

St John's Episcopal Church

Ross, CA



Daily Meditations for Lent

2017

Using this book

The season of Lent, the forty days before Easter, commemorates the 40 days Jesus spent praying in the desert before his public ministry. At Lent, we also remember the 40 years that the people of Israel spent wandering in the desert.

Lent traditionally been the season in which Christians focus on the call to ongoing repentance and change. Lent is also a call to humility as we remember our mortality and our need for God.

Lent is not intended to make us feel terrible about ourselves. During Lent we focus on prayer, self-examination, and repentance not in order to feel guilty, but in order to clear space for God to work in our lives.

Some find that giving something up – a favorite food, a bad habit – helps to open that space for God and serves as a constant reminder of God's presence. Others find it more helpful to take on something new – ten minutes of prayer, a daily walk, or some other spiritual practice.

We offer this booklet to be a part of your spiritual practice this Lent. In this booklet, 40 members of St. John's have written a meditation or reflection on one of the Gospel passages assigned for the weekdays of Lent.

We are thankful to all who have contributed and we pray that this resource helps you to create space for God to work in your heart this Lent.

March 1 (Ash Wednesday)

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Jesus said, “Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 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.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Chris Rankin-Williams

What an odd Gospel for a day when many of us have our foreheads marked with an ash cross. This reading and the Ash Wednesday liturgy seem at odds. Some years I wash my face right after the Ash Wednesday service, as the Gospel seems to encourage, and other years I leave the cross on my forehead. But this concern over whether to keep the ash cross on my forehead is a distraction that misses the point of the Gospel passage. I've been consumed with "doing it right" in the sight of others. Jesus is telling us that our fasting and Lenten discipline is done for the sake of our relationship with God alone. In Lent, energy that might otherwise be directed elsewhere is focused on God. That is what fosters spiritual growth.

The cross of ashes on this day is a physical sign of the words with which it is imposed: "remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return." In the end, all that remains is God. A cross on our foreheads is a temporal concern. To live for God is the treasure of heaven.

March 2 (Thursday after Ash Wednesday)

Luke 9:18-25

Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" They answered, "John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "The Messiah of God." He sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone, saying, "The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." Then he said to them all, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?"

Susan Ivancic

After an exhausting day of preaching to the crowds, Jesus finds himself alone with his disciples. He wants their feedback about the response of the crowd as to who they think he is. Some think that he is John, the Baptist or Elijah or one of the ancient prophets. But now Jesus wants their own opinion of him and Peter adamantly responds, “The Messiah of God.”

Jesus advises them to keep this information under wraps and tell no one. He refers to himself mysteriously as the “Son of Man”, explaining how he must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the powers that be, the scribes, elders and chief priests, leading to his death and, on the third day, his resurrection.

Christ explains that life as a Christian is not going to be a bed of roses. He introduces “The Way” to save themselves by becoming followers of him and losing themselves in his teachings and making these teachings a way of life. Much will be demanded of us in this life, but if we wish to become followers of Christ, oftentimes we must go outside of our comfort zones to meet and serve others.

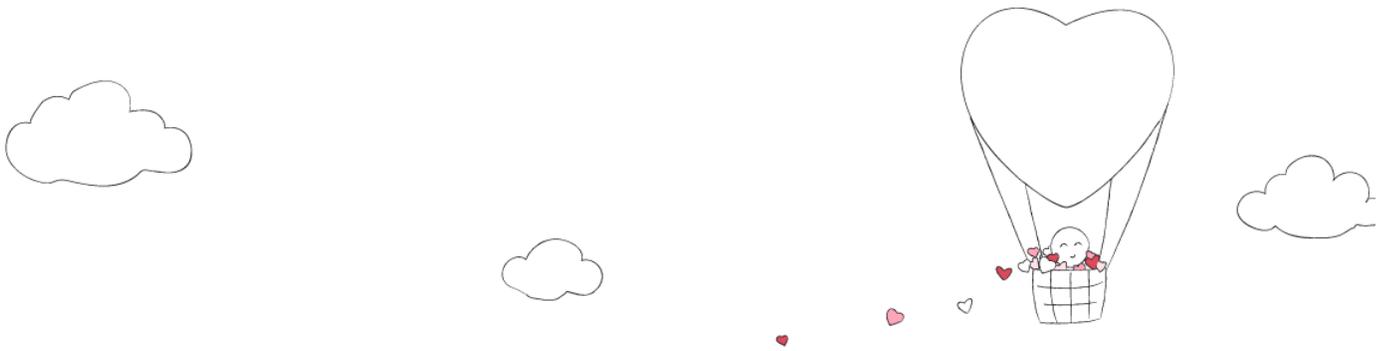
Losing ourselves in caring for and teaching others means that we will find an ever more meaningful existence as Christians in a wholesome and fulfilling life.

March 3 (Friday after Ash Wednesday)

Matthew 9:10-17

And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” But when he heard this, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.”

Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak, for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”



The bridegroom has arrived...

Revel within God's goodness like a bride rejoices in her wedding day...

Savor these blessings by placing them in a finely crafted & treasure container...

for Our Lord's gifts are too precious to be stored in a potter's rejects...

Let God perfect your soul by tailoring for you a garment that will last for eternity...

March 4 (Saturday after Ash Wednesday)

Luke 5:27-32

After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up, left everything, and followed him. Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others sitting at the table with them. The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Melissa Congdon

In this passage Jesus does not hesitate to accept the dinner invitation of a tax collector, a man who is hated and scorned because of his profession, because Jesus loves ALL of God's children. He pays special attention to those who are sinners —those lost and broken-- because they have the greatest need for the hope and redemption of God's love. Perhaps Jesus is encouraging all of us to step out of our comfort zones and be more open and charitable to every person in order for the message of radical love to spread throughout the world.

Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus said, “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Peter English

Matthew, in writing of our Lord's eventual return to join our lives, said (I paraphrase): Inasmuch as you have cared for those of our people most disadvantaged, you have cared for me. Conversely, inasmuch as you ignore those unfortunate in our midst, offering no personal sacrifice, you ignore me!

The message is crystal clear. Even in 21st century Marin, abundant wealth masks our year-round homeless camps, our State prison population, and two substantial near-poverty communities. Do very many of us invest time and treasure to help the afflicted? Do many of us participate in any of the many church and civic programs to bring meals, shelter, clothing, and conversation to those in need of our help? Upon encountering needy persons on our streets, do we acknowledge their presence, offer an encouraging word, or do we hurry on? In other words do we let others carry the load, or do we lend a shoulder and a voice?

As we contemplate Lent, leading to a horrific murder nearly 2000 years ago, then the wonderful mysteries of new life, we should take Jesus' warnings seriously, and act when the many opportunities present themselves.

I am uncomfortable writing these words because I can and should do more, not to curry favor, but to acknowledge my own good fortune to even be alive, and to be part of a wonderful family.

March 7

Tuesday 1st Lent

Matthew 6:7-15

Jesus said, “When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

“Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Jan Heglund

Prayer can be a tricky thing. There are “arrow prayers” – when someone asks you to pray for them or a friend and you say that name out loud. That prayer goes right to God. There are releasing prayers: “Dear Lord, please release me from the need to _____.” There are prayers we scream to God when we are mad at Him. When someone says to me that they are so mad at God they cannot pray, I simply answer “Then I will pray for you until you can pray again.” The writer Ann Lamott says that her prayer in the morning is “Help me, help me.” In the evening, it is “Oh, well!”

When elders are at the end of their lives and their memory is impaired, I have found that if I begin with the words of the Lord’s Prayer or start to sing an old hymn, they know every single word.

Spontaneous prayers are wonderful. They come from the heart and speak to where we are at the moment. However, the Lord’s Prayer is centering, affirming, re-assuring and like a solid ship in the storm. It is “home” for us and it is who we are as Christians.

It has been said that when our knees are shaking, the best remedy is to kneel on them. When I was serving as clergy in Newfoundland, I was so moved to see dear Effie, the widow with whom I was living, kneel every night to say The Lord’s Prayer and others. There is a depth of feeling for me when I kneel to pray.

At the end of the day, I say the Lord’s Prayer, Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep....and prayers for others. I can’t imagine a day without prayer. I also give thanks we are ABLE to pray without worry that we will be persecuted.

To close with a smile..... Lead me not into temptation – I seem to be able to find it myself!

March 8

Wednesday 1st Lent

Luke 11:29-32

When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, “This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation. The queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here! The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here!”

Folks, there isn't going to be a sign for us to follow. No burning bush is in our futures. Yet the answers to our questions are right in front of us as delivered by the Son of Man. The people repented on hearing the words of Jonah, and we should repent because words greater than those spoken by Solomon or Jonah have been spoken to us by Jesus. However we have to hear those words with our own ears and recognize their truth in our own hearts and minds. The buck stops with us.

March 9 Thursday 1st Lent

Matthew 7:7-12

Jesus said, “Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.”



Encaustic Collage by Jane Heath

Jane Heath

I am the first to admit that it can be a challenge to find time to pray. I'm pretty consistent when it comes to quick prayers, but the reflective, soul searching, deep conversations with God can all too easily get pushed out of my day.

In part, this is because, while I find 'thank you' prayers easy, I find the 'asking' ones much harder. "*Ask, and it will be given*", has always been troublesome phrase for me. I was brought up never to ask, or knock, but to wait to be offered or invited and then to only take the smallest, the nearest or the least desirable; to leave the best for others. So to ask God for what I want and expect it to be given seems inappropriate, if not downright rude.

Scripture is often quoted or remembered out of context and I think that this is true for the first two verses of this passage. When I read the whole passage, rather than get hung up in its opening phrases, I can see that Jesus is telling me to ask as child and that He will respond as a parent. It is a parent's role to respond to a child's questions appropriately, giving what is beneficial or necessary while teaching the child to ask the right questions, by not fulfilling the inappropriate requests. Jesus is telling me do not be shy, be bold. He'll decide what is appropriate.

I know that when I take the time to formulate my confused and overwhelming thoughts into actual words and sentences, I am more likely to understand what is really troubling me, what I actually need, and to figure out what I should do. A quick 'smiley face emoji' in a text might let a friend know I'm thinking of her or her me, but often what is needed is for us to take time to sit down and have a face-to-face conversation. (In my case, with an obligatory cup of tea!) This is true with prayer too. While God probably appreciates my quick check-ins on a busy day, what He really expects is a meaningful, honest, share all, conversation.

When I pray I will remind myself to sit down with 'a cup of tea' and **BOLDLY** say...

March 10

Friday 1st Lent

Matthew 5:20-26

Jesus said, “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.”

Katie Jarman

This passage is basically about repenting for doing something wrong and asking for God's mercy. I believe we do this each time we say the Lord's Prayer.

As I read this passage I reflected back on my childhood and something came to mind when I read "reconcile to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift".

For some odd reason in high school I used to sneak into my older sister's closet and borrow her clothes without asking. I don't really know why I did it but it really bugged my sister. I would sneak in her room when she was away and "borrow" dresses, tops and sweaters. It got so bad that my sister actually stopped talking to me. She was 2 years older than me. When she went off to UCLA she barely said goodbye. I realized that I had committed a cardinal sin by taking her clothes, not owning up to it and never apologizing. The anger my sister felt toward me festered over the years. We grew apart. It was only within the last five years that we finally decided to "move on". She had grown tired of being angry at me and I apologized for creating such a wedge between us. I think I finally paid "my last penny". I've learned a valuable lesson and one that I have shared with my daughters. Grudges suck up too much energy. Forgive, forget and move on.

March 11

Saturday 1st Lent

Matthew 5:43-48

Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect

Susan Aley

Spending time among young children and their parents I hear a version of this lesson from Jesus often: be kind to everyone. While that sentiment bears a resemblance to Jesus' instruction, He is asking us to do more than be kind. He is not calling for us to be civil towards our enemies or to consider the situation from their perspective; He asks us to love our enemies. That's difficult. It can even be difficult to love those who are not our enemies. Take the many acquaintances or strangers in my life: I do not show them hate, but do I show love? It makes me consider what it means to love.

Over the past week, I have sought to go beyond tolerating or accepting and to truly love. I have tried to open my eyes and heart to those who I often do not see or greet with love in my heart. In doing so I have appreciated those around me more. I see people as they are and do not try to change them to be whom I would like them to be. I see where my reactions of annoyance, dislike or separation reflect less about what another person has done and more about what I want. I find when I greet someone with love, I see God in the other person.

Luke 6:27-38

Jesus said, “But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you. “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”



March 14

Tuesday 2nd Lent

Matthew 23:1-12

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

Morgan Darden

"Red Letters"

In some versions of the Bible Jesus speaking is in "Red." This passage is almost all Jesus speaking; The first 9 words in black and the remaining 185 words in Red.

What does it look like to you when Jesus is speaking? Think of one or two experiences.

For me two are:

1. Listening to someone across the table from me at Dinner Church share their personal journey and spirituality
2. Hiking up Baldy at first light.

It happens more than we know; God is always seeking us and speaking to us. Our relationship with God is personal and unique. How can we hear, see, and feel the Holy Spirit better? In taking time to read this you clearly have the desire to look for the Presence.

TODAY, commit to notice the "Red letters" and Jesus speaking.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Open my eyes and ears to your presence today. Forgive us for and remove our blocks. When you call give us the strength and courage to follow.

March 15

Wednesday 2nd Lent

Matthew 20:17-28

While Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and said to them on the way, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified; and on the third day he will be raised.”

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.” But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.” He said to them, “You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.” When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Maya Farhoud

I see these paragraphs as two separate entities. In the first, Jesus establishes himself as the son of God about to be sacrificed for the redemption of mankind. I see him wanting to give his disciples a “heads-up” of the atrocities to follow so that (a) they will not be in total shock and (b) so that they do not doubt that he is God.

In the second part, we witness a recurrence of the theme of suffering and servitude as the path to heaven. This passage reminds me of the story of St. Rita of Cascia; a story that I learned as a child. As I remember it, St. Rita so wanted to walk in Jesus’ footsteps that she prayed she might experience even a tiny bit of his pain. Legend has it that she was granted her wish in the form of a thorn that appeared on her forehead, opening a wound that never healed and caused her much pain and alienation because of the stench it produced. Her story is a source of courage in the face of suffering that we often don’t ask for, and a reminder that the path to heaven is not necessarily sprinkled with roses but more likely with thorns. Our challenge is to remain in grace and trust that the one who made us loves us beyond our suffering, and is the final prize for our devotion and gratitude in the face of such suffering.



Luke 16:19-31

Jesus said, “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’ He said, ‘Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’ Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ He said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

Charles Schaefer

Several weeks ago, I disembarked the commuter ferry in the city with many others, each of us distracted by our own thoughts. Just outside of the ferry building something odd caught my eye. I saw two men struggling against the flow of the homogenous, white-collar mass of which I was part. One man looked like I did, dressed in business casual attire and mostly likely on his way to work. The other man could not hold himself upright, looked as if he had not bathed in months and seemed mentally disturbed. The first man held, practically carried, the second man to a bench, set him down carefully, and began to talk to him. I kept my pace as I passed, only turning my head to watch briefly.

I don't know why the first man helped the second nor do I know what he said. I assume that this was an act of kindness and charity between strangers. Initially, I felt guilty for continuing on my way without stopping to help. However, that feeling was quickly replaced by one of hope and love. How uncommon for a well-dressed businessman to engage with a poorly-dressed homeless man; it sounds like a modern day parable about Jesus' love for us all.

The story of Lazarus is similar but with a different outcome. I read this passage as an invitation to love others as God loves each of us.

March 17

Friday 2nd Lent

Matthew 21:33-43

Jesus said, “Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.” Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes’? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.”

LaRae Quay

As I read this parable, I couldn't help but think that these verses were written for those of us today who live in Marin County. We are all tenants in God's beautiful creation. Everything we own, everything that brings us joy, and every person we love, is a gift from God. Even our skills, talents, and resources are gifts from God that allow us to work on God's behalf to the best of our abilities.

We are called to represent the Word of God in the way we live our life, by building communities within St. John's that reflect God's values rather than our own desires and amusements. This parable explains stewardship at all levels and at all times. It is not just about money, although tithing is an important part of stewardship; it also speaks about the quality of time and the use of our talent within our community.

This parable also reminds me of how God does not give up on us. The bible is full of examples of repentance, atonement, and restoration to the Lord's favor—King David is probably one of the most memorable examples of a man who stumbled many times, responded with contrition, and continued to seek God's heart.

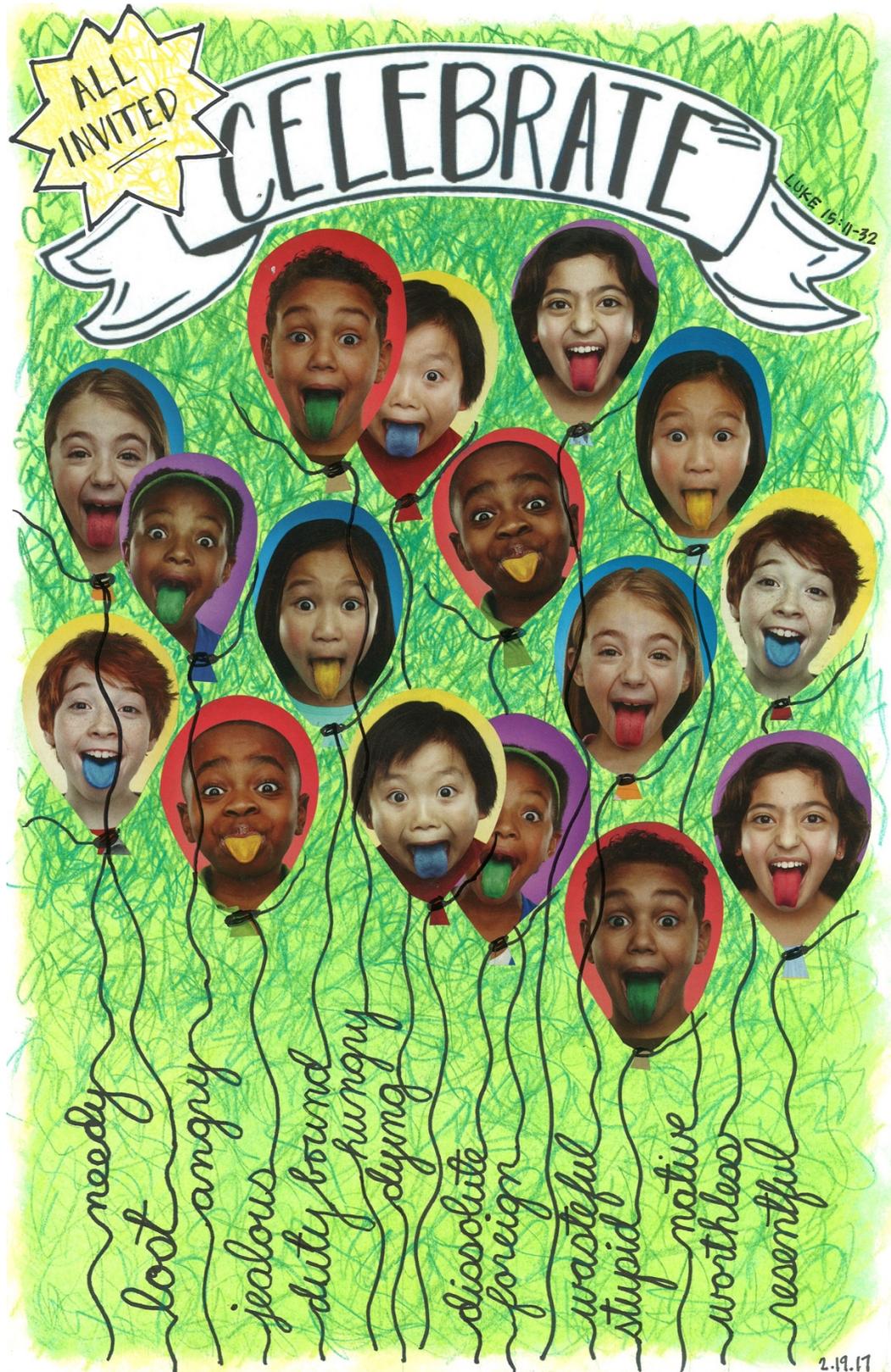
As humans, we have a hard time seeking God's heart because that means we have to wrap our own dry, hard little hearts around something incredibly frightening called infinite love. From the way we treat other people, animals, the planet, and even ourselves, do we *really* believe that God is present in everything? That we are to love *all* of God's creation?

If we truly believe that God is present in all creation, then we can't choose who to respect or disrespect, what to love or hate. The Gospel demands that we seek God's heart, and that takes away all power for us to decide and discriminate where God is, or isn't.

These verses aptly remind us that the Lord wants us to make the choice and return to God, and that God is willing to forgive us when we do.

Luke 15:11-32

Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate. “Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”



Mixed Media Collage, V. Kosydar

March 20

Monday 3rd Lent

Luke 4:23-30

Jesus said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’” And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

Doug Van Gessel

Physician, Heal Thyself (Or, Coffee Hour Gets Ugly)

Luke 4:16-30 is set in Jesus's home town of Nazareth, in the very early days of his ministry. His reputation as a great prophet is starting to grow, yet this was his first attempt at preaching in his home town, in front of family and friends from his youth. Clearly, the stage is set for great success. And, indeed, things start out great. At the local synagogue, he reads to the impoverished locals from a messianic passage informing them that the time has come to invoke an ancient practice by which the land is transferred from the rich to the poor in order to redistribute wealth, a process that, while not exactly always followed, was a central concept of Jewish law and tradition--something dreamed about by, and a major ethnic rallying cry for, the suppressed Jews. He's a major hit as local boy done well. He's one of them.

But then he continues, telling them that he, himself, is the fulfillment of the messianic prophecy. He's the messiah. The skepticism is immediate. "Is not this Joseph's son?" they ask. They grew up with him. Surely the messiah is someone else, from someplace else, far more grand and exotic. They already know this guy from his undistinguished youth and there surely is nothing special about him. The skepticism from his neighbors is obvious.

How does Jesus react? He tells them I suspect you are going to want me to put on a show to prove who I am. He doesn't put on a show; instead, he further enrages them by citing to them two past incidents in Israel where there was famine, disease and death everywhere, and yet God sent his messengers Elijah and Elisha not to comfort the many suffering Jews, but instead to comfort gentiles in Sidon and Syria. Gentiles! Now, they're mad. Maybe he's not one of them after all.

So how do they react? At the end of mass, they run Jesus out of the synagogue to a nearby cliff, which they try to push him off.

What happened here? Why is Jesus seemingly going out of his way to insult the people he grew up with by telling them not what they want to hear, but exactly what they don't? There's three things about Jesus's actions in this story that appeal to me. First is the idea of credentials. Jesus is rejected by the clergy and parishioners because he has no great record of scholarship, government position or social standing. What gives him the right to claim any level of stature, much less a role as the messiah? Jesus rejects their metrics and instead makes it clear that God chooses his messengers; they don't choose themselves. He stands on his ministry of social justice. It's the deeds done for others at God's direction, not the titles or awards, that establish the ministry. Second is his establishment of just what it is he is offering the parishioners. Many of them seem to want to be told that they are the chosen ones already, or given a set of rules or policies that they can cling to in order to make sure that they always stay in God's favor. Forget that, Jesus seems to be saying. Instead, what I offer you is an intimate relationship with God. It's not going to be easy. There are not always bright line rules; there will be more mystery than there will be certainty and it will be a relationship in which you will be the student, abandoning any sense of dominance. Finally, and most importantly, Jesus establishes the scope of his ministry. He could have easily said to his audience, lets rally together as Jews from Nazareth, appealing to their shared ethnicity and home. He could have gained favor by rallying them against any one of their many persecutors. Let's Make Nazareth Great Again! But he makes it clear to them immediately that he has no intention of making such an appeal, or that he intends to favor them or be divisive in any way.

Somehow, in today's social and political climate, the message feels both timely and timeless.

March 21

Tuesday 3rd Lent

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

Bob and Kathryn Goldsmith

These verses may be summed up as defining God's unlimited ability to forgive us for our sins. The king who charitably forgave his servant his astronomical debt, is later told by other fellow servants that the forgiven servant demanded that his debtor- servant pay him in full. Exactly the opposite of what had happened to him. The king, upon learning of this lack of charity by his forgiven servant, put him in jail to be tortured.

We may ask what kind of a God (the king will be supposed to be God in this story) would do such a thing? But these verses intend to demonstrate that "refusal to forgive will make it impossible for us to understand and experience the forgiveness of God for us."*Therefore, we are torturing ourselves for the lack of forgiving others.

*The Christian Resource Institute

March 22

Wednesday 3rd Lent

Matthew 5:17-19

Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Charlie Hoeveler

Matthew 5 17-19: Jesus said “Do not think that I have come to **abolish** the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to **fulfill**”.

What I have derived from this Matthew passage is the obvious: the Power of God, His commandments , following his commandments...but also important and impactful other lessons.

We are guided by the Lord our God and we must lead our lives according to his will.

It is vitally important to speak up and recount His teachings and wonderful works to our children (and Grandchildren) so they can teach their children.

Every generation must embrace and observe God’s commandments which, far more importantly than man’s laws, are the basis upon which we live our lives.

Thy (God’s) will be done. God gave us the power of choice, so our journey is to **choose to follow God’s commandments**, to make choices based on God and goodness.

This is the way of gaining understanding, of growing in a deeper, spiritual way.

March 23

Thursday 3rd Lent

Luke 11:14-23

Now Jesus was casting out a demon that was mute; when the demon had gone out, the one who had been mute spoke, and the crowds were amazed. But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.” Others, to test him, kept demanding from him a sign from heaven. But he knew what they were thinking and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself becomes a desert, and house falls on house. If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? —for you say that I cast out the demons by Beelzebul. Now if I cast out the demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your exorcists cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his castle, his property is safe. But when one stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his plunder. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”

Eleanor Prugh

It is my preference and practice to read J. B. Phillips' translation, THE NEW TESTAMENT IN MODERN ENGLISH [Geoffrey Bles, London, 1960].

"Another time, Jesus was expelling an evil spirit which was preventing a man from speaking, and as soon as the evil spirit left him, the dumb man found his speech, to the amazement of the crowds."

--- Luke 11:4

This gospel passage in its entirety presents several "threads" to consider. My thoughts have been many and, far from weaving these threads into a "fair linen cloth," I have made of them a veritable tangle, if not a total knot. The text hurries us away from the man whose demon prevents him from speaking; I would linger with him a while, wondering.

We get nothing of his history. How long has he been mute, what is his place in society, in what ways does he suffer? (Given the tenor of today's discourse I find the idea of muteness appealing and often wish for it in many people. How uncharitable of me!) Seriously, Jesus noticed this person and healed him; he was one being in a crowd of many others. Certainly Jesus must have thought this guy had something worth saying. I hope that the speaking man used blessed and blessing speech ever afterwards. (May we all do the same. Hear us, Lord.)

And, to those who want a SIGN that Jesus is of GOD, I can hear him say, "He gave me speech that I might praise The Lord Almighty. He did for me what no other person could or would do. Jesus works in full sight of all, and still, you ask for a 'sign'? You wouldn't know a sign even if one sprang up from your front stoop as you step out the door. You're missing the one that's here."

March 24

Friday 3rd Lent

Mark 12:28-34

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; and ‘to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself,’ —this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that no one dared to ask him any question.

Shelley Wilson

This passage resonates with me because Jesus' message is really about love. To love our neighbor as yourself, is to show compassion first to ourselves, and then to all we encounter, no matter our differences. We live in a world where divisiveness seems to be the norm, and we need to pause and honor Jesus by being open to those we may disagree with, don't understand or don't know. To stop and listen to our neighbors, is to understand that all people are worthy of God's love.

March 25

Saturday 3rd Lent

Luke 18:9-14

Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Jolly Brown

As a kid I remember this passage vividly and would always shake my head and say “Wow, it sure seems like a lot of Pharisees attend this church. What a bummer”. As I grew older and had studied the New Testament at Emory and TCU it became evident to me this was directed to an audience that was suffering politically, economically and socially. The audience that Jesus is speaking to was not white, not politically or economically connected and far from the reality of Marin. It’s hard to imagine this scene no matter how intellectually honest you are in search of this text and to think otherwise is somewhat delusional.

From that existential starting point then the question is how do I understand my role in this passage far removed from its’ reality or intended audience. It has always struck me that the very essence of Christianity is that we are people of love.....we are the religion of love and that I believe most lay readers and scholars would agree on. From that perspective, we could look at the tax collector and imagine all the undesirables of society.....and then throw in all the oppressed of our society, the mentally ill homeless, the illegal aliens, all the “little” people of our world that makes our lives more pleasant. If then we are the children of Jesus, then we should exalt all these people.....love them as he would love them.....but how? With a check to the charity that does hands on work.....some might say no give them no money only do the hands on work.....I have to believe the answer is both.....and then I still don’t think that will be enough.....and knowing that is our cross to bear.....oh, and I have to love the Pharisees even when it is me.....

March 27

Monday 4th Lent

John 4:43-54

When the two days were over, he went from that place to Galilee (for Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in the prophet's own country). When he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, since they had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the festival; for they too had gone to the festival. Then he came again to Cana in Galilee where he had changed the water into wine. Now there was a royal official whose son lay ill in Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my little boy dies." Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started on his way. As he was going down, his slaves met him and told him that his child was alive. So he asked them the hour when he began to recover, and they said to him, "Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever left him." The father realized that this was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he himself believed, along with his whole household. Now this was the second sign that Jesus did after coming from Judea to Galilee.

Tom Fregoso

After reading this passage, I started thinking about the father on his way home wondering about his son. He didn't know if his faith would be rewarded. In thinking about your own faith in Lent, I wonder if the urging at the end of this speech's passage might spur one to be empowered and vulnerable in your faith life because of a bold choice.

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done better.

The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes up short again and again,

because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause;

who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at worse, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly..."

- speech, sometimes referred to as "The Man in the Arena" was delivered at the Sorbonne in Paris, France, on April 23, 1910.

Reflection courtesy of Brené Brown's book *Daring Greatly*.

John 5:1-18

After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Bethesda, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.” Jesus said to him, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.” At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk. Now that day was a sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, “It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.” But he answered them, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your mat and walk.’” They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take it up and walk?’” Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.” The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath.

But Jesus answered them, “My Father is still working, and I also am working.” For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.

Cynthia Captain

This Gospel speaks of healing at the pool sometimes called Bethesda. Recently I was fortunate enough to read the writings of the poets of the Harlem Renaissance and one in particular, Arla Bontemps, speaks of healing at the same pool.

Nocturne at Bethesda By Arna Bontemps

I thought I saw an angel flying low,
I thought I saw the flicker of a wing
Above the mulberry trees; but not again.
Bethesda sleeps. This ancient pool that healed
A host of bearded Jews does not awake.

This pool that once the angels troubled does not move
No angel stirs it now, no Saviour comes
With healing in His hands to raise the sick
And bid the lame man leap upon the ground.

The golden days are gone. Why do we wait
So long upon the marble steps, blood
Falling from our open wounds? And why
Do our black faces search the empty sky?
Is there something we have forgotten? Some precious thing
We have lost, wandering in strange lands?...

The old terror takes my heart, the fear
Of quiet waters and of faint twilights.
There will be better days when I am gone
And healing pools where I cannot be healed.
Fragrant stars will gleam forever and ever
Above the place where I lie desolate...

You do not hear, Bethesda.
O still green water in a stagnant pool!
Love abandoned you and me alike.
There was a day you held a rich full moon
Upon your heart and listened to the words
Of men now dead and saw the angels fly.
There is a simple story on your face;
Years have wrinkled you. I know, Bethesda!
You are sad. It is the same with me.

March 29

Wednesday 4th Lent

John 5:19-29

Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes. The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son, so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life. “Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

David DeRuff

Wow! That passage is clear as mud. My confusion with it is similar to my understanding of the news in our country these days. I try to understand on rational and emotional levels but I don't.

I ride the ferry to work and have noticed how muddy the Bay is. It is the runoff from the wettest winter in years, an answer to prayers perhaps but I'm concerned that it will take the urgency off of investments we must make in the stewardship of our natural resources and in our future.

In today's passage, I understand that Jesus is responding to challenges by Jewish leaders on his claims of Godly authority. The presence of conflict is clear but I struggle to understand specifically what he is saying. My point with this reflection is that life is like that sometimes. To me, the answer to confusion lies in the second paragraph. Jesus says that the Kingdom of God is here now. "Those who hear the voice of the Son of God ... will live." I find this very reassuring when I feel confused and stuck in the mud.

March 30

Thursday 4th Lent

John 5:30-47

Jesus said, “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

“If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. There is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that his testimony to me is true. You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth. Not that I accept such human testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But I have a testimony greater than John’s. The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent. “You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. I do not accept glory from human beings. But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?”

Linda Gridley

As I cracked the stiff open the stiff pages of my Bible I said, “Hey how are ya doing? It’s been a while. Same ol’ story?” That’s pretty funny, because it is the same old story. But the ever changing component is our evolving understanding or relating to the teachings as our lives ebb and flow with emotion and experience. This, I am thinking, is the path of faith. Leading us at times to the places we didn’t even realize we needed to go, and other times drifting by at a slight distance only reachable by the strongest pleading stretch we can muster.

Those tougher patches are the times I remind myself that all of this has happened before. Other people have loved, lost, wept, survived. Some have gone through it feeling alone. Others have done it knowing God is there somewhere in all of it. You can’t teach it, this knowing. It is the “knowing” that fills one with faith and comfort. The knowing is the thing I think Jesus is talking about here. One can hear the testimony of others, be “told” the story of Jesus, but in the end, a finds their own connection, their own knowing of the truth at the center of their faith, their own connection to Jesus.

March 31

Friday 4th Lent

John 7:1-2, 25-30

After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish to go about in Judea because the Jews were looking for an opportunity to kill him. Now the Jewish festival of Booths was near. Now some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is not this the man whom they are trying to kill? And here he is, speaking openly, but they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Messiah? Yet we know where this man is from; but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from." Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him. I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me." Then they tried to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come.

Mary Ann Maggiore

Is my time near Lord?

Who will seize me

or what will seize me and take me to my place?

I want my path to be clear

and I want it to be purposeful

and I want it to be a serving in your name.

I seek guidance;

I seek strength.

I wish to move with power and also with love.

April 1

Saturday 4th Lent

John 7:37-52

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified. When they heard these words, some in the crowd said, “This is really the prophet.” Others said, “This is the Messiah.” But some asked, “Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he? Has not the scripture said that the Messiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?” So there was a division in the crowd because of him. Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

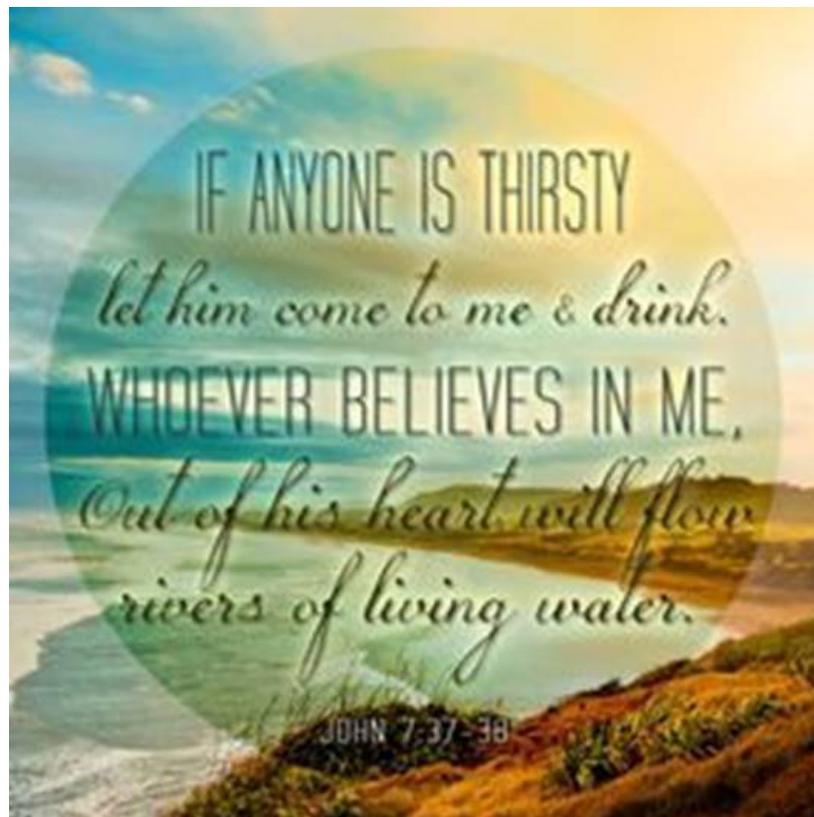
Then the temple police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why did you not arrest him?” The police answered, “Never has anyone spoken like this!” Then the Pharisees replied, “Surely you have not been deceived too, have you? Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, which does not know the law—they are accursed.” Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, “Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?” They replied, “Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee.”

Jennifer Bowman

Jesus invites all who are thirsty to come and drink from the living water that is the Spirit who will guide Jesus' disciples into faith and all truth. Belief, as it turns out, is a gift. The Spirit, as Jesus said in the last scene, blows where it will.

So when we meet people who believe differently than we do, or profess not to believe at all, perhaps the most fitting response is to welcome them as children of God anyway, praying to, and trusting in, the Spirit of Christ who grants faith in a way that is beyond our comprehension.

This is a challenging passage. But perhaps it is also a passage that can serve as an example -- both negative and positive -- for those of us who also live during a time of religious rivalry and the clash between faith and disbelief.



April 3

Monday 5th Lent

John 8:1-11

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, sir.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.”

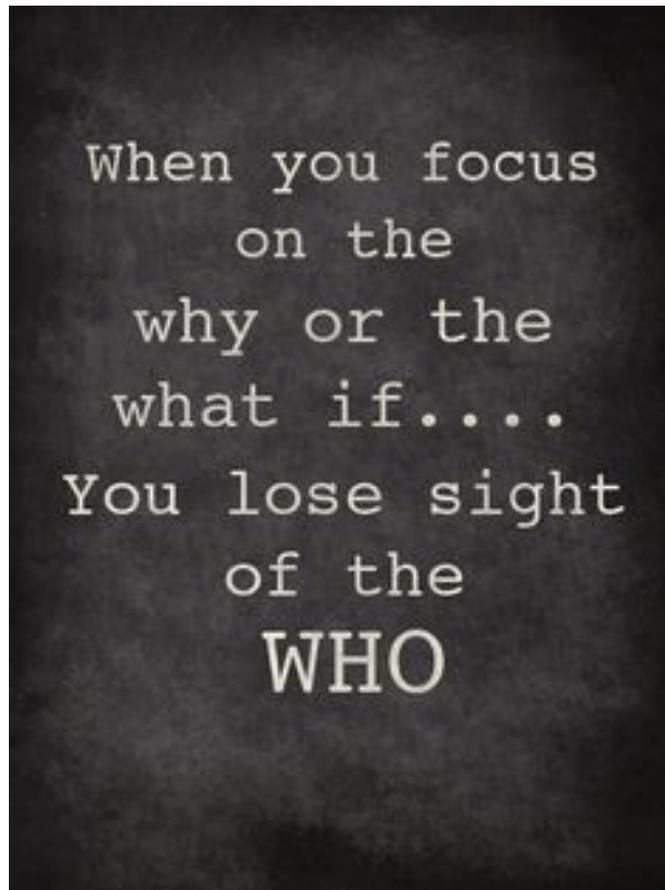
Jesus upholds absolute morality. Such is determined by the observation of the cause and effect of human behavior and the resulting natural law-such is even articulated by the Church at Rome. What Jesus wrote in the dirt is a mystery-both the first and second time. It may be what common sense dictates-to pastorally not treat some sinners differently than others and some transgressions harsher than others. Certain scriptural truths resonate-that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and that a single violation of the law is a violation of the whole law. It is the duty of the Church to balance the advocacy morality and truth with the compassionate welcoming and nurturing of all. It is unknown why Jesus asked the woman caught in adultery if anyone condemned her since he was there and knew the answer-perhaps he asked her in earshot of the religious leaders to point out that such leaders should have moral integrity exceeding those that they may judge or perhaps it is to point out that she is no worse off than those who condemned her. Jesus's condemnation (judgment?) of judging is well known and inarguable. That all transgression and judgment and morality collide on the cross is a marvel of Christianity. The imperative of Christians as a result is clear-love, live uprightly, forgive and persevere. This is all told beautifully in this passage.

April 4

Tuesday 5th Lent

John 8:21-30

Again Jesus said to them, “I am going away, and you will search for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.” Then the Jews said, “Is he going to kill himself? Is that what he means by saying, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come’?” He said to them, “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he.” They said to him, “Who are you?” Jesus said to them, “Why do I speak to you at all? I have much to say about you and much to condemn; but the one who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.” They did not understand that he was speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me. And the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him.” As he was saying these things, many believed in him.



In this moment when Jesus is trying to tell the non-believers WHO he is, I am reminded that here in these last moments with those who do not yet believe, Jesus simply tells the Jews they cannot go where he is going and they will not understand until they raise him up. Of course when I read this in my much younger years I assumed the “raise” was the physical placement of the Jesus on the cross and all that encompasses Easter. As a more seasoned adult, with a few more shaken and stirred faith moments under my belt, I see these words “raise me,” as Jesus telling us to exalt and hold HIM higher than anyone else on our journey as man. To raise up Jesus, our heavenly father and all that is sacred allows us to be authentically humble and takes a bit of the pressure off quite frankly. We were designed to stumble, but the Lord is with us all the way, just as he was with Jesus. I am beyond grateful that because I raise him up, I can follow. I can go there. In the end if we cannot follow, we are in fact our worst enemy. I am reminded to raise my faith higher and higher as the doubts and the fears get bigger and bigger.

April 5

Wednesday 5th Lent

John 8:31-42

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be made free?’” Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you look for an opportunity to kill me, because there is no place in you for my word.

I declare what I have seen in the Father’s presence; as for you, you should do what you have heard from the Father.” They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing what Abraham did, but now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are indeed doing what your father does.” They said to him, “We are not illegitimate children; we have one father, God himself.” Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me.”

Jesus offered truth and freedom. To accept that offer, place their faith in Jesus, and embrace the truth the Jews who believed in Him had to sacrifice long held beliefs that their identity, community and world view relied on.

Sometimes the sacrifices required to pursue and embrace the truth are not those we expected. A previously unrecognized truth may challenge the entire architecture of our lives. At times, in order to embrace the truth we must let go of something that we never dreamed would be implicated: our personal identity, the acceptance of our community, the orientation of our day to day lives and notions of the world. It takes courage.

Which sacrifices must I make to “continue in his word” and embrace the truth? Do I ever try to avoid seeing the entire scope of the truth in order to protect beliefs or behaviors that are more difficult or painful to abandon?

April 6

Thursday 5th Lent

John 8:51-59

Jesus said, "Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death." The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and so did the prophets; yet you say, 'Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.' Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets also died. Who do you claim to be?" Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, he of whom you say, 'He is our God,' though you do not know him. But I know him; if I would say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him and I keep his word. Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad." Then the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am." So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

Carolyn Brown

A Lenten Challenge: Try to practice kindness or thoughtfulness to others, at least once a day, in the manner of Jesus Christ.



April 7

Friday 5th Lent

John 10:31-42

The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus replied, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?” The Jews answered, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God.” Jesus answered, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, you are gods’? If those to whom the word of God came were called ‘gods’ —and the scripture cannot be annulled— can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’? If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”

Then they tried to arrest him again, but he escaped from their hands. He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing earlier, and he remained there. Many came to him, and they were saying, “John performed no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.” And many believed in him there.

Jo Burnett

The key words in this passage that resonate with me are “doing the works of the Father” because it seems that I need to maintain a focus on my own actions in doing the works of the Father and try to remember the aspirational ideas that come to mind during Sunday services so that I will behave more responsibly during the rest of the week!

Several years ago during the funeral of dear Jessica Hart we were asked to stand and listen to the tolling of St. John’s bell for each year of her long life. I stood, at first chaffing at the idea that this would TAKE A LONG TIME, but quickly my mind turned to her considerable accomplishments and moral leadership and then I pondered my own life and WHAT AM I DOING? I think of the bell tolling often and try to improve my behavior - simply being more considerate, helpful and not so impatient with the imperfect world around me, because I am so imperfect too. I know I can do more of the work of the Father.

April 8

Saturday 5th Lent

John 11:45-53

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council, and said, "What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed." He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God. So from that day on they planned to put him to death.

I love the phrase...*”but to gather into one the dispersed Children of God”*.

This passage at once makes me feel profoundly sad and hopeful. Sad as it foretells Jesus’s fate (at this point we are not even aware of how brutal it will be); and at the same time hopeful as Jesus’s ultimate sacrifice will be for the unification of all Christians.

It also serves to remind me of how devastating fear can be; fear of losing power, fear of losing control and ultimately that fear can destroy genuine goodness. *“This man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him...”*

When fear is at the root of my decisions, more often than not, the outcome is not what I hoped for. This Lenten season, I will commit to staying close to my faith in God – the antidote to fear.

April 10

Monday Holy Week

John 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, 11since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.

Jennifer Bull

Upon a first, and even repeated, reading, this biblical passage seems opaque and layered with complex meaning. It feels hard for me to gain any sense of insightful comprehension. Then a little assistance from a theological website provided me with a bit of clarity. For me, this passage asks us to follow Christ in service and discipleship -- as shown by the devoted actions of Martha and Mary -- regardless of our involvement in worldly affairs, or our having a complete understanding of Him. A short verse says it better perhaps:

Times I am swept up in the cunning matters of the world;
Petty, exhausting, uncertain.
And then, I focus on what really matters.
On the ground,
In a humble gesture,
I kneel and
Wash feet.

John 12:20-36

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. The crowd answered him, “We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” Jesus said to them, “The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light.” After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.

Stephanie Fontaine

"The Lord Jesus refers to himself as a grain of wheat. If he did not die he would abide alone and there would be no sinners there to share his glory. If we refuse to be kernels of wheat- falling into the ground and dying- we will not grow and serve the Lord. If we wish to be fruitful, we must follow our Blessed Lord Himself, by becoming a kernel of wheat and dying, then we shall bring forth much fruit."

-The Believers Commentary

Because Jesus died for me, in return we are grateful that we can share his glory in heaven. To me this is the whole idea of resurrection.



John 13:21-32

After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, “Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “Do quickly what you are going to do.” Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the festival”; or, that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.”



“Last Supper” by Aleks Kargopoltsev

April 13

Maundy Thursday

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

From "Praying with Icons" by Br. James Koester, SSJE

First, get comfortable and let your eyes roam over the whole picture.

Simply gaze at the icon in a spirit of openness allowing the icon to gaze back at you. Gaze in expectation and anticipation knowing that God has something to say to you through this icon tonight. Gaze at this icon, allowing your affections to be kindled.

What do you see? What do you notice? What stands out to you? What questions arise as you gaze at this icon? How do you feel? Don't try to figure things out. Simply gaze at love and allow love to gaze back at you.



April 14 Good Friday

John 18:1-19:42

The Passion narrative of John is too long to reproduce in this booklet form. Please refer to your Bible for the complete passage, cited above.



Madonna of the Meadow, Giovanni Bellini



Pietà, Giovanni Bellini

Ginger Strickland

I often come back to these paintings by Italian Renaissance painter Giovanni Bellini as I contemplate Good Friday. *Madonna of the Meadow* at first seems like a delicate depiction of a Mary and Jesus at a restful moment.

But if you look more closely, you might notice that something is not quite right about the infant Jesus. His skin color is wrong – he looks sickly, pallid, dead even. And the way he sprawls across Mary’s lap is odd as well – again, like a dead body (watched over by an ominous black bird). And her facial expression is ambiguous: is she just quiet and pensive, or is something more complicated going on? Is there grief in her face, horror?

The more closely I look at this painting, the more I see a foreshadowing of the crucifixion. Bellini has deliberately painted the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus in a way that prefigures his Pietà, the image of a grief-stricken Mary holding the body of her crucified son.

The painting deliberately brings us forward from the beginning of Jesus’ life to the end, reminding us that the Jesus crucified on Good Friday is the same innocent baby miraculously born in Bethlehem.

The painting invites us to take a moment and look at all of Jesus’ life through the lens of Good Friday, to remember that he loved, healed, and served even though he knew what was to come.

April 15

Holy Saturday

Matthew 27:57-66

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb. The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception would be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

From the Easter Sermon of St. John Chrysostom (c. 400 AD)

Are there any who are devout lovers of God? Let them enjoy this beautiful bright festival!

Are there any who are grateful servants? Let them rejoice and enter into the joy of their Lord!

If any have toiled from the first hour, let them receive their due reward; If any have come after the third hour, let him with gratitude join in the Feast! And he that arrived after the sixth hour, let him not doubt; for he too shall sustain no loss. And if any delayed until the ninth hour, let him not hesitate; but let him come too. And he who arrived only at the eleventh hour, let him not be afraid by reason of his delay. For the Lord is gracious and receives the last even as the first. He gives rest to him that comes at the eleventh hour, as well as to him that toiled from the first.

First and last alike receive your reward; rich and poor, rejoice together! Sober and slothful, celebrate the day! You that have kept the fast, and you that have not, rejoice today for the Table is richly laden!

Feast royally on it, the calf is a fatted one. Let no one go away hungry. Partake, all, of the cup of faith. Enjoy all the riches of His goodness!

Let no one grieve at his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed.

Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again; for forgiveness has risen from the grave.

Hell took a body, and discovered God. It took earth, and encountered Heaven.

It took what it saw, and was overcome by what it did not see.

Christ is Risen, and you, o death, are annihilated! Christ is Risen, and the evil ones are cast down! Christ is Risen, and the angels rejoice! Christ is Risen, and life is liberated!

Other Ways to Connect to God this Lent

Lent Classes for Adults

- **Daily Meditation and Prayer:** Interested in starting a daily practice of prayer or meditation? Or looking to infuse your daily prayer with some new energy? Join us as we explore how to pray in a way that is sustainable and joyful. **Sunday, March 12, 11:30am-12:30pm** in the Fireside Room.
- **Christ and Culture:** At a time when the world around us seems to be going crazy, how are Christians called to respond? Do we practice acceptance? Withdraw and take care of ourselves? Resist and oppose? Join us for a discussion **on Sundays in Lent** (with the exception of Sunday, March 12) in the Fireside Room from 11:30-12:30am. Each class is designed to stand alone, so no need to attend every meeting in order to participate.
- **Demons in the Desert: A contemplative Lenten Sojourn** Join us for this three-week Lenten Series, taught by the Rev. Dr. Vincent Pizzuto, Professor of New Testament at the University of San Francisco, Vicar of St. Columba's Inverness and Vicar at New Skellig Celtic Christian Community. The course will meet on March 15, 22, and 29 from 6:30-8pm in the Youth Room.

Lent with Children and Youth

- Special **weekly reflections for families** can be found at the back of this booklet.
- Join us for our **Palm Sunday Potluck** after the 10am service on Sunday, April 9. There will be a special project for children to help them understand and experience Holy Week and Easter.