

Daily Reflections

LENT
2010



Written by the
Episcopal Community
of South Dakota

Invitation to a Holy Lent

The Book of Common Prayer invites us into an observation of a holy Lent. As we read and meditate on God's holy Word, we are privileged within these pages to share in how the Spirit touches people whose lives are connected to ours. During our daily journey through Lent, we will have the opportunity to learn from one another how God moves within us and shapes us.

May we read these words with open hearts and with a willingness to listen for the Spirit speaking to us through our brothers and sisters in Christ.

To those who wrote the following meditations, thank you for opening yourselves to the idea of reflecting on God's Word and sharing your thoughts.

Ash Wednesday

Amos 5:6-15; Psalm 32 & 143; Hebrews 12:1-14; Luke 18:9-14

A black smudge of ashes will appear on the foreheads of many of us today. It will be a visible reminder that we have been created from dust and that we will return to dust. We have been created mortal and will occupy these bodies only on a temporary basis. Yet, within the Ash Wednesday liturgy and the readings appointed for today, we are called into life. We have been given everlasting life through the gift of Jesus Christ – a gift of love freely given with no strings attached. We may fall away; we may lose heart; we may question yet this gift calls out to us so that we turn and re-turn towards Him time and again in our lives. We are encouraged to run with perseverance towards the Light and we are reassured that we are never alone in our journey. We seek good and not evil so that we might live as we are meant to live – as we have been created to live. We rejoice that despite our eventual mortal death, we as beloved children of God are called into life here and now within the Kingdom of God.

Deacon Marty Garwood: St. Andrew's Rapid City

Thursday, February 18th

Habakkuk 3:1-10(11-15)16-18; Psalm 37: 1-18; Philippians 3:12-21; John 17:1-8

The monastics of the Egyptian desert were men and women who escaped the turbulent world around them to live in solitude so that they might pray, sing, and worship God. They would pray and worship God in the middle of the night, at sunrise, at noonday, and in the afternoon. They would sing the psalms; in some instances they memorized the whole of the Psalter. We haven't left our families and friends to escape the world to have a better relationship with God. Instead we, as baptized and committed members of the body of Christ, can accomplish the same as our honored sisters and brothers of the desert. We can trust in God. We can nurture our relationship and partnership with God by inwardly worshiping our Creator in the solitude of our hearts, and outwardly by feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, by caring for the very Body of Christ that we are. By so doing we are building upon the hope and Glory of RESURRECTION.

Mark Kopejtka: Calvary Cathedral, Sioux Falls

Friday, February 19th

Ezekiel 18:1-4,25-32; Psalm 31; Philippians 4:1-9; John 17:9-19

Praise the God who loves us in spite of ourselves!

These days of Lent truly are for us to spend some time of personal reflection. This is not an easy thing when we see the truth in how many opportunities for praising and glorifying our God get left undone. God created us to be beautiful in His sight and to glorify Him. This should not be as difficult as we make it!

But instead, we put our energies into doing things our way. These passages reinforce that no matter how we wayward we go in our daily lives, God truly loves us. His Word gives us many examples of those who stray so far from their Maker and self-destruct in their wicked ways. We are to see these things in ourselves and turn from them before we, too, are destroyed by our own selfishness. If there has not yet been any other reason stated for us to do this, we should let our praise to our Lord flow out from our hearts without any sign of ceasing.

David Klassy: St. Andrew's, Rapid City

Saturday, February 20th

Ezekiel 39:21-29; Psalm 30 & 32; Philippians 4:10-20; John 17:20-26

“...Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.” **John 17**

You loved me before the creation of the world...

Who is this that can remember a time when we did not exist? Once we have a child in our arms, who can imagine a time when we did not know and love that child? We all imagine the world as forever changed because we came into it. Time begins with our birth—or does it? In our narcissism we forget. In our joy of a new relationship we forget. In the depths of grief we forget.

You loved me before the creation of the world...

We are loved before, during, after — and forever.

Shelli Vallis: St. Andrew's, Rapid City

Sunday, February 21st

Daniel 9:3-10; Psalm 63; 1-8 (9-11) & 98; Hebrews 2:10-18; John 12:44-50

There is beauty here in the desert of Arizona and in the beautiful Black Hills. I often "lift up my eyes" to enjoy the beauty around me and make comparisons. So, this morning as I sit here in the Guild Hall (sun porch) waiting for friends to arrive, I read Psalm 63 several times. This group of friends may bring stitchery-crochet-knitting or whatever they have. They may also just come because they need to share their woes verbally; ask for prayers or maybe advice; shed a few tears; or receive a hug from a friend. Many the time as I lay in bed holding my daughter's hand, I think of the love I feel for her and the courage that I gain as we talk about our Lord and Savior. Jesus seems to come to me out of the darkness with the moon and stars. We are a close family so we have friends who come to us by blood ties but also those who come to us out of the need for love from our summer and winter churches and elsewhere. I feel when I need them for prayer or a physical task they are as close as the wings of eagle can carry them. Bishop Katherine Jefforts Schori wrote in the October issue of Episcopal Life): "I

command the practice of more patient and intimate conversation. It is the way in which we discover the friend we have in Jesus, as well as the friends around us who thus far have been dimly seen."

Eileen Garwood: St. Andrew's, Rapid City and St. Stephen's, Sierra Vista, AZ

Monday, February 22nd

Genesis 37:1-11; Psalm 41 & 52; 1 Corinthians 1:1-19; Mark 1:1-13

Often our experience of life is that we are wandering in a wilderness. As we travel our daily journey, we are determined to complete our own puzzle and come out "on top" thinking this will give our lives meaning. We think we are at the top of our game when the bills are paid, the refrigerator is full and we have kept the "wolf" away from our door for one more day. However, there remains a nagging suspicion that the other shoe hasn't yet dropped. We ponder global warming; we worry about the strength of the economy and deny our complicit greed, cruelty and treachery to our brothers and sisters.

During this season of Lent, we remain in the darkness of our desperation and yearn for that spark of Light that is the Way and the Truth and the Life. Amen and Amen.

Donna Burnap: Emmanuel, Rapid City

Tuesday, February 23rd

Genesis 37:12-24; Psalm 45; 1 Corinthians 1:20-31; Mark 1:14-28

As we come out of the wilderness with Jesus, we move to the turning point of His ministry. Matthew, Mark and Luke all write about the full events of the Transfiguration revelation. They write about seeing Jesus turn toward the days of Jerusalem and toward the coming of the glory of God through His son. Only Luke adds the phrase "to pray" to the account. It is like Luke to stress the importance of prayer to Jesus and he often speaks of Jesus as praying. Although no analogy can be hinted at between Christ's unique experience and our own, I believe that it is in period of prayer that each of us is most likely to witness – in whatever measure may be possible for us – the glory of God. To see the beauty and the glory, it's necessary to be "delivered from the disquietude of this world." This is one of the things that the retirement chapter of my life has delivered. I've taken the time to pray and reflect and study without the demands of daily church activities. I've had my health struggles in the past couple of years, but prayer and faith has sustained. In everything, I give thanks.

The Rev. Dennis Tippet: St. Andrew's, Rapid City

Wednesday, February 24th

Genesis 37:25-36; Psalm 119: 49-72; 1 Corinthians 2:1-13; Mark 1:29-45

It was easy to be a Christian today. I traveled a familiar road, to a familiar church filled with people I recognize and know. The music was soothing and the words came forward from the archives of my mind. I went through the motions of the service speaking the familiar words like I have done hundreds of times before. I didn't stop to listen to each word or ponder their meaning. Not on this particular morning. This morning I was preoccupied with other thoughts. My heart was heavy with an all too familiar sadness. I robotically recited the Lord's Prayer and politely greeted my neighbors. Like the words of a familiar poem "today my faith was carrying me to a place of comfort and solace." It was okay that today I moved methodically through the service unaware of the specifics or details. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son" Yesterday I was protected by this gift. This morning I rejoiced and gave thanks.

Autumn Gregory: Church of All Angels, Spearfish

Thursday, February 25th

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

In day to day life, we are faced with challenges and decisions to make on how to overcome them. When dealing with the man with palsy, Jesus did not address the man in a way which the people present understood. We don't know for sure that He was seeking their approval of his actions when he restated his command to the man with the palsy, but He did and the man was healed! We can also look at this situation from the prospective of the needy man. Was it really his physical affliction which disabled him? Or was it some deeply rooted sin in his life causing him his suffering? It has been medically proven in our time that guilt from past mistakes can cause a person to suffer a physical affliction and this could have been the case with the man with palsy. Whatever the cause of the man's affliction, this passage asks us to look within ourselves and decide if we take actions for our own glory or to please others, and to seek out something in our past which causes us pain and to allow ourselves to be forgiven as Christ has already forgiven us.

Roger Blair: St. Andrew's, Rapid City

Friday, February 26th

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

The Psalms tell of many experiences that humans have in the course of our existence. Some psalms are a re-telling of history. Others are laments or even angry diatribes. Often psalms are songs of praise and thanksgiving. Take time today to notice the many things you are thankful for – sing a song of praise to

God. Perhaps the world will be a better place at least for this one day if we all make a conscious effort to work on our attitude of gratitude.

“It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and every- where to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.” (BCP)

Saturday, February 27th

Genesis 41:1-13; Psalm 55; 1 Corinthians 4:1-7; Mark 2:23-3:6

The word of our Lord is love.

As we celebrate the glorious resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ, in excited anticipation, we realize his greatest gift to us is love. Christ's love is all around us as we experience it every minute of every day of our lives. Come let us celebrate the wondrous birth and resurrection of our Lord

Bill Schuler: Calvary Cathedral, Sioux Falls

Sunday, February 28th

Genesis 41:14-45; Psalm 24 & 29; Romans 6:3-14; John 5:19-24

We are never stronger than when we are most vulnerable. We are never more powerful than when we have no power. We are never closer to the One who gives us life than when that life is taken away from us.

God alone is Almighty. God alone is good. God alone has given us Him who has ensured our resurrection, our eternity, and our forever.

This is not a gift meant for the powerful alone. This is not a gift meant for only those whose knowledge surpasses all others. This is not a secret gift meant for the few. This is God giving of God's self; this is God defining what power is; this is God loving us —powerfully, passionately loving us.

Only God Almighty can lift us up at our weakest. Only God Almighty can accept us as we are. Only God Almighty can truly be with us as we wend our way on our life's journey — never knowing truly where we are, but always knowing where we're going. To understand this is to understand what it means to be a child of our loving God.

Fr. Liam Muller: St. Mary's, Mitchell

Monday, March 1st

Genesis 41:46-57; Psalm 56, 57, (58); 1 Corinthians 4:8-20(21); Mark 3:7-19a

Mark speaks today about the multitudes of disciples who were following Jesus. Out of the many, Jesus chose 12 Apostles. How would I have reacted if I had not been chosen? I am sure I would have become jealous. Jealousy could turn into accusing Jesus of being a false prophet and becoming one of the crowds yelling "Crucify Him." Thinking I could be one asking for Jesus to be crucified brings tears to my eyes. Jealousy is a very powerful sin. It is so powerful it is mentioned in the Ten Commandments and Jesus calls it by name as a sin. It can lead to false gossip, strife, and betrayal. I have seen it destroy families, church groups, and cause self-destruction. If jealousy is a conflict for you, I will share the tools I have had to use to help defeat this anguish. Very simply: 1. Ask God for forgiveness; 2. Give thanks daily for the blessings you have. Eventually I become genuinely happy for whom God had blessed and I will also be blessed.

Linda Simmons: St. Andrew's, Rapid City

Tuesday, March 2nd

Genesis 42:1-17; Psalm 61 & 62; 1 Corinthians 5:1-8; Mark 3:19b-35

Back 20 years ago, I was the editor of the Daily News-Sun in Sun City, Ariz. I was too young to live there so I lived in Peoria, the "regular" community next to the walled retirement community in northwest Phoenix so I would drive through Sun City each day. There were people out most mornings, but generally they were concentrating on what they were doing and not paying attention to much else. I was concentrating on making my way safely to work and planning my day so this mutual ignorance of each other worked out well. I started seeing an older man one winter. He caught my attention as he was bundled up in a parka and wearing a hat with ear flaps. This is unusual for Arizona, even in January. After several weeks, he started looking up when I went by and I'd nod back. Another couple of weeks later, he started to lift his cane in a wave. I waved back. And by the time spring came, when he would raise his cane in a wave, I'd be waving with exuberance out the window. I wrote about him in my column and he came to see me, telling me all about how he started walking after his wife died to make sure he left his house each day and all about his walks. After that, I'd stop my car every now and again and walk with him a ways. It's wonderful what a little wave can bring you.

Jan Tippett: St. Andrew's, Rapid City

Wednesday, March 3rd

Genesis 42:18-28; Psalm 72; 1 Corinthians 5:9-6:8; Mark 4:1-20

Jesus taught the people by telling parables that were short stories using familiar scenes to explain spiritual truths. Jesus explained that people are like seeds along the path where some seeds have roots

and produce a good crop and others aren't planted deep enough and soon wither away. We hear with our ears but there is a deeper kind of listening with the mind and heart that is necessary to understand what Jesus really wants us to know. Some do not understand God's word because we are not ready to hear and digest what He has in store for us. God is patient with us and will open our hearts and minds if we will let Him. Our daily routines can become overcrowded and packed with materialistic pursuits. Verse 19 says: "but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful." This was true for the disciples as it is for us today. As we continue on our journeys we need to ask ourselves "how can I stay free so I can hear God when he speaks?" Lord, help me to make time for you and listen for your word and your guidance in my life. Help me to allow your word and your spirit to change my life. Amen

Vicki Sweet: Emmanuel, Rapid City

Thursday, March 4th

Genesis 42:29-38; Psalm (70), 71; 1 Corinthians 6:12-30; Mark 4:21-34

Jacob was so desperate that he sent his sons into Egypt to buy grain. When they got there they found a rock and a hard place. A place where they could get what they needed, grain -- and a place where they had to risk all they loved in life in order to get it. It was a test of faith. When Joseph sent them home to get Benjamin, they found their money in the grain sacks. They were terror stricken, sure they would be accused of theft and Simeon would be killed. They were at the edge of despair.

But God (have you ever noticed in the Bible that there is always a "but God" in there somewhere?) wanted the sons of Jacob to trust him, to have faith.

Despair and faith are exact opposites. God gives us a choice each and every day. He wants us to choose to trust Him or not. We can choose His way or our own way; hope (faith) or despair.

Bob Ketchum: Custer, SD

Friday, March 5th

Genesis 43:1-15; Psalm 69: 1-23(24-30)31-38; 1 Corinthians; 7:1-9 Mark 4:35-41

Response to Mark 4: 35-41:

This piece of scripture says two things to me: That Jesus the Christ shows his Lordship over all things and through all things, even my life. Verse 39 says "And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" I apply this to Jesus of my life, as he becomes my stress-releaser and comforter when I go through rough times and "turbulent waters" of my life. Through the quiet moments, I can tap into what he says to me through my heart.

In verse 40 Jesus says, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" I have asked this of myself when in doubt of some of life's difficulties. Jesus reminds me that doubt does hinder progress, and with faith and belief in him, I can shatter walls and barriers in my life through college and beyond with him at my side.

When I pray to God, I create a bond and relationship with Jesus that will sustain me each day and fuels my ambition to learn of his wisdom as my Lord and Counselor.

Wade W. Brings: Religious Studies Major,
Mount Marty College, Yankton, SD

Saturday, March 6th

Genesis 43:16-34; Psalm 75 & 76; 1 Corinthians 7:10-24; Mark 5:1-20

Years ago, I was in training to become a nurse anesthetist. My entire professional life had been spent preparing for this time. But a year into the program it was apparent to my instructors and to me that I was not suited for this career, so I withdrew. Devastated, I moved away and began work elsewhere. And during the next year, I not only found the Episcopal Church but also the man I married. God took my broken dream and turned it into a life beyond my wildest imagination. God did the same for Joseph. Sold into slavery, thrown into jail where he stayed for years, the prophetic dreams God gave Joseph in prison became his ticket to the position of Pharaoh's right hand man. Not only was he able to save his people the Hebrews, but also he was restored to his beloved brother Benjamin and to the rest of his family. If he had not been sold into slavery, would the world have been wiped out by famine? Something horrible turned into something wonderful which we continue to read about today. Wait upon God when bad times come. You never know what God's plan may be for you.

Laura Lewandowski: St. Andrew's, Rapid City

Sunday, March 7th

Genesis 44:1-17; Psalm 93 & 96; Romans 8:1-10; John 5:25-29

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace...But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. (Romans 8: 6-9.) To set the mind on the Spirit is not easy. It takes discipline and concentration, meditation and prayer. Seeking God's will for our lives is a spiritual activity that sometimes takes work! And yet we can be assured that if we reach out to God, God will reach out to us. Part of the difficulty and the challenge is in the fact that we live as physical beings in a physical world. We cannot escape the fact that our greatest awareness is in "the flesh." Our bodies take a certain amount of maintenance —food, shelter, clothing —it's easy to be carried away! And the things of the Spirit are those we cannot necessarily see or touch or feel —love, joy, peace, kindness, faith, self-control. "My soul is restless until it finds its rest in Thee." A river

flows on, until it loses itself in the sea. Our spirits long for rest in the Spirit of God. We yearn to realize a peace, a rest, a satisfaction that we have never found in the world or its pursuits. [from Twenty-Four Hours A Day, Nov. 25]

Diana Mathisrud: St. John's, Deadwood

Monday, March 8th

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

One of the primary themes running through today's scripture readings is trust. How is trust possible? When we have been betrayed time and time again, or when we know the depth of our own failure to remain trustworthy, how can we surrender our trust, our very lives, to God? Joseph's brothers knew they had broken their father's heart, his trust, in a terrible way. Now they are forced to decide whether to trust another or to let their families starve. The psalmist cries out in pain and misfortune "Restore us, O God of hosts! Let your face shine upon us, that we might be saved!" Paul exhorts us to live as though the time is very short, because the present form of our world is passing away. The woman who is bleeding has no one who cares for her. Her life is miserable and she is completely degraded. Should she reach out in trust to this Jesus? Jairus' daughter is dying. In his desperation, he calls upon Jesus. Does Jesus have the power to save? Desperation, dwindling resources, dramatic and frightening changes in our world, personal failures to answer God's call were all part of the fabric of human existence in Biblical times. We continue to face our own versions of the same problems today. What will our response be? Will we shrink into darkness and fear? Or will we follow the examples of people in today's scriptures, reaching out to touch his garment, trusting in God's power to save, surrendering to love, believing that even as the old world passes away, a new beginning is in store?

Jane Hill: Church of All Angels. Spearfish

Tuesday, March 9th

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

My husband and I had taken our 6 year old son to see a local production of Andrew Lloyd Weber's "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat." He enjoyed it and seemed to be following the basic story, jealousy leads to poor choices, goodness prevails & wrongs are forgiven, however I was not sure he understood what God had to do with it. The next day I was given the readings for reflection, and I was reminded of the same thought.

We praise God in good times and we tell our children of his glorious deeds but when challenged by life we wonder where God went. It is easy to look backwards and think we KNOW what God is up too. However, as with Joseph, is it enough for God to just BE with us? I asked Kenny and he said YES.

Tally Salisbury: St. Matthew's, Rapid City

Wednesday, March 10th

Genesis 45:16-28; Psalm 119:97-120; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Mark 6:13-29

The Old Testament and the Gospel reveal parables involving relationships. Conflict is expected in any relationship. The OT shares a story of forgiveness and a reuniting of brothers, brothers who no doubt regretted what they had done to Joseph many years ago. It reminded me of my relationship with my brother. He was the typical younger brother who got into all my things. I remember being mean and nasty to him. Years later I apologized and he forgave me.

The Gospel is pretty serious with resentment and pride causing the beheading of John the Baptist. The emotions going on in the story do reflect many things we experience in relationships. Herod was having a good time at this birthday party and promised his stepdaughter whatever she desired – up to half of his kingdom. The request of John's head wasn't what he was expecting. How many times do we make a vow that abandons our principles? Regrets – I have had my share! These lessons were a good look in the mirror to see how my actions and faith walk could affect others. Let us pray that our decisions and actions don't cause someone to lose their head!

The Rev. Karen Anderson: St. Francis Episcopal Church
Scottsbluff, NE & Christ Church, Lead

Thursday, March 11th

Genesis 46:1-7, 28 -34; Psalm (83) or 42, 43; 1 Corinthians 9:1-15; Mark 6:30-46

Listen for a word or phrase in today's readings that stands out for you.

Read the passage again, perhaps using a different translation.

What is God saying to you?

What is God calling you to do?

Adapted from Gospel-based Discipleship

Friday, March 12th

Genesis 47:1-26; Psalm 88; 1 Corinthians 9:16-27; Mark 6:47-56

Today's readings resonate with "servanthood" or the giving up of oneself. In the Old Testament reading from Genesis where Jonathan's people became servants of the Pharaoh, we read about people willing give up their very being for a cause. In Corinthians, Paul stated he made himself a slave to others in order to

spread the Gospel of Christ in a way that would be acceptable to whoever he was preaching. In Mark, we learn how Jesus, who must have been exhausted after teaching a preaching to thousands, saw His friends, the disciples, on the stormy seas and gave up the quiet time and solitude He had achieved to walk across the water to the boat and calm the seas. And, after all this, Jesus found the crowds assembled again and the people needing Him when the boat came to shore. I wonder - could I be this kind of servant? Could I give up myself for what I feel God is calling me to do? As I ponder these questions, I realize, with God's help and guidance, I can – I must.

Mary Olson: Emmanuel, Rapid City

Saturday, March 13th

Genesis 47:27-48:7; Psalm 87 & 90; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Mark 7:1-23

As I read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 the passage that caught my heart and mind is in verse 13: "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

I'm blessed to have a loving, supportive and prayerful family. My two sons, Larry and Calvin, died as the result of a car accident on Easter Sunday, April 3, 1994. I prayed daily for the souls of my sons and for protection for my three grandchildren. I prayed for strength. However, I was "mad" at God for taking my sons. I quit going to church because I blamed God for my loss. As time went on I discovered true hope is believing God is good no matter what He decides to do. God gives gentle nudges to get our attention and I finally acknowledged Him in my life. The hardest thing I had to do was to put my life in his hands. Every decision God makes for my life is a wise decision because God is wisdom. It took the death of my children, the praying, listening, discerning and meditation for me to actually grasp and understand that God gave his only son to save us. He knows and understands what parents go through when their child dies. God knows the plans He has for me and He asks me to trust in Him with all my heart to fulfill those plans. I thank God for the life I have and the path I'm on to be a servant and spread the good Word.

Pat White Horse-Carda: Holy Spirit/Woniya Wakan, Wagner

Sunday, March 14th (Daylight savings time began at 2 a.m. Did you spring forward?)

Genesis 48:8-22; Psalm 66 & 67; Romans 8:11-25; John 6:27-40

"But Israel reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim's head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left hand on Manasseh's head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn....When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim's head he was displeased."

"No! Wait! Stop! That's not the way it's supposed to be!" Oh, how many times I've shouted that in hopes things will turn themselves around and go the "right" way. However, more often than not, my displeasure doesn't seem to change the progression of life's events. Then later, often much later, hindsight focuses in on the minor mishaps and major catastrophes of my past, and rather than shouting out orders, I find myself humbly accepting that I don't always get to be in charge. When I look back on any part of my past where I've shouted, "That's not the way it's suppose to be!" hindsight's 20/20 vision clearly reveals God's presence in the midst of the wrongdoing. Sometimes I learn a lesson that strengthens my character. Other times I am presented with an opportunity to minister to the

person who was wronged. At still other times I am forced to humble myself and accept the help of others. Whatever the outcome, it is always revealed that although God's hand isn't in the catastrophe, his hand is always in the recovery. Lord, as I struggle with minor mishaps and major calamities, help me to reach out to you. Remind me to look at life through new eyes so that I may clearly witness your goodness and mercy in everything I see.

Dawn Hurney: Trinity, Pierre

Monday, March 15th

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

God's love is constant. We are called into faithful love for God and each other. God's love, however, is not in response to our love for God. God's love is freely given to everyone. Our Baptismal Covenant says we are to "seek and serve Christ in all persons." We should then look out for the interest of others – not just ourselves. Are there times we are like the deaf and mute man in Mark's gospel – needing our own lips and ears opened? Are we silent when we should speak out? Are we deaf to the cries of the world? Are we blind without the vision of Jesus in our lives? Whatever we do, do all to the glory of God. Be imitators of Christ.

Black Hills Chapter Daughters of the King

Tuesday, March 16th

Genesis 49:29-50:14; Psalm 97, 99, (100); 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; Mark 8:1-10

Eucharist, communion, is the normal church service for most of us Episcopalians these days. But do we really understand the magnitude of what it is we are doing when we receive communion? In this lesson, Paul gives us the words of institution we use in our Book of Common Prayer, "this is my body," "this is the cup of my blood," "do this in remembrance of me." This is a truly awesome mystery that should leave us feeling unbelievably blessed and humbled at the same time. The love and compassion Jesus poured out on the 4,000 hungry followers he pours out on all of us at the moment we receive the bread and wine of his body and blood. This is a spiritual meal, a love feast. When we come to receive this meal, this feast, come with hearts filled with holy awe. This is God's gift to us, our salvation. How can we not share that love and compassion with all those around us in Jesus' name?

Mark and Mary Marion: St. Luke's, Aberdeen

Wednesday, March 17th

Genesis 50:15-26; Psalm 101, 109:1-4(5-19)20-30; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Mark 8:11-26

“Do you have eyes and fail to see? Do you have ears and fail to hear?”

“Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently, and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.”

Have we allowed ourselves to become blind and deaf to the Incarnate Christ that moves and breathes in others?

How would today be different if we intentionally look for the face of God in everyone we meet?

Anonymous

Thursday, March 18th

Exodus 1:6-22; Psalm 69:1-23(24-30); 31-38; 1 Corinthians 12:12-26; Mark 8:27-9:1

"The Body is one, but yet has many members, but all are One Body!" But when one member seems to get the biggest portion of attention, the rest of the body goes into overdrive. I recently experienced just this. My feet were suffering from infection and seemed to get the biggest portion of attention for a long time. I spent 13 days in the hospital, then nearly a month of home confinement, and thankfully the feet have made great progress. The remainder of the body seemed to group together, maintaining the functions and chores, allowing the feet to be cared for and heal, so that once more, at the Lord's direction and the skill of the nurses and family care, the body becomes one and equal again! The same holds true for the Body of Christ that is the church. When one member suffers, the rest of the Body is called to care for that member. It is only when all members are healed that the Body becomes one and equal. This is what we are called to in the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Bill Garwood: St. Andrew's, Rapid City & St. Stephen's, Sierra Vista, AZ

Friday, March 19th

Exodus 2:1-22; Psalm 102; 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:3; Mark 9:2-13

In the middle of this Psalm the words "Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that people yet unborn may praise the LORD" piques my interest. During my lifetime, research changed from books at a library to surfing the net; my landline no longer meets my immediate needs for communication; and my childhood chalkboard in the classroom has turned into a computer screen for higher learning. But through all the changes in technology and the different ways I was brought up than that of my grandparents the one true thing that has stood the test of time is the "LORD." The LORD has not turned into a robot. The Bible has not become a pop-up on the computer screen (yet). And my love for God stands true. My heart is warmed to know that God's love has not changed and that those who are unborn to this world will know and feel God's love as I do, as my grandparents did and their grandparents did. Is this proof that not "all good things come to an end?"

Kirstin Sanford: Grace Episcopal Church, Madison

Saturday, March 20th

Exodus 2:23-3:15; Psalm 107:33-43, 108: 1-6(7-13); 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Mark 9:14-29

Depending on what is happening in your world at the time you read these words of St. Paul, they may be interpreted in a number of different ways. As I read them today, they spoke to me about my relationship with other people. I have been fortunate to receive unconditional love here on earth at those times when my parents and other family members continued to love me even when I had disappointed them by doing something they did not agree with or by not doing something they wanted me to do. I am now familiar with the giving side of this type of love in experiences with my children and grandchildren. A family member once told me, "At times I may not agree with you; at times I may not like what you have done; sometimes I may not even feel I like you because of these things; but no matter what, I will always love you!" To me, this summarizes a never-ending love able to bear and endure all things. I recently read an article that included the statement: "Love should govern our relationships with other Christians especially those with whom we strongly disagree." I wonder what Jesus thinks when we fail to carry out his direction of loving our neighbors as ourselves. I do not believe God commands us to agree with everything someone else does, or agree with everything he/she may believe in, much less emulate them; however, I do believe He asks us to respect our differences and be tolerant of them, to forgive each other for our human failings, and to love each other.

Karen and Don Eagle: Trinity Episcopal Church, Mission

Sunday, March 21st

Exodus 3:16-4:12; Psalm 118; Romans 12:1-21; John 8:46-59

In the psalm we are told that people will let us down and that the Lord will always be on our side. Every time we are knocked down the Lord is always there picking us right back up. This psalm is also a message of Thanksgiving to the Lord and a message of hope that he will be ever present in our lives. Again in Exodus we hear the message that the Lord will be with us as we face the doubters and he will put the words in our mouths to speak. He knows we are going to be put to our everyday struggles but yet again reminds us that we are not alone in those struggles. Now here for some is the tough part: In Romans we are all reminded that all of these things will come to us but it is not for free. Jesus paid the price for our sins and we all have our obligations and responsibilities as Christians to also do as we have been taught and strive to better our world, our communities and ourselves through His teachings of charity.

Tara Jean Engle: Grace Church, Huron

Monday, March 22nd

Exodus 4:10-20(21-26)27-31; Psalm 31; 1 Corinthians 14; 1-19; Mark 9:30-41

Exodus 4:10-13 spoke deeply to me. How often I plead to the Lord as Moses did to please send someone else. Why me? Can't someone else feed the hungry person or family, or provide a coat, a cap and gloves to a neighbor next door or under the bridge or at school or the mission. Why me? And it's tough to speak up about violence, racism, or needless spending when your voice cracks and you shake because you are so scared and nervous – why me? Lord, it's so hard to leave my cozy little spot or group and speak to the stranger or offer the ride or slip the extra bill to the needy or fill the gas tank. It's hard Lord – why me? Then the gentle nudge and voice – why not me? It's tough! On my bathroom mirror is posted part of Nelson Mandela's 1994 inaugural speech. It encourages me to think and act as our Lord instructed. Part of that quote says: "We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it's in every one of us." After those many, many years Mr. Mandela spent in prison, I wonder why he didn't sit back and say "Please Lord, send someone else." I'm thankful he did not.

Lois Howe: St. Andrew's, Rapid City

Tuesday, March 23rd

Exodus 5:1-6:1; Psalm (120), 121, 122, 123; 1 Corinthians 14:20-33, 39-40; Mark 9:42-50

Peace...peace for our hearts, peace for our minds, peace for our souls. How do we get it? How do we keep it? We look everywhere for it. Our lives seem to get busier and busier. We seem to attain more and more responsibilities. Time rushes through our hands like a waterfall over a cliff. All about us is clamor and noise. Even in church we rush from this job to that job trying to get everything done in a proper fashion and on time. By the time we are finished we are more tired than when we started and need to go home and take a nap.

Is this what God intended? Does God want us stretched so thin that we are no good to anyone? In Corinthians it asks "What happens if the salt loses its saltiness?" Can you make it salty again? That's what happens when we are overworked and over tired. No saltiness remains.

The Rev. Sandy Williams: St. James's, Belle Fourche

Wednesday, March 24th

Exodus 7:8-24; Psalm 119:145-176; 2 Corinthians 2:14-3:6; Mark 10:1-16

As indicated by Mark, marriage is sacred in the eyes of God. Along with Baptism and Communion, it is one of the most holy and sacred of the seven sacraments. We who are married experience it daily on an operational basis. Baptism and Communion are more conceptual and experienced weekly. The clergy, of course, deal more directly with all the sacraments. The psalmist laments or cries out for help. He petitions the Lord to hear him and send aid. He shows trust in the Lord and his commandments and statutes. He shows trust in the Lord and his righteous judgments. The psalmist recognizes the wisdom of the Lord by trusting his precepts and testimonies. The psalmist demonstrates strong faith in all the

ways of the Lord. The psalmist demonstrates his faith by trusting in the word of the Lord. We need to show our faith by trusting in the Lord and asking for help when in need. We need to show all of these elements of the psalmists in our own faith: lament, petition, wisdom, and praise. We are missionaries. We are to spread the word of the Lord. Praise be to God! We show our love of God through our faith and love of Jesus, our intermediary.

Jane and Mike Nemecek: St. John's, Deadwood

Thursday, March 25th

Exodus 7:25-8:19; Psalm 131, 132, (133); 2 Corinthians 3:7-18; Mark 10:17-31

In the 10th chapter of the Gospel of Mark a rich young man asks Jesus: "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus told him that he must give away anything and everything in his life that he had put before God and then to follow Him. How are our lives like that of the young man in Mark's Gospel? When we are challenged by Jesus to rid ourselves of our excess baggage, whether they're our familiar patterns of behavior, the comfortable rut that we would call our niche or the latest "thing" that we simply couldn't live without, what is our answer? Do we heave a mighty sigh, shrug our shoulders and say..."What you ask of me God, is impossible!" Or with God's help can our answer be a different one that is more pleasing to God and ultimately to ourselves? Can we say "Yes Lord, I will follow you!" and then have the faith and the guts to do just that and let go of and leave behind whatever it is that holds us back from fully embracing the life God holds in promise for us? We can indeed my friends but only because God is with us.

The Rev. Mercy Hobbs: St. Paul's Vermillion & Santee Mission

Friday, March 26th

Exodus 9:13-35; Psalm 22; 2 Corinthians 4:1-12; Mark 10:32-45

When you read Exodus 9: 13 –35, you might get an impression of a vindictive God. I went back a couple chapters to find that Moses and Aaron traveled to Egypt to meet with the King. They tried to persuade the King to let God's people go. He refused. In fact, every traumatic, horrible event that God inflicted hardened the King's heart even more. Sometimes that happens to us. We suffer a loss of any kind and we get angry and blame God. We often blame God for what happens to us even though much of what we experience is our own fault. He is not a vindictive God. He catches us when we fall and all he asks of us is to be faithful, not to pass judgment, not to despise others, and to follow God's example. (Corinthians 4: 1–12.) We don't have to be fearful of not being perfect because Jesus died as ransom for our sins – imperfections and all!

Jesus knew what was going to happen to him as they approached Jerusalem, (Mark 10: 32–45.) and he repeated it three times to his disciples so he was sure they understood. I often wonder if he knew what was ahead of him – the splendor and the riches of a life with God! He had to suffer first, (Psalm 22) just like we all do. But God was there to catch him when he gave up his last breath even though his life was not easy and Jesus wasn't perfect.

Jan Sanford, Grace Episcopal Church, Madison

Saturday, March 27th

Exodus 10:21-11:8; Psalm 137:1-6(7-9), 144; 2 Corinthians 4:13-18; Mark 10: 46-52

Today's reading in Corinthians directs us "so we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." In these waning days of winter it is kind of nice to have something to "work on" - a homework assignment, as it was - like this direction from Corinthians. This reading reminds me that Easter celebrates the unseen gift that Jesus gave us - the gift of eternal life.

In my relationship with Jesus, I remember another great gift that he gave the world. (Matthew 22:37-39) Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." This commandment to Love is very meaningful to me.

Directions like these, along with Jesus' commandments, life, death and resurrection help guide our family in our daily prayers - the ones we say out loud or the ones we say to ourselves and the prayers we show through our behaviors.

David and Sara Brave Heart; St. Matthew's, Rapid City

Palm Sunday, March 28th

Zechariah 9:9-12; Psalm 24 & 29; 1 Timothy 6:12-16; Luke 19:41-48

Sometimes the barricades around us are built by our own selfishness, our subtle fears and prejudices. These barricades or enemies often come from within. They chip away at the temple of God and separate us from God and from one another. We allow them to blind us to the vision God has for us. God sings to each of us.

We need to open our hearts to God's voice. God's voice is heard in the beauty of the earth, the wind and the rain, and in the kind acts of others. God's voice is also heard in those things that make us uncomfortable: suffering, poverty, violence, injustice and oppression. God's voice offers us amnesty, sets us free, and brings us peace. Let God's voice mold us as we live our lives. Let us choose the way of peace and become prisoners of hope in Jesus Christ.

Black Hills Chapter Daughters of the King

Monday, March 29th

Lamentations 1:1-2, 6 -12; Psalm 51:1-18(19-20); 2 Corinthians 1:1-7; Mark 11:12-25

Take some time for yourself today. Perhaps you might want to go for a walk or read a book. Give yourself the gift of silence for a small portion of your day. And as you do, listen for the voice of God in the stillness.

Deacon Bitsey Ciesel: Sisseton Mission

Tuesday, March 30th

Lamentations 1:17-22; Psalm 6 & 12; 2 Corinthians 1:8-22; Mark 11:27-33

I found Mark 11: 27-33 thought provoking. The passage deals with Jesus' authority being questioned. Today, when our authority is in question, as Jesus' was, it can appear confrontational, even challenging. In Mark's gospel, Jesus cleans up the temple, described by him as a den of robbers, by driving out the merchants and money changers, (Mark 11:15-17). His actions must have been quite alarming. When the chief priests and scribes heard this, they don't appear happy, and confront him; "By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?" (Mark 11:28). Jesus does not appear to be outraged by the question and instead of leashing out or refusing to answer, he asks a simple question in its place and the situation appears diffused. How do you act when your authority is being questioned? Do you strike out and become confrontational, even challenging...or do think about why your authority is in question? Maybe taking things down a notch can bring a better response.

Thom Helmer: St. Andrew's, Rapid City

Wednesday, March 31st

Lamentations 2:1-9, 14-17; Psalm 55; 2 Corinthians 1:23-2:11; Mark 12:1-11

"My soul cries out with a joyful shout that the God of my heart is great. And my spirit sings of the wondrous things that you bring to the one who waits. You fixed your sight on the servant's plight, and my weakness you did not spurn so from east to west shall my name be blest. Could the world be about to turn? Though I am small, my god, my all, you work great things in me. And your mercy will last from the depths of the past to the end of the age to be. Your very name put the proud to shame, and those who would for you yearn, You will show your might, Put the strong to flight, for the world is about to turn. From the halls of power to the fortress tower, not a stone will be left on stone. Let the king beware for your justice tears every tyrant from his throne. The hungry shall weep no more, for the food they can never earn; these tables spread, ev'ry mouth be fed, for the world is about to turn. Though the nations rage from age to age, we remember who holds us fast: God's mercy must deliver us from the conqueror's crushing grasp. This saving word that our forbears heard is the promise that holds us bound, "til the spear and rod be crushed by God, who is turning the world around.

Canticle of the Turning: Lyrics by Rory Cooney

Thursday, April 1st

Lamentations 2:10-18; Psalm 102; 1 Corinthians 10:14-17 & 1 Corinthians 11:27-32; Mark 14:12-25

We know how this Gospel story ends: Judas betrays Jesus and certainly Judas must have agreed that "it would have been better for that one not to have been born" as Judas' torment would push him to suicide. There is a non-canonical book (not included in the Bible we read today) known as the "Gospel of Judas" that gives a different perspective. The 4th century book is written as a conversation between Judas and Jesus Christ in which Judas is portrayed not as a betrayer, but rather as an obedient servant who was just following Jesus' orders, so that God's plan of salvation would be carried out. As humans, we like to have things in black and white. We don't like ambiguity and grey areas. We want to have clear labels of "Good" and "Evil" stamped on everything. Judas confuses us. Christ ended our black and white existence with his death and his resurrection. His grace, his unconditional love and his refusal to classify others within the limits of black and white, have enabled blessings to spring forth from the organic fertilizer of our sins. This way of thinking and living may not be easy to understand, but it is beautiful and glorious. Jesus comes to us where we are. He does not wait for us to perfect our lives. Jesus knows our pain and he wants to help us to move beyond the pain of black and white, and into the colorful and wonderful life of joy and blessings!

The Rev. Paul Sneve, St. Matthew's, Rapid City

Friday, April 2nd

Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-33; Psalm 22; 1 Peter 1:10-20; John 13:36-38

Do I Know You?

Jesus tells Peter, not once but three times, that he will deny that he knows Jesus. There are so many ways we can think of this. We can know someone on the level of acquaintance, "Oh, sure, he's that Jesus guy, I've heard of him." We can know something about someone, "Yeah, Jesus Christ, Son of God," and we can know someone in the depths of intimacy, "Jesus, my Lord and friend - I would lay down my life for him and he for me." Later, in chapter 18 of John, Peter does deny that he knows Jesus, and it seems that the questions asked relate to each of these levels of knowing. Jesus also told Peter that where he is going, Peter cannot follow at this point. Perhaps this is because there is more Peter needs to know about Jesus. He has not fully explored the depth of pain and sense of abandonment expressed in Psalm 22 and the passage from Lamentations. This day will bring that knowledge. Like Christ, Peter may cry out, "Why have you forsaken me?" And yet, in that forsakenness, what can one do but turn to God? Over and over in scripture we see this - despite the odds and even the physical evidence in front of my eyes, I will hope in the Lord. Over and over the people of God proclaim, "You have answered me! I do trust in you." And that is the way Christ wants us to know him - in the depths of our pain and forsakenness, even in the areas of our lives where we deny he has any power - Jesus is faithful, forgiving, and loving. He has been in those depths himself and is with us in our depths and heights. This is what he does, in his grace and faithfulness. Let us receive this gift by setting all our faith and hope on God. Let us give our lives to him. And even when we don't, like Peter we are forgiven, and deeply loved.

Holly Huisken, Calvary Cathedral, Sioux Falls

Saturday, April 3rd

Lamentations 3:37-58; Psalm 88; Hebrews 4:1-16

Today is Holy Saturday. It is a day of remembering and waiting in our liturgical year. We are remembering everything that our God has done for us. He loved us so much that he sent his Son to live among us and be tested in the same ways we are tested. We wait – we wait because his Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, was crucified on the cross for the sins of us all. We do not wait alone. We have a high priest who sympathized with our weaknesses and in spite of our frail nature, loves us more than we can ever imagine. God loves us and he waits for us! We wait with hope. Hope is something far more than the meaning in the dictionary implies. It is more than something hoped for – as a nice day or a promotion at work. Hope is confidence grounded in God. It is what is deep in our souls and we can reach in and pull it out and hold on to it in times of waiting or uncertainties in our lives. Emily Dickinson wrote: “Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul, and sings the tune – without the words, and never stops at all” That is the hope we wait with today. It is the hope that never stops. Today may we have the hope that only God gives; the real hope which will not abandon us in our time of need.

The Rev. Evelyn Weaver and Deacon Mike Weaver:
St. James, Belle Fourche

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