to reach back for their African brothers and sisters. Coming out of American slavery, Negroes dared to sacrifice, pray, and fast that they might dig again the wells of their African fathers.

*Prayer: LORD God in light of our past, help us today and forevermore to preserve those traditions that are grounded in the love of Christ. Amen.*

# DAY 6

*Tuesday, March 12, 2019*

## TRIED AND PURIFIED

Rev. Dr. Jason L. Turner

Job 23:10

*10 Yet He knows the way that I take; if He tested me, I would come out as gold.*

Trouble has a way of disorienting us. This is certainly the state we find Job in by the time we reach chapter 23 of his story. After losing so much, it appears that he has lost touch with God, although, God is very much present. In verse 3 he says, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” So much so that in verses eight and nine he cannot detect God’s presence anywhere he looks. He says, “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him; on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him; he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him.” Although to Job God is absent without leave, God is very much present and aware of what Job’s plight is when he exclaims, “But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.”

Such is the reality with our lives; when trouble visits, we feel that God has left the premises. On the contrary, God is as close to us in trouble as He is in our triumphant moments. For one reason, God being absent from any place at any time is an impossibility because God is omnipresent. But in the case of the troubles we face in life, God is present, administering to us the test. What God is looking for is whether or not we can trust Him beyond the point of our pain, disappointment, frustrations and even our losses to see that He is still working all things together for our good. In the test and trials that have been administered by God, we discover more than being merely being tried. Our faith is strengthened. Our resolve is that much more sure. And our witness is perfected through the process of purification.

If by chance you are facing a test know that God is doing more than working all things together for good, but, He is bringing much that is good out of you and your walk with Him.

*Prayer: Lord, help us to see You beyond our veil of suffering. For You are an ever-present and loving Father working all things out for our very good. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

# DAY 7

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

## A FAITHFUL & DEPENDABLE PRAYER PARTNER

Rev. Frank Kennedy, Jr.

Romans 8:26-27

*26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.*

*27 And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.*

It is called one of the ten greatest moments on Everest; Erik Weihenmayer became the first blind person to reach the summit of Mt. Everest on May 25, 2001. Mt. Everest is the world's highest mountain at 29,035 feet above sea level. Though blind, Erik achieved one of the greatest feats recorded in human history. He climbed Mt. Everest. Yes, overcoming the odds stacked against him, he would ascend to the lofty heights of Everest. The prevailing question is how did such a man with obvious limitation and disability scale the most formidable mountain in the world? A simple answer: He possessed faithful, dependable, competent, and skillful help. Great feats are the result of great assistance.

In Romans 8 verses 26-27 the apostle Paul shares with believers the Mt. Everest of Spiritual discipline and devotion: Prayer. Prayer is the ultimate quest of the human spirit to ascend to the highest peak: God. Prayer is God's gift to His children for the sake of constant communion with their heavenly Father. Prayer is our opportunity to experience the glory of holy company, compassion, and concordance with God. Jesus advocates, "man ought to always pray and not faint." Likewise, the apostle Paul encourages the believer to "pray without ceasing." Paul states in verses 26-27 "the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity, is our divine assistant for dynamic discourse with a Holy God. The Holy Spirit indwells the believer as sufficient support for substantive supplications. We desperately need the Holy Spirit to pray on our behalf because "we don't know what we ought to pray for." The Holy Spirit intercedes for us because of our apparent weakness; we really don't know what to pray for. The suffering of this present age has the capacity to impact us chaotically. We are subject to become disoriented or perhaps discombobulated as a result of difficulty imposing its will upon our lives. The indwelling status of the Holy Spirit helps us by interceding for us and through us, with speechless groanings according to the will of God. The Holy Spirit partners, polishes, perfects and presents our prayers to God, our Father.

*Prayer: Father God, I thank you for the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit. I thank you Holy Spirit for your profound partnership; you support me in my weakest moment. Thank you for keeping my prayers in harmony with the will of God. Amen.*

# DAY 8

Thursday, March 14, 2019

## IN SEARCH OF BLOOD

Rev. Elmer P. Hardy, Jr.

Exodus 12:13

*13 The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.*

One of the most important ingredients in the recipe of Christian discipleship is blood—that red fluid pumping from the human heart, circulating through our veins, transporting oxygen to our most vital organs so that we are able to function at maximum capacity.

Spiritually speaking, blood is a liquid symbol of the extreme sacrifice that is necessary to qualify our claim to be disciples of Christ. Because just as Christ shed his blood as the paschal lamb, and the propitiation for the atonement of our sins, we as followers of Christ are blessed with the privilege of bloodshed when it comes to sacrificing our time, talent, and tithe, and enduring the suffering which is indicative of, necessary for, exclusive to and synonymous with being a disciple.

In today's text we find the Old Testament's foreshadowing of the New Testament's portrayal of the greatest public display of affection (PDA) in the history of humanity—Jesus on the cross. Moses provides for us what is most accurately described as a 'type' of Jesus Christ—the 1 year old male lamb, without blemish, which was slaughtered and whose blood was strewn on the lintels (horizontal beams) and door posts (vertical pillars) of the homes of the Israelites.

This was a preview of the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world by shedding his blood on the vertical stake and horizontal beam which composed the cross at Calvary.

Moses received and implemented God's directives which were necessary for the protection of God's chosen during His custom tailored reign of terror upon the Egyptians when He activated ten plagues; the last of them being death to kill every firstborn man and animal—the punishment for the evil they inflicted upon God's elect. But, on that fateful night, God directed death to 'pass through' the land, but to 'pass over' His chosen, so that His divine weapons of mass destruction could annihilate the oppressive Egyptians, without touching His predestined people of promise.

When in search of blood, one need not look any further than the life of Christ, which features blood in every facet of his being: Jesus was bloody as he cried out a 'blood-sweat' prayer from Gethsemane; and bloodiest as he hung there: pierced, nailed, and thorn-crowned in Golgothan glory.

During this season of Lent, let your perpetual prayer be one of radical gratitude for being blood bought, blood washed and blood covered, so when you ask God why the devastation passing through our land passes over you, you can hear God say: "Because I see the blood."

*Prayer: Our Father, thank you for the blood of the Lamb of God! In Jesus' name. Amen!*

# DAY 9

Friday, March 15, 2019

## PRONE TO WONDER

Rev. Dr. Naomi Tyler-Lloyd

Exodus 32:31

*31 So Moses went back to the Lord and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold."*

I remember my first year in seminary I was reading Exodus for my Old Testament class and became so thoroughly disgusted and frustrated with the children of Israel. It seemed that no matter what God had done nor how miraculously God showed power...they were never satisfied. Every time they bumped-up against the unfamiliar, the unknown, the uncomfortable, the unpleasant or whatever the issue was, they murmured, complained, made poor choices, and romanticized bondage. I got so annoyed that it took me a minute to see that I too, from time to time, had been guilty of the same behavior...we all have.

The children of Israel had spent centuries in Egyptian bondage. All of the activity and welfare of their lives was dictated by an enemy. They were in circumstances that rendered them hopeless and helpless. Then God stepped into their situation and brought them out. They were walking in freedom having experienced God in powerful ways, like none had ever seen before. But now the process had begun to look like it was at a standstill. Moses had been up on the mountain too long, they were getting hopeless and restless and even though set free...in their liberated state their minds began to wander. They felt they needed a tangible and visual object for their faith to remain intact. And with that crisis of faith they sinned against God.

As we journey this Lenten season we may find ourselves in unfamiliar, unknown, uncomfortable or even unpleasant places. The process is meant to challenge and strengthen us as we move towards Calvary and transformation. While we wait on God in this wilderness season, resist the temptations to soothe our hopeless and restless souls, influenced by God's enemy. While the children of Israel felt they needed something tangible and visible, we need only to consider Jesus. When our hearts are overwhelmed, when our faith is in crisis, even when our choices lead us to sinful consequences...we are covered by the blood of Jesus!

*Prayer: "Prone to wander Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart Lord take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above." Lord as I journey to Calvary help me to hold on to you so that you may do what you desire with me, through me and for me. Amen.*

# DAY 10

Saturday, March 16, 2019

## THE BRIDEGROOM'S FRIEND

Rev. Dr. James C. Perkins

2 Corinthians 11:2

*2 I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.*

The relationship of St. Paul to the Corinthian Church is more fully known than perhaps his relationship with any other Church he founded. And possibly no other church with which he was associated caused him more grief and sorrow or brought him more sleepless nights.

The history of Corinth itself is the logical explanation for much of the difficulty he encountered; beyond the obvious sin and shame of that infamous city, the Church at Corinth had developed some internal conflicts which were uniquely its own. There was strife and bickering. There were deep divisions which had dissected the membership into hostile factions. And all of this seems to have stemmed from the single fact that this Church had no clear vision of whom they ought to follow into a deeper relationship with Christ. Some said, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ" (I. Cor. 1:12).

They claimed Christ as their Savior. But now, who was the preacher? Where did he fit in? By what right did the preacher assume the kind of authority that he claimed? Many of the problems we are experiencing in the modern Church stem from the fact that we don't know who the preacher is; what his purpose and function is; and by what authority he does what he does and says what he says?

Paul could see these underlying questions as the basis of which led to their misconception of him as a preacher. And so, he moves in this text to explain the nature of this mystical relationship by using the metaphor of marriage to explain the role of Christ, the Church and the preacher in this divinely designed triangle of love.

There was a most important person who participated in every Jewish wedding. He was called the bridegroom's friend. This person had the awesome and unenviable responsibility of serving as the liaison between the bridegroom and the bride during the engagement period. This person had to watch the bride to be sure she was faithful until the wedding day. And in the event that she was accused of infidelity, this person had to verify the truthfulness or falsehood of that claim. From the language of the text, it is obvious that Paul saw himself and saw every preacher as being in the position as serving as the bridegroom's friend.

During this engagement period while Jesus is away getting our bridal suite ready, He has entrusted preachers with the responsibility of watching His bride until He comes back for their wedding day. It is Paul's hope that the Church will heed his words about Christ and be presented as a pure Church when Christ returns. In other words, Paul says that when the day comes and you march down the aisle of time to meet Him in the mid-air, "I'll be proud to escort you and present you and give you away for I have kept solicitous watch over you." During this Lent as always, keep your mind and your heart fixed on Jesus. He's coming soon!

*Prayer: LORD Jesus, help preachers everywhere to live as a faithful friends to you and your beloved community. Amen.*

# DAY 11

Monday, March 18, 2019

## HUSH, HUSH, SOMEBODY'S CALLING MY NAME

Rev. Dr. Anthony Lowe

1 Samuel 3:10-12

*10 The Lord came and stood there, calling as the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." 11 And the Lord said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. 12 At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end."*

What does it mean when someone calls your name? Most of you are familiar with the fear that strikes near the heart when our name is called in a public setting.

Samuel was ministering to the Lord when God spoke to him. Ministering to the Lord is different from ministering for Him. Ministering for the Lord is teaching a lesson, giving a sermon, helping someone in His name. Ministering to the Lord, on the other hand, is drawing near to Him personally and privately. Ministry to the Lord takes place not on stage, but in the pew. Ministry to the Lord is not about what others see us do, but what the Lord alone enjoys as we spend time with Him. Ministering to the Lord is the highest calling in life, and every single one of us can do it. We will never know what God is trying to tell us if we do not listen. There are those who never listen to Him simply because they don't want to.

Listening to God is not always easy, but is always rewarding. Listening means taking time to seek His will and focusing on what He has to say. We will never find peace of heart until we take the time to attune our attention on Him.

Listen to this declaration from the Bible, "I have called you by name; you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1), as well as the verse where Jesus says that He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out (John 10:3).

God knows your name and he knows everything about you. He knows what you are capable of doing and he knows why you might be fearful of doing something. God knows you through and through and when he calls you he calls you to do something he knows you will be capable of doing well and something that he knows will be good for you to do.

When you hear God speak to you, have confidence that because He knows you and loves you, your obedience to His direction or call will bless your life.

*Prayer: Lord, our prayer today, on this day is "Send me." We ask in these coming days and months that as a whole church family, we would—with one heart, one mind, one purpose, one voice, and one action—give ourselves to hearing Your voice, doing Your work, and accomplishing Your will in this world. We seek this, Lord, in Your name. Amen.*

# DAY 12

Tuesday, March 19, 2019

## SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Rev. Dr. Julius R. Scruggs

2 Kings 7:9

*9 Then they said to each other, "What we're doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let's go at once and report this to the royal palace."*

One needs to understand the context of this good news before he or she can appreciate it. Here is the context: a severe famine had gripped the land of Samaria. The Syrian army had besieged the city of Samaria, and surrounded it with its mighty army. There were four men with the disease of leprosy living in a leper's camp on the outer edge of the city of Samaria, and were starving for lack of food. They said to each other, "Why are we still sitting here waiting to die? There is no food in Samaria. If we go into the city, we will die there. If we stay here, we will also die. So, let's go to the Aramean camp. If they let us live, we will live. If they kill us, we will just die."

I appreciate the creative and innovative thrust of the lepers' conversation. They dare to exhibit a risky faith. They knew that people in Samaria were starving. They knew that they would soon starve to death in the leper's camp. So they reasoned, let's do something innovative and risky in the face of our dire situation. Let's surrender to the Aramean army. If they let us live, we live. If they kill us, we will just die; and if we stay here in the leper's camp, we surely will die. And so, they arose in faith to do something creative, innovative and risky about their dire situation. Guess what happened! God was working in prevenient grace on their behalf. For the Bible says that He caused the Aramean army to hear the sound of chariots, horses, and a large army. And so, the Aramean soldiers said that the King of Israel had hired the Hittites and Egyptians to come and fight against them. Thus the Aramean army ran fearfully off and left everything in their camp: they left tents with food, clothes, silver, gold, and even horses and donkeys.

When these four starving lepers arrived at the camp, they found all these marvelous blessings. Because they were hungry, they plunged in and began to eat and eat and when they were full, they began to hide all the other bounties: food, clothes silver, gold, etc. Suddenly, it dawned on them that they were being selfish. They remembered that other people in Samaria were starving. And so, the Spirit of God moved them to get up and go into the city of Samaria and tell the King's men to tell the King about all the blessings that they had found in the Aramean camp. They hurried and spread the wonderful news.

Could it be today that these lepers could inspire us to get up from our spaces of satisfaction and complacency and share the good news of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. There are people in our local communities, our states, our nation, and in foreign countries who need to hear the good news in John 3:16, Romans 5:8, and Ephesians 2:8-10. Let us be swift and faithful to spread this good news from God.

*Prayer: Lord, help us to be faithful in spreading your good news! Amen.*

# DAY 13

*Wednesday, March 20, 2019*

## THE GOD OF GRIEF AND COMPASSION

Rev. Dr. Marcus D. Davidson

Lamentations 3:25, 31-32

*25 The Lord is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him...*

*31 For no one is cast off by the Lord forever. 32 Though He brings grief, He will show compassion, so great is His unfailing love.*

One thing no one looks forward to is grief. Nothing can be more painful and heart wrenching than facing grief, but even worse than that, is facing it alone. However, it is good to know that we do not have to face grief alone. Yet, there is another perspective to grief, and it is, God will occasionally gift us with grief so that He may give us His grace. We have a God who is caring and compassionate towards us and will extend to us grace when we are gripped by grief. In the book of Lamentations 3:25, 31-32, we see the goodness of God, grief from God, and the grace of God. The aforementioned passages teach us much about the kind of God we have and can trust in difficult times. Even though Israel had failed God, He did not fail them. He lovingly dealt with them, but did not discard them. Let us consider three aspects to encourage us relative to the God of Grief and Compassion.

### **The Goodness of God**

“The Lord is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him” (vs. 25).

If we wait prayerfully, patiently, and persistently, we will experience the love and mercy of God.

### **The Grief from God**

“For no one is cast off by the Lord forever” (vs. 31).

Although God will at times, position us in painful places, but when it is part of His providential plan and for His providential purpose, we can have peace in the midst of the pain because we know it will not last to perpetuity.

### **The Grace of God**

“Though He brings grief,  
He will show compassion,  
so great is his unfailing love.” (vs. 32).

We can rejoice in that when the pain is for redemptive purposes, our God will remember, rescue us, and ultimately restore us.

*Prayer: Thank you LORD that even in the midst of grief you bestow on us the grace to endure! Hallelujah to Jesus. Amen!*

# DAY 14

Thursday, March 21, 2019

## LEAD ME TO THE ROCK

Rev. Dwight Benoit

Psalm 60:2; 61:2

*2 You have shaken the land and torn it open; mend its fractures, for it is quaking.*

*2 From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*

Psalm 60 is a national song! It is such a timely one in this Lenten season. Such a purposeful one, when our nation, you will agree, needs a song to sing!

Like David who was engaged in two battles (the number 2 biblically affirms that differences purposefully exist), one battle was against the Edomites and the other against the Syrians. One was a distressful defeat, but in the other battle, David rejoices in ultimate victory (not yet obtained) because of the promises and the power of God! David says in verse 6, “God had spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice” because of the spoken Word of God, which was enough for Him to sing and rejoice before possessing the victory.

Someone described the Christian journey as “three steps forward, two steps back” ... “win some, lose some” ... “defeat today, victory tomorrow.”

The two main causes for this song are the *punishment of God* and the *promises of God*! Verses 1-3, the specifics for *punishments* are revealed: discard, dissemination, displeasure, destruction, difficulties and drinking. Each was repercussions of disobedience and the wages of sin. Verses 1-3, the source of the *promises*: “THOU hast scattered”; “THOU hast been displeased”; “THOU hast made”; “THOU hast broken”; “THOU hast shown”; “THOU hast made us to drink” and “THOU hast given a banner to them that fear THEE.” God uses other nations to punish us for our unholy ways! Yet, remains our towering Rock! “Don’t start with the problems in pursuit for The SOLUTION, always start with The SOLUTION and the problems are solved!” GOD forgives the repentant!

Ruth Caye Jones, wrote these words, during the fearful days of World War II,

“In times like these, you need a SAVIOR,  
In times like these, you need an ANCHOR,  
Be very sure, be very sure,  
Your anchor holds and grips The SOLID ROCK!

This ROCK is JESUS, Yes, HE’S The ONE;  
This ROCK is JESUS, The Only ONE!

Be very sure, be very sure,  
Your anchor holds and grips The SOLID ROCK!

*Prayer: It is You, the Rock of Ages, in whom we put our trust! Amen!*

# DAY 15

*Friday, March 22, 2019*

## **SPIRITUAL NAVIGATION**

Rev. Dr. Deborah D. Jenkins

Proverbs 3:16

*16 Length of days is in her right hand. In her left hand are riches and honor.*

I can recall being fascinated by biblical stories of King Solomon, as a child in Sunday school. It wasn't his wealth that was fascinating, but his devotion to God in his youth (1 Kings 3:1-15). It is often during our youth that our vision is clear enough to ask God for those things most important to God and us.

My early experience with God was limited to going to church, singing in the choir, going to Sunday school and being quiet while the preacher preached. It was in Sunday school that I learned the do's and don'ts of Christianity, but I was never empowered to hear God for myself nor answer if I believed God had spoken.

I was well into my twenties before I realized that my life in Christ was not limited to what I learned as a child. It was as a young adulthood that I like Solomon began to pray for wisdom. I would religiously attend my Pastor's Bible Study where he made himself available to question during and after class if needed. It was there that I realized the power of wisdom in the process of spiritual formation, growth and navigation. Studying God's Word had now given me the power to hear and know when God was speaking to me. Though I have not always made the right decisions, nor have I always sought God's face for direction; I now know how and its importance.

As children of God we can be assured of having a prolonged life if we recognize the importance of godly wisdom in our decision-making. Not only will our spiritual lives be prolonged, but through obedience to God and God's Word, we will be blessed and receive unexpected honor. I've been blessed to walk before my two children as a mother committed to a loving Creator God, faithful Savior and His guiding Spirit. I take great pleasure in growing towards God through every disappointment, every misstep and every failure—without each I would cease to grow and that's not a price I'm willing to pay. Where God leads I'm willing to follow.

*Prayer: LORD, grant us the wisdom necessary for the living of these days! In Jesus' name. Amen.*

# DAY 16

*Saturday, March 23, 2019*

## **BROKEN CISTERNS, IDOLS OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY**

Dr. Riggins R. Earl, Jr., Ph. D.

Jeremiah 2:13-14

*13 “My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me—the spring of living water and they dug their own cisterns—cracked cisterns that hold no water. 14 Is Israel a servant—a slave by birth? Then why has he become plunder?”*

What a beautiful passage of scripture noted above from Jeremiah, the weeping prophet. He diagnoses Israel’s sins as her unwillingness to trust God to be the “eternal spring of living water” and daring to substitute her engineering know-how (making broken cisterns) for God’s gift.

No disaster in human community is comparable to a drought, whether natural or man-made. The latter can cause human beings to turn on each other destructively or turn with each other to God in humility. A natural drought often motivates human beings to turn with each other to God in prayer for help, placing God above their engineering know-how. Natural droughts are analogous to spiritual ones. Only God can water the dried-up souls of people.

The prophet Jeremiah is very unpopular in the eyes of the people. Like an unpopular newscaster, he is cursed and mocked by his generation. There are times when he feels that God has deceived him. Jeremiah uses the symbol of water to speak of God as the source of eternal life. John’s Gospel speaks of Jesus declaring Himself as the water of life (John 7:37; John 4: 5-15). He is the unbreakable and inexhaustible well of life. Our engineering know-how can never be compared to God’s creating and saving knowledge.

In verse 14 of this chapter, God raises the question that is most timely for every generation that presumes self-sufficiency: “Is Israel a servant, a slave by birth?” The question provokes us to ask: What is it that makes us worship the false god of self-sufficiency? Do we do so because it is in our spiritual DNA? Or, do we do so because of our culture? Jeremiah thinks that Israel sins because she chooses her own ability over the redemptive power of God. Self-sacrifice that is required of Christians, as Lent teaches, must remind us that God in Jesus is the source of our salvation.

*Prayer: Lord, thank you for being a spring of eternal living water for us in Jesus, forgiving us of our idolatrous ways. Amen.*

# DAY 17

Monday, March 25, 2019

## HE SHALL CARRY THE LAMBS

Dr. Dale T. Irvin

Isaiah 40:11

*11 Like a shepherd, He tends His flock. He gathers the lambs in His arms, carries them in his bosom, and gently guides nursing ewes.*

Central Park in the middle of Manhattan is one of the most popular stretches of urban landscape anywhere in the world. The original design for the park in 1857 called for a military parade ground between 66th Street and 69th Street on the west side. But by the time the city got around to constructing that section in 1864, the Civil War was raging across the nation. The designers decided instead to convince the park commission to put a flock of sheep with a shepherd on the green instead, in order to reinforce the peaceful image of the city that they wanted to project. The sheep remained until 1934 when Robert Moses in his capacity as New York City Parks Commissioner had them removed, by some accounts to keep them from being eaten by hungry New Yorkers in the midst of the Great Depression. That field in Central Park is still called “The Sheep Meadow” today.

The image of a pastoral green in the middle of a city with sheep safely grazing is as comforting today as it was in the ancient world. Both Moses and David started out keeping sheep before they became leaders of Israel. Jesus often used the image of a shepherd caring for sheep to describe His own ministry. The earliest known artistic representation we have of Jesus comes from the third century from the walls of the catacombs outside Rome, where the dead were buried in underground caves. The picture depicts Jesus as a shepherd, carrying a lamb on his shoulders. Isaiah 40:11 reminds us that God carries us close to the divine heart, and that God leads us gently through the troubled world in which we live.

*Prayer:*

*Savior, like a shepherd lead us,  
much we need thy tender care;  
in thy pleasant pastures feed us,  
for our use thy folds prepare.*

*Thou hast promised to receive us,  
poor and sinful though we be;  
thou hast mercy to relieve us,  
grace to cleanse and power to free.*

*—Dorothy Thrupp*

# DAY 18

*Tuesday, March 26, 2019*

## **DON'T BE SURPRISED IF YOU SUFFER**

Rev. Dr. Lindsay E. Curtis

1 Peter 1:4

*4 An incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance has been reserved in heaven for you.*

We live in a society where there is much anathema to pain or suffering; who among us enjoys being in a state of distress and hardship? If there is a therapy available, a pill or some other form of painkiller that would fortress us from suffering, we generally seek it. Even some of us in the Body of Christ who should know better, but to be spoken ill of, to be ostracize or criticize one might be considered to be suffering and we are taken by surprise and ask the age-old question “why me”? Please consider our Savior who truly suffered all types of emotional, spiritual and physical sufferings, calamities even to the point of asking the the Father to “let this cup pass from me,” only to relent and conclude, “ not my will but thy will be done.”

Those of us in Christendom understand that suffering is a part of the equation called life and yet we pray His Will be done in our lives. We know that there are some good days and some bad days. We know that the rain falls on the just and the unjust. We as believers are not surprised if we suffer, our continual battle cry is, “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal. 6:9). As believers, we are well aware of our wonderful and glorious inheritance that awaits us which is eternal life with God. Peter reminds us that it’s an inheritance pure and cannot fade away as ink on paper or as the memory fades. In fact, however, an everlasting place for us has been reserved for us. No, we should not be surprised that suffering is a part of the journey, but, let us rejoice in knowing that a home has been prepared for us.

*Prayer: Dear God our Father in all our going and coming, our ups and downs we seek to do your will, your way. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

# DAY 19

Wednesday, March 27, 2019

## THE WHISTLING GOD

Rev. Dr. Don Darius Butler

Zechariah 10:8

*8 I will signal for them and gather them in. Surely I will redeem them; they will be as numerous as before.*

Within the expansive canon of sacred scripture there are verses with deeply reassuring overtones—passages that seem to bear the weight of divine responsibility in each written word. The oracle of Zechariah is illustrative of the point, as returning inhabitants of Judah take comfort in the spoken declarations of restoration. They would play the instrumental role in rescuing the remaining exiles and bringing them into the possibilities of a new future. These reclaimed people are described with language typically reserved for God's warrior nature. They would become the cornerstone. But for this to occur, God must first get their attention, and they must heed God's sign.

These forty days of Lenten devotion afford us just the opportunity needed to give our attention to those things to which God might be calling us. The daily grind of life, with its incessant to-do lists, render us harried, most often fatigued with little to show for it; and the misadventures of human ambitions and vain pursuits only drive us like herd to closings that cannot sustain nor support, leaving us harassed by such unfulfillment. But when a clearing appears, when we are open enough to sense what God is unfolding before and around us, the truth becomes plain: God is still at work with us.

For all the aimless wanderings and futile endeavors of your life, for all of your preoccupations, assumptions, and conclusions, the same God who has reclaimed and restored life to its intended purposes commands your attention. As He has done in times past, so does He intend to work through you His will for His glory and your benefit. No prerequisites are necessary, for He takes the responsibility to gather and redeem. Just be open.

*Prayer: Still us from all that distract us from sensing Your summons and calling to nobler things, Great Redeemer, and work through us Your holy will. Amen.*

# DAY 20

Thursday, March 28, 2019

## OPERATION RECOVERY

Rev. Dr. Kelly Miller Smith, Jr.

Joel 2:25

*25 "I shall restore to you the years that the locust, the swarming locust, the cankerworm and the caterpillar have eaten—My great army that I sent among you."*

When President Barack Obama came into office he had a mess on his hand. There was a global financial crisis, the US auto industry was in trouble, there were two unpopular wars in which our country was in and the mode of the nation was dismal. Yet over the eight years of his presidency, President Obama was able to guide the country to the recovery from which we are still now reaping the benefits. The recovery has been of such a nature that many have forgotten how bad it was before it began.

As long as we live there will be things from which we will need to recover. It may be surgery or some other medical procedure. It may be personal financial stress. It may be family upheavals. It may be the loss of a love one. It may be things we have no control over. It may be the consequences of some choices we made. There are many circumstances in our lives that can devastate us, even destroy us.

The sense of this prophesy of Joel is that there were several years of plagues of locusts that ate away and destroyed that which was believed to be crucial to Israel's survival. The Lord sent this message to them to let them know that even as they have gone through some difficult times, God was in the process of enabling them to recover that which been lost. We must understand that recovery does not necessarily mean that we will get back exactly what we lost. But, it does mean that we will be equipped to still experience the fullness of life by the hand of God.

The season of Lent is designed to help us remember and reflect upon the fact that no matter what we go through in life, all is not loss. There is as recovery process God is working in our lives through the life of Jesus Christ that was recovered from Calvary.

*Prayer: Lord, allow our faith to mature to the place where we are able to see that no matter what we may go through that You are always there to enable us to recover. Amen.*

# DAY 21

Friday, March 29, 2019

## SONGS IN THE NIGHT

Rev. Dr. Darrell A. Drumwright

Psalm 77:6

*6 I remembered my songs in the night. My heart meditated and my spirit asked.*

The psalmist speaks from a place of remembrance and acknowledgement of God when he was in a hard season of life. The utter transparency in this Psalm enables us to embrace the reality that at times life brings with it some intense moments. In the midst of the psalmist's life intensity he recalls the "songs" given to him in his personal night season. Night represents those hard and intense times in our lives. I have a personal theology about songs especially in the "night" of life. God has the supernatural ability to give us songs that nurture and nourish our spirit. There are hard-pressed moments when you can't say it, you can sing it. When you can't sing it, you can hum it. When you can't hum it, you can moan it. And even when you can't moan it, you can groan it. Maybe your song at night is, "Great is thy Faithfulness." Maybe your song at night is "God Specializes." Maybe your song at night is, "Gotta Have You." God will give you songs in the midst of your night and God will use your songs to help carry you through.

*Prayer: Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank you for the encouraging and inspiring ministry of songs during our night season. Amen.*



# DAY 22

*Saturday, March 30, 2019*

## THE SEEKING SHEPHERD

Rev. Brian Cash

Ezekiel 34:11

*11 “For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them.”*

In October of 2016 Andrew Gaskell, a 25-year-old Australian engineer from Tasmania, decided to go hiking through the rocky terrain of Gunung Mulu National Park in Malaysia. Andrew’s purpose behind taking this private excursion was to discover spiritual meaning in his life. While on the journey, Andrew became lost in the mountains for about two weeks experiencing: malnourishment, dehydration, and leeches that attacked his body. Miraculously, a search committee found him and airlifted his weak body to freedom. Following months of recovery, Andrew opened up about his experience in those mountains, sharing that he purposely ignored all of the advice locals had given about safety procedures. Andrew intentionally walked down paths that had multiple signs that said areas were closed or forbidden.

A great tragedy in life is being lost and knowing you were culpable because of making wrong choices. Time after Time, the children of Israel received signs and prophetic warnings that they were journeying down the wrong road. However, they continued worshipping idol gods, affirming the teachings of false teachers over God’s law, and living lives contrary to the way of their creator. Nevertheless, the beauty of both narratives is not found in the tragedy being lost but in the miracle of being rescued.

Ezekiel 34 reminds us that we belong to a shepherd who seeks after sheep that have wandered down dangerous paths, leading to the state of being lost. The long journey of life is filled with diverse pathways that point in different directions. Unfortunately, most of the times we have decided to choose the wrong paths. We are flawed people that make erroneous decisions which leaves us lost in the mountains of despair. But thanks be to God, that our seeking shepherd does not allow our simple choices to be the dirt on our graves of ignorance. The seeking shepherd comes to find us and airlifts us to grounds of God’s abundant grace and mercies. For those of us who have made wrong decisions, we are forever indebted to the seeking shepherd that saved our lives.

*Prayer: Thank you God, when we found ourselves in mountains of despair, You found us, cleaned us up with Your grace, and showered us with undeserving blessings. To the God, who is our seeking Shepherd, may we forever rest in Your loving Hands. Amen.*

# DAY 23

Monday, April 1, 2019

## GOD, EVER READY TO PARDON

Rev. Dr. Jonathan McReynolds

Nehemiah 9:17

*17 They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them...*

This text speaks to humanity's predisposition toward our sin nature. The surrounding narrative details God's goodness and faithfulness toward His people. God was faithful to liberate the nation from Egyptian bondage and to deliver them into the land of promise. God met every need and gave them victory in every battle in route to their place of promise. However, in spite of God's faithfulness, His people still rebelled and turned away from Him.

Tragically, all of humanity struggles in their interpersonal relations with God and our associated obedience to Him. There is no doubt that God has been faithful to us just as He was with the nation. Many times we fail in aligning our lives with the precepts and principles of God that have been set forth for our lives. The refusal to obey God as stated in the text; speaks to the conscious decisions, which we make as free moral agents. Thus we consciously know that we are transgressing against God in our behavior.

It is incomprehensible how humanity can transgress against God in light of His faithfulness and goodness toward us. However, this happens many times when we lose sight of the wonders, which He has performed in our lives. The nation diminished the acts of God, which He performed toward their liberation. We must never lose sight of the wonders, which God performs in our lives for our liberation and blessings.

Nevertheless, we find that God is faithful and ever-ready to pardon us of our transgressions. This speaks to the character of God and His divine attributes. When we transgress against God, we will find that He is ever-ready to pardon us and to reconcile the broken human-divine relationship, which has been damaged due to sin and disobedience.

All of us have been the beneficiaries of God's willingness to pardon. As we endeavor in life and experience our periodic failures before God; we must never ignore His willingness to pardon us from sin.

*Prayer: Oh God as we walk before you; empower us to walk holy and upright. We continually thank you for your pardon toward our lives lest we fall from your mighty hand. Amen.*

# DAY 24

Tuesday, April 2, 2019

## COMING CLEAN

Rev. Dr. Craig Scott Brown, Sr.  
James 5:16

*16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

Consistent with the theme of his Epistle, James in the 16th verse of Chapter 5, writes to empower believer's, who he has sought to encourage to persevere in the trials and temptations they have faced, as they remain steadfast in what they have been taught and learned in Christ. In this verse which builds on what he said in verse 15, reminds them and the Church today of the power and privilege of Prayer. James wants his readers to pray and mature in their "faith in Christ by living what they say they believe."

So, in this verse, he seeks to empower them by encouraging them to live as a transparent and co-dependent community of faith. As they do so they are to confess their faults to each other and pray for one another. How profound a concept! The Body of Christ is supposed to be able to be transparent with each other and seek those of the household of faith to pray for them. In his prescription for healing, this is the first step. He says, in essence, "Come clean"!! The spiritual and physical healing we all require from time to time is dependent on Transparency.

Once we have become Transparent, then and only then, does the "Power of Faith," kick in. We are to pray in the power of faith, which is to say, we are to pray the Word of God, back to God. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." James says, once we have come clean, the "effectual fervent prayer of the righteous avails much." The words "effectual fervent", means "to display one's activity; to put forth power." Simply put, it means we are to move beyond the habit of asking God to do something and then sit and wait for the results. It means we are to ask God based upon His word, then thank Him in advance of the manifestation and then get up and live in the anticipated victory. As the righteous pray, we understand that James says, their prayers, "availeth much"; that means when the righteous pray, God will do much more than what has been requested.

*Prayer: Dear God, please give us the courage to adhere to the prescription for healing outlined by James. Give us the courage to be transparent. We thank you in advance for hearing and answering our prayer. Amen.*

# DAY 25

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

## REJECTED BY HIS OWN

Rev. Dr. Melvin G. Miller

John 1:10-11

*10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. 11 He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him.*

One could argue that the Christian faith boils down to two things—acceptance or rejection of the gospel message. When Jesus arrived on the scene of human history, many Jewish sectarians and individuals were eagerly awaiting the arrival of a Messianic king (i.e., the Pharisees, the Essenes and the Zealots). Even Samaritans, who were not a part of the mainstream Jewish society, believed that a Messiah was coming, who would “...explain everything to us” (John 4:25). The Sadducees were the sole exception to this belief.

These Jewish sectarians, however, were largely unimpressed with Jesus’ earthly ministry and thus rejected Him as the long awaited Messianic king. The poll of popular opinion did associate Jesus with prominent personalities in Israel’s history—John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets (Matt 16:14). These associations placed Jesus in good company, but only represented a milder form of rejection, since they fell short of embracing Him on His own terms. Eventually, these various groups and personalities led a movement against him that resulted in one of the most brutal forms of rejection known to humankind—Roman crucifixion.

A new sect emerged—called Christians—that accepted Jesus as a ‘Suffering Servant,’ who died for human sin in accordance to the expressed plan of God, to bring salvation to the whole world (Acts 2:22-41; Matt 28:16-20). This group was comprised of people from different cultures (John 4:4-42; Acts 2:8-12 and 10:1-48) and every walk of life (tax-collectors, prostitutes, bandits, fishermen, aristocrats, religious rulers). Regarding this group, John says, “...to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12).

*Prayer: LORD, thank you for your willingness to suffer and be rejected for my benefit and for the benefit of the whole world. Teach me, O LORD, that I, too, have a cross to bear for you (Luke 9:23).*

# DAY 26

Thursday, April 4, 2019

## DEVOTE YOURSELF TO PRAYER

Bishop Phillip Elliot & Dr. Sheila Elliott  
Colossians 4:2

*2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.*

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians around A.D. 60. It gives an outstanding overview of Jesus Christ being God in human form.

Paul began his letter to the Colossians by giving thanks to God and sharing his prayer of intercession for them. Paul described the awesome person and work of Jesus with such power it nearly leaves one breathless. Paul used strikingly vivid words to describe the all-sufficiency of Christ and the power of new life in Him, and to teach how to live holy lives that are pleasing to God!

With that said, Colossians 4:2, reminds us that we need to celebrate who we are in Christ. Nothing is more important than knowing our identity in Christ and who we are (or fail to be) apart from Him. This scripture reminds us of Holiness in Public Life! Go to sleep praying, wake up praying! Trust God and expect Him to act. Watch for His hand of favor each day!

It's important to make a note to self: Let go of worry and fear. Have peace because God is here!

*Prayer: Help us rest in your arms Jesus always. Amen.*



Dr. Jamey O. Graham breaks ground for New ST. John Baptist Church in Malunje, Malawi

# DAY 27

Friday, April 5, 2019

## SPIRITUAL DEHYDRATION

Rev. Dr. William B. Sutton, III

John 7:37

*37 On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink."*

One of my favorite pastimes is playing racquetball. I have played this sport for most of my adult life for fun and as a way of exercising. As much as I enjoy playing racquetball, I have to remind myself that there is a danger to this game. When most people think about the dangers associated with playing racquetball they think of being hit by the ball or accidentally being hit by an opponent's racquet. While trust these are indeed some of the hazards associated with this game, I have been advised by my physician over the years to be aware of the dangers associated with becoming dehydrated. As a matter of fact, most of the time when I am playing this game my biggest complaint are the cramps I experience from time to time in my legs and arms. My physician has advised me that most of the cramping that racquetball players experience is a result of dehydration.

In our devotional for today, Jesus, our great physician, advises His audience to beware of a spiritual condition that is the equivalent of physical dehydration. Spiritual dehydration is a far worse condition than physical dehydration. According to our lesson, Jesus identifies spiritual dehydration as the condition that exist when we do not have the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the person of the Triune Godhead who reveals Jesus Christ to us, guides us in all truth, and reveals those things to us that give us the abundant life promised by Jesus. Spiritual life is the exact opposite of spiritual dehydration. When the Spirit gives us spiritual life, we have "Living water flowing through us." Friends, let's make certain during this Lenten Season we have the life that Jesus desires for us to have. Let us make sure we have the spiritual condition where we have "Living water flowing through us!" Amen.

*Prayer: Gracious and loving God, there are so many times in life when we thirst for that which does not satisfy. Use this Lenten Season to quench our thirst with the "Living Water of Life." Use the "Living Water of Life" that flows through us to not only provide us with abundant life, but life for others as well. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.*

# DAY 28

*Saturday, April 6, 2019*

## HEARING THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

Rev. Dr. Derrick L. Boykin

John 10:27

*27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*

Some of us may be familiar with the German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. If not, his story is certainly one worth reflecting upon particularly in light of the scriptural passage for today.

Shortly after finishing his doctoral studies at the University of Berlin, Bonhoeffer traveled to the United States to teach at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. While in the Big Apple, one Sunday morning he decided to attend Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem where Adam Clayton Powell was pastor at that time. What he encountered on that first visit was so moving and so transformative, Bonhoeffer decided to frequent worship services thereafter and even participate in the life of the congregation by teaching a class in the Sunday school.

What was it that captivated him so? Multiple voices agree; it was the power of the Gospel expressed in lives of the people he came in contact with. There was a certain continuity between the teachings of Christ and their obedience to following those teachings without departure. Such an experience must have contributed to the inspiration of the writing of his celebrated book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, which was in fact originally written in German and entitled *Nachfolge*, which literally means to “follow after.” It is no wonder, as history reveals, Bonhoeffer’s commitment to following after Jesus led to his courageous return to Germany where he joined in the struggle against Nazism and ultimately gave up his life in the movement to stop Hitler’s reign of terror.

This is the true mark of discipleship: hearing Christ voice and obediently following where He leads. As Christ without deviation followed the voice of the Father, let this be our prayer this Lenten season and beyond—that we too may steadfastly follow the voice of Christ so we can make the One who knows us known by the living Word of God living in us.

*Prayer: LORD, thank you for the guidance in your voice. Help us and grant us the courage to follow wherever you lead. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

# DAY 29

Monday, April 8, 2019

## THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

Rev. Dr. Joe Albert Bush, Sr.

Matthew 10:37-38

*37 “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”*

About two years ago, my wife and I couldn't help but notice that our then three year old grandson, Josiah, seem to be mesmerized by the very sight of a cross—any cross. Whether it is on a building, a billboard, inside a sanctuary, or simply hanging from someone's neck, Josiah can spot it right away. Each time Josiah sees a cross, it somehow seems to arrest his little imagination. We can't explain Josiah's interest in the cross at such an early age (and he can't either); but it is as if he already knows that there is something mysteriously and uniquely special about the cross. Perhaps this child is beginning to see something there that many adults are unable to see and appreciate.

It reminds me of a previous episode of ABC's Good Morning America, when then co-host Charles Gibson was interviewing a young jewelry designer who happened to be marketing a new line of crosses supposedly designed by the popular rock star, Madonna, better known as “The Material Girl.” Among the things the young designer said was that “The Material Girl has brought a whole new dimension to the cross. Never has the cross been more popular than today.” Something within me wanted to interject that for serious followers of Jesus Christ the emphasis has never been on wearing the cross, but rather on bearing the cross—and there is certainly a radical difference.

Gibson went on to challenge the young designer, by saying that he (Gibson) understood the cross to be a uniquely Christian symbol, to which the young designer replied, “Not anymore, because Madonna is changing all that.”

Can you imagine that? A rock star changing the very meaning of the cross! What a frightening prospect! God forbid that anyone, from the most celebrated artist to the most famous zookeeper, should ever be able to change the meaning of the cross.

I am sure the cross means many things to many people; but for Him who hung, bled, suffered and died on that ugly skull shaped hill called Calvary, the cross meant total obedience and absolute surrender to the Father's perfect will. And for those of us who would be identified with what happened to Him on that Cross, it means total redemption and deliverance from the iron clutches of eternal death and damnation.

*Prayer: Lord, God Jehovah, by the power of Your Spirit, help us to so rightly see and appreciate the beauty and power of the cross of Your Son and our Lord Jesus Christ until we, too, are lead to radical obedience and absolute surrender, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

# DAY 30

*Tuesday, April 9, 2019*

## THE CHALLENGE OF THE CROSS

Rev. Dr. Jesse T. Williams, Jr.

Matthew 10:38-39

*38 Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.*

Of all of the challenges that may face a disciple of Jesus Christ during the course of his or her lifetime, the challenges that the Cross represents are perhaps the most demanding and most difficult for us to embrace. You see, the challenge of the Cross is for us to live totally selflessly. It is a call for the disciple of Jesus Christ to fully and completely surrender themselves; mind, body and soul, for the cause and purposes of the Lord.

In fact, Jesus says to us in these verses that unless we are willing to take up our cross and follow Him, then we are not worthy of Him. All of us has a cross that we must carry in this life. Everyone's cross is not the same, but, they all represent a similar type of selfless living and ultimate, unconditional surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are not willing to do this, then we are like most half-hearted followers who are lukewarm in our support and commitment to Jesus. When we look at the cross, we can see not only the suffering of Jesus; but, we also see our willingness or unwillingness to truly sacrifice everything for Jesus.

Real life does not come from fulfilling our own preferences, desires and choices. The key to real life comes in living a life that is consumed and captivated completely by the will and purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ. The challenge of the cross is to move us from self-centered living to selfless living in which we crucify our old life and accept the New Life that only the Lord Jesus Christ can provide for us. That's when we find real life as God intended it for us!

*Prayer: Gracious God in Heaven, please give me the mind and heart of Jesus Christ; and give me the courage to pursue the challenge of the Cross that will lead me to the true source of life. Amen.*

# DAY 31

Wednesday, April 10, 2019

## LOVE REJECTED

Rev. Dr. Keith A. Russell

Matthew 23:37

*37 “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.”*

The Lenten season is an opportunity to reflect on the human condition with an honesty aimed at repentance. God has sent us the prophets, whether in the past or the present, and we rejected them while preferring the spiritual spin masters of false hope. Why do we consistently reject the help that God sends?

God has sent us Amos, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Martin, Malcom, Sojourner, Rosa and countless other men and women who sound the alarm about the reality of injustice, hate and bigotry. Particularly in our age where hate has new energy and endorsement from the principalities and powers, where racism is unmasked and, on the rise, and where mercy seems to have lost its way, how can we not heed God’s call to come home to faith?

In spite of our rejection of God’s love, God comes again this season with even a costlier invitation by sending His Son to save us. God seems not to give up on us although we often give up on God. This is a time to receive and not to reject—a time to repent and come home just like that prodigal son of old returned to the arms of a loving father. Won’t you come home to the God of justice, mercy, and liberation? Do we not need to be empowered to resist the current wiles of the evil one even as our leaders turn their backs on both God’s people and God’s creation? Let this be a season of return to the God who loves us so much He sacrificed His only begotten son on our behalf. Let this season be a time of invitation to our friends and neighbors to come home to the God who loves them. Please, do not reject this persistent and costly love.

*Prayer: Dear God, help us to heed your call and come home to your love and forgiveness. Amen.*

# DAY 32

Thursday, April 11, 2019

## THE TEARS OF JESUS

Rev. John W. McVicker, Sr.

John 11:35

*35 Jesus wept.*

Perhaps in the Gospels there is nothing more revealing as to the humanity of Jesus than the shortest verse in the entire bible, “Jesus wept.” The tears of Jesus confirm Isaiah’s prophecy when he called him “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” The bible records three occasions upon which Jesus shed tears. In our text at the grave of Lazarus, He wept over His friend and the impact of sin in a fallen world. Matthew and Luke record Him weeping outside of Jerusalem over the tragedy of a lost opportunity; and the writer of Hebrews (5:7) recounts His weeping over bearing the sins of the world as He prayed in Gethsemane. Jesus wept, not because He was lost in hopeless despair, but because He is not willing that any should perish.

As Jesus looks at his church today, it begs to wonder if He is still weeping. Does He weep when He sees us, like Jerusalem, missing so many opportunities to affect the world for the Kingdom’s sake? Does He weep as millions die without hearing of His redeeming love because the church has failed to witness for Him? Does He weep at the church’s indifference toward the least of these as sin continues to plague nations and people are the victims of corruption and greed?

In this season, let us work toward drying the eyes of Jesus through our prayers in action. Let Him weep no more because of our failure to represent Him in this world. Let Him weep no more over His church being apathetic. Instead, let Him rejoice over us and say, “Well done, good and faithful servants.” May our words and works become the balm to un-break the heart of Jesus.

*Prayer: Dear Lord, as willing vessels we pray that our lives and service never cause another tear of yours to be shed. Amen.*

# DAY 33

Friday, April 12, 2019

## ABANDON BY THOSE HE LOVES

Rev. Dr. Bruce N. Alick

John 6:66-67

*66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. 67 “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.*

Has anyone ever walked out on you, or abandoned you at a time when you needed them most? How did it make you feel? In the scripture referenced above, how do you think Jesus felt?

In this sixth Chapter of John, Jesus poured out the truth of who He was and what He came to do. Continually, Jesus references Himself as “bread” or as “bread that came down from heaven” (vss. 35, 48, 50, 51, 58). He invites those who call themselves His disciples, to eat this bread. In essence, to nourish themselves so completely on him, through his preaching and teaching and actions, that their entire lives would be dependent on him, and like Jesus, the Father’s will would be their will. This was hard. It was more than some could handle. So they, despite His love for them, abandoned Him.

Those whom He loved, abandoned Him. However, dear reader, before you rush to judgment on those who abandoned Jesus back then, what about you today? I would contend, that those whom He loves today, whether in or outside of the church, have abandoned Him. When the church becomes indistinguishable from the world, we have abandoned Him. When we are no longer concerned about the immigrants at our borders, the poverty stricken in our cities, the incarcerated in our prisons, we have abandoned Him. When political expediency replaces moral exigency, we have abandoned Him. Imagine that, once again, Jesus abandoned, by those He loves!

*Prayer: Lord, forgive me for my fickle ways. Help me to not be guilty of abandoning you in the way I live my life. “Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me, til I want no more.” In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen!*

# DAY 34

*Saturday, April 13, 2019*

## STAYING WOKE

Rev. Dr. Derick Brennan

Matthew 24:42

*42 Therefore stay alert; for you do not know what day your Lord is coming.*

Throughout this 24th chapter of Matthew, at the prompting of His disciples, Jesus provides an extensive lesson on eschatology, the study of the end times of an individual, an age or the world. The passage describes the destruction of the Temple, signs of the end of the age, the persecution of the disciples and the rise of false prophets. Jesus paints a very grim picture culminating with His sudden return! It is with this backdrop that Jesus admonishes His disciples then and His disciples into perpetuity to remain watchful.

A watchful eye is necessary for several reasons, the first being Jesus' return will not fit into our personal timetable. In this 21st century, we are conditioned by technology to fill our calendars with professional and personal appointments, meetings, and errands. Organization for efficiency in a multitasking life is a necessity, but the return of the Son of God cannot be scheduled with reminders, invitees, or color codes. According to Matthew 24:36, not even the angels know the day or the hour.

Second, believers must remain vigilant because Jesus' second coming will not be foreseeable. Matthew 24:6-8 teaches that the signs will include wars, rumors of wars, nations rising against nation, and natural disasters... However, anyone who has a basic understanding of human history knows that the world has been fraught with all of these signs and more since Christ's ascension. Regardless of the latest false prophet claiming to have pieced together the signs, it is an exercise in futility to attempt to predict His appearance.

Last, it behooves every saint to be attentive, since when Jesus comes back each of us will be accountable. Jesus concludes Matthew 24 by comparing a faithful and an evil servant. The faithful servant is handsomely rewarded based on effective stewardship. Conversely, the evil servant is severely punished for failing to fulfill the master's wishes. Accountability is often stressful for non-performers, but for the prepared Christian, being accountable should be met with anticipation.

*Prayer: Holy Spirit help me to always be ready for Jesus' return, whether He is coming for the church universal or coming for me personally. Amen.*

# DAY 35

Monday, April 15, 2019

## THE LORD HAS NEED OF IT

Rev. Jonathan R. Staples

Mark 11:3

*3 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"*

Jesus, one week away from the cross, gathers together His disciples and in fulfillment of Bible prophecy, He enters the city presenting Himself according to Zechariah 9:9 as the King of the Jews and the King of Israel.

There is tremendous meaning in this passage for our hearts in this triumphant entry of Jesus. This procession reminds us that "Jesus is the Son of God. He is the King of the Jews. He's not just a man; He's the Savior of the world."

Jesus departed from His usual manner. He had been telling people when He healed someone, "Don't tell anybody." He said to the people, "Now don't tell anybody who did this." But, now Jesus comes forth publically and He begins to take control and direct the events that will lead to His death.

It is estimated that there were at least two million people who had crowded into Jerusalem. They had come from places all over the world because it was the Passover.

They had come there to bring sacrifices unto God. As Jesus comes to Jerusalem, He brings the sacrifice of Himself, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world and He presents Himself as deity.

The disciples are sent on an errand. He said, "Go to the village ahead of you, you'll find a donkey tied up," and He goes on to say, "When you find that donkey you untie him and bring him to me and if anybody tries to stop you, you just say to them, 'The Lord has need of him.'"

Jesus is demonstrating that He is on a mission. He could see that donkey; He knew exactly what was going to happen when they went to get that donkey. Jesus is the Son of God, He knew that the Father had prearranged for that little donkey to be there.

That's how minutely concerned Jesus is about your life. He knows the details of your life. He knows all the little things you face in your life. He knows all the little problems you have. Jesus predicted exactly what was going to happen. He demonstrated His deity. He is Lord.

The first time I preached this story it gave me mental fits. The Greek word "kurio" (owner, lord or master) occurs in the text twice. The text translates, "go tell the owner (kurios) of the colt that the Lord (Kurios) has need of it." I could not figure it out. Why is kurios in the text twice? It finally hit me. The text is accurately translated, "go tell the owner of the colt, that the owner of the owner has need of it." Jesus desires to be our owner. He wants first place or no place in our lives. He is Lord. He is still demonstrating His deity.

*Prayer: Loving LORD, help us to never forget that you are LORD. You desire to be our owner and demonstrate your deity. Amen.*

# DAY 36

Tuesday, April 16, 2019

## KINSHIP TO THE KING

Rev. Dr. Ivory T. Thigpen

John 13:35 KJV

*35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

You are not the Father's! You are the Father's! (?)

In this DNA age of disputed paternity, quite a spectacle has been made in determining the heredity of individuals. Whether for the purpose of disputing inheritance or developing identity, judges and jurist alike all seek evidence, indisputable evidence of heredity, as to know to whom one belongs!

The faithful followers of Christ need not ever face such a crisis of identity because there should never be a lack of evidence. Evidenced by our love, they will know we are disciples and we will know that we are children of the living God by our love!

The existence of our heavenly Father and his Fatherhood will never be in doubt when we show our love to one another (friend or foe). Our heritage of love predates all other test of paternity. For it was Love that formed the foundations of the world. It was Love that molded man from dust. It was Love that covered a multitude of sins on the cross. For God so LOVED the world that he gave his only begotten son! Therefore, when we love there is indisputable evidence of our discipleship, of our fellowship, and most importantly of our kinship to the King!

*Prayer: Oh, Heavenly Father help me to love all your children in ever instance, on every occasion, at every opportunity. Help me to look past differences and love the very diversity created by You, God! Let the love I show leave no question that I belong to You, God! Amen.*



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# DAY 37

Wednesday, April 17, 2019

## THE MEANING OF THE VEIL

Rev. Dr. Demetrius K. Williams

Mark 15:38

*38 The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.*

As Jesus hung on the cross amidst mockery and abuse from those who pitted themselves against Him as His enemies, and sadness and despair among those who partnered with Him as His friend. The chief priests and the elders had plotted for a long time Jesus' demise and destruction and now, finally, they were certain that they had Him and would bring His life and movement to an end. For His enemies, the troubling door Jesus had opened in the history of Israel by claiming to be the Son of God, would soon be sealed and closed. But, after Jesus breathed His last breath (Mk 15:37), something strange and miraculous happened: "The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." The curtain that separated the Holy of Holies where God's presence dwelt from the rest of the holy places of the temple and the people was torn from top to bottom. Certainly, the priests who were serving in the temple that day saw this event and were perplexed; perhaps, asking themselves, "What could this mean?"

The veil that sheltered the entrance to the Holy of Holies signified that humankind was separated from God by sin (Isaiah 59:1-2). And even the high priest who was permitted to pass beyond this veil to enter God's presence to make atonement for Israel's sins (Leviticus 16) was only allowed to do so only once a year. God's presence could not tolerate for too long or too regularly the sinfulness of human presence. The veil in the temple was a constant reminder that sin renders humanity unfit for the presence of God. Jesus Christ, through His atoning death, was the only sacrifice that could remove the barriers between God and humankind. Because of Him, our Great High Priest, we may now enter God's presence with confidence and boldness (Hebrews 4:14-16). The torn veil signifies that now the door, the way into the God's presence—the Holy of Holies—is open for all people, for all time.

Yes, the torn view shows that Jesus is the way, the door, our access into the presence of God. Already in Mark 1:10, Jesus baptism was a sign of the impending rending of the veil: "Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, He saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove." The heavens had already been torn apart at the revealing of His divine nature and identity. And at His return, the door of heaven will be opened again. As John relates: "After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven" (Rev. 4:1). John reveals further: "Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne,... the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb.... And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev. 4:1; 5:6, 9).

*Prayer: Let us all now with gracious hearts accept God's invitation to enter joyfully into the presence of God through Jesus Christ our Lord! The veil of separation has been removed. Amen.*

# DAY 38

Thursday, April 18, 2019

## THE LIGHT IN THE DARK

Rev. Dr. John W. Kinney

Luke 23:44-46

*44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, 45 for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When He had said this, He breathed His last.*

Good Friday is a stark reminder that the "righteous" are not immune to periods of darkness. Darkness comes and it can come when it is least expected and when darkness does not fit with the moment. Darkness can come at your noonday. The narrative reveals to us that darkness not only comes, it can cover the whole place. Darkness comes in such a fashion that it covers the whole of your mind, your spirit, your body and your being. In the midst of the darkness, we recognize that the darkness not only comes and covers, it can continue for a season from the sixth to the ninth hour. Nevertheless, when we enter the depth of darkness that comes, covers, and continues, we discover that the darkness is luminous and there is light in the darkness. God is and God is light and, in God, there is no darkness at all. Since God is light, no matter how deep the darkness, there is light in the darkness.

Good Friday informs us that darkness comes, covers, and continues, but it also reveals brilliantly what darkness cannot do. Darkness cannot last always. Darkness has a limited time of three hours. The illusion of ultimacy and supremacy that darkness tries to create is collapsed into a fragment and a fraction or 12.5% of a day. The light shines and darkness is exposed as a moment in your movement that reflects neither your design nor your destiny.

In the midst of the darkness, we also see light shining with radiance of glory as the curtain is torn from top to bottom. Darkness can never separate us from God nor stop God from working on our behalf. In the darkness, the powers of separation and hierarchy are destroyed and reconciliation occurs. The light in the darkness allows us to see that God does some of God's best work in the dark! And, at last, Jesus lets the light shine when He lets us know that darkness can never stop us from putting our situations in God's hands. "Into thy hands," I put my being and my reality. In God's hands, we can expect and anticipate an outcome that is not defined by darkness. At the cross, I first saw the light and it is all Good!

*Prayer: Even in our moments of darkness, LORD we give You praise! For in such hours, Your Love shines brightest! Hallelujah to the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world! Amen.*

# DAY 39

*Friday, April 19, 2019*

## CONFESSIONS FROM AN UNLIKELY WITNESS

Rev. Dr. Freddy J. Clark

Mark 15:39

*39 And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how He died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"*

In most popular television drama series, one of the scripted features to keep people engaged in watching is the element of surprise. Often it is the most unlikely person in the drama who carries out the unexpected twist. The response from many who watch is simply, "We didn't see that coming!"

The crucifixion was a brutal form of execution where the victims were placed on a T shaped cross, rigidly held in one position, unable to do anything for themselves until they eventually died. The crucifixion of Jesus was no different. Mark's gospel gives us insight into the intensity of that moment. He reports that there was darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour. At the ninth hour Jesus cried, "My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me?" There were those around the cross who mocked him and suddenly with a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. Jesus died and his death was expected. What was unexpected was the response of the Centurion soldier who stood in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, and said, "Surely this man was the Son of God." That which had been concealed is now revealed. This Christological confession from the Centurion soldier is a surprising testimony. "None of us saw it coming." The surprising confession from the Centurion soldier invites us to see what he saw and to hear what he heard, and to share the same confession with others.

The hope in this moment is that we be inspired to become witnesses for Christ through our lives and through our words to the people with whom we share our world. To God be the glory.

*Prayer: God open our eyes that we can see your goodness and glory and give us boldness to confess this joy to others. Amen.*

# DAY 40

*Saturday, April 20, 2019*

## GIVING BLOOD

Rev. Dr. Joe Albert Bush, Sr.

1 John 1:7b

*7...the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

Many years ago, I gave blood for the very first time in a blood drive sponsored by the American Red Cross. Prior to drawing the life sustaining fluid from my veins, the Red Cross technician gave me a small pamphlet which I found interesting in that it listed several facts about the different blood types in the population. I stumbled upon these facts again recently, and I share them with you here:

37.4% of the population were type O-Positive

35.7% were type A-Positive

6.3% were type A-Negative

1.5% were type B-Negative

The rarest blood type in the population, type AB-Negative, was found only in 1 out of 167 people, or just 0.6% of the population. Then the pamphlet went on to say, “The rarest blood type is always the one that is not there when you need it.”

I am not sure if these figures still hold, almost twenty years later, but thanks be to God, we have a-one-of-a-kind supply of blood that is always available to those who would have it! It is as with a mighty trumpet shout that we stumble upon these words here in 1 John 1:7, “The blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.”

Long ago, Jesus Christ shed the blood from His own veins, to satisfy the demands of the Law of a Holy God. It was a once-and-for-all payment for human sin—your sin and my sin. The good news is that whenever a man or a woman cries out to God in faith and trust, truly repenting from sin and seeking God’s forgiveness, his/her prayer is always granted.

This is the gospel! Jesus Christ gave Himself to hang from a bloody tree, bleeding to death so that you and I could have and enjoy the free gift of eternal life. It’s life that comes out of His veins!

*Prayer: Blessed Father, thank you for Your Son, Jesus Christ, and the blood He shed from his veins for our salvation.*

# RESURRECTION SUNDAY

*Sunday, April 21, 2019*

## WHY DO YOU LOOK FOR THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD?

Rev. Dr. Neville Callam

Luke 24:5-7

*5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'"*

A number of women accompanied Jesus from Galilee to Judea. They provided for him out of their own resources (Luke 8:2-3). So great was their love for the Lord that, when Jesus was crucified, they were among those who lingered at the site until the very end (23:49). Afterwards, they followed those who carried Jesus' body to a stone-cut tomb and they took careful note of its location (23:55). The story of these women is one of extravagant love and deep devotion.

At dawn on Sunday, the women arrived at Jesus' burial place. They arrived there with aromatic oils and scented ointments. As they had cared for Jesus in life, they would after his death. Entering the tomb, they were shocked to discover that the one they loved was missing. Jesus, their Lord, was not there. Their shock turned into fear when two men in dazzling clothes appeared with them. These messengers addressed a strange question to them: "Why are you looking for the living among the dead?" Wonderful words of encouragement followed. "He is not here, but has arisen" (24:6).

The angels' initial rebuke reminded the women who loved Jesus that they should have known better than to be looking for him in a tomb. Only after the rebuke did they remember that, in fact, Jesus had told his disciples that his resurrection would follow his crucifixion (9:22; 18:33). Their deep love for Jesus was too focused on Jesus' death to allow them to call to mind how the events of the past week fit into the overall mission of Jesus. Their love needed an accompanying grace.

Here's a lesson the passage may teach us: It is possible for followers of Jesus who truly love their Lord to fail to take Jesus' word seriously. Love for our Lord needs to be wed to trust in his word if we are to be authentic disciples of Jesus.

Do we not know that love for Jesus needs to be matched by trust in his word? Faith in the promises of Jesus can transform our gloom to joy; it can turn our doubt to faith and convert crippling fear into joyous celebration.

This is what happened to the women when, on hearing the angelic message, they remembered the words of Jesus. They left the tomb to tell the story that renewed their joy, revived their hopes and would minister new life to the rest of the disciples—and to us. This is the story of Easter.

*Prayer: When we bear the cross of disappointment, teach us, good LORD, to recall the promises you have made and find in them the source of new life. Amen.*

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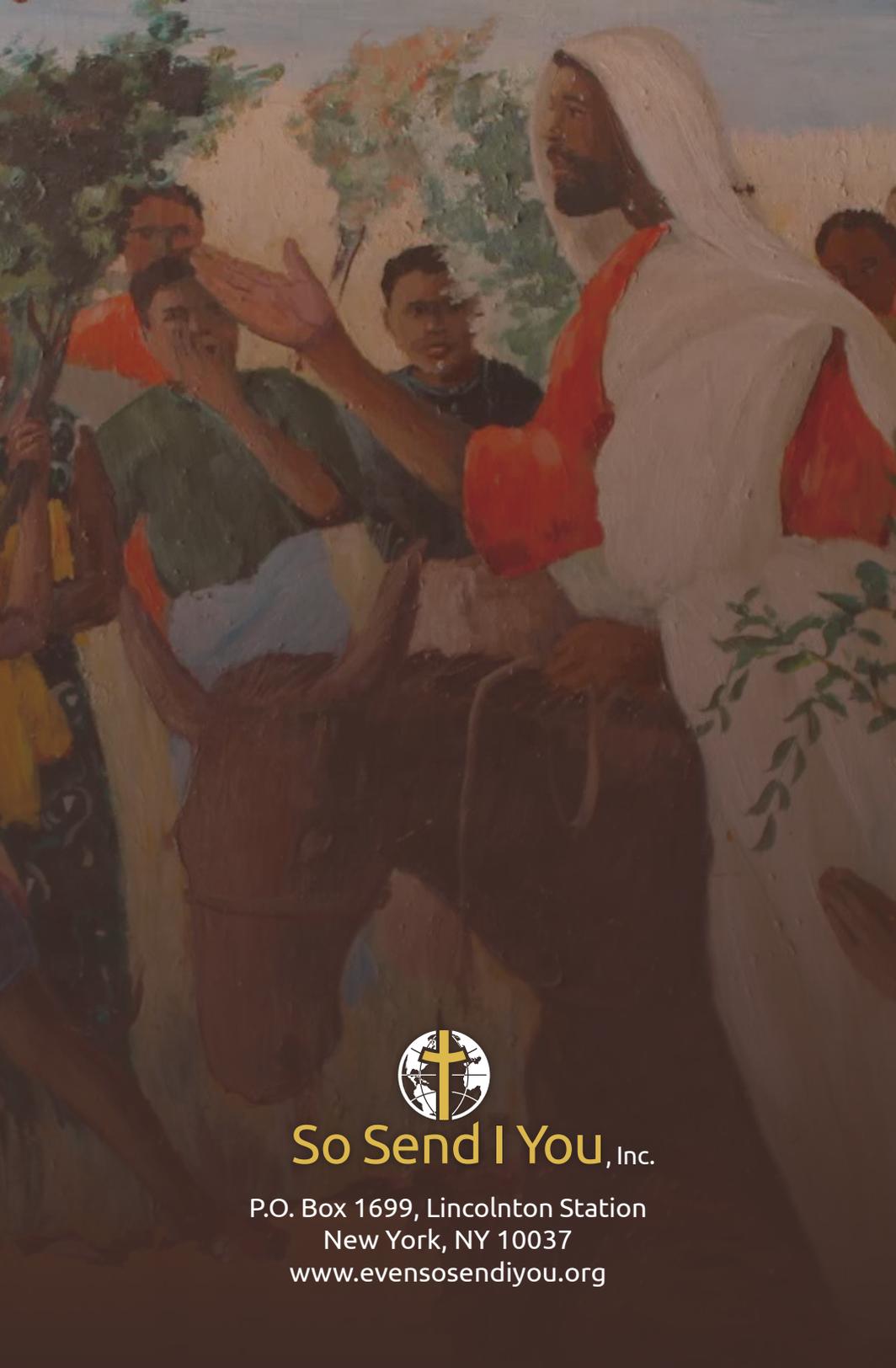
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