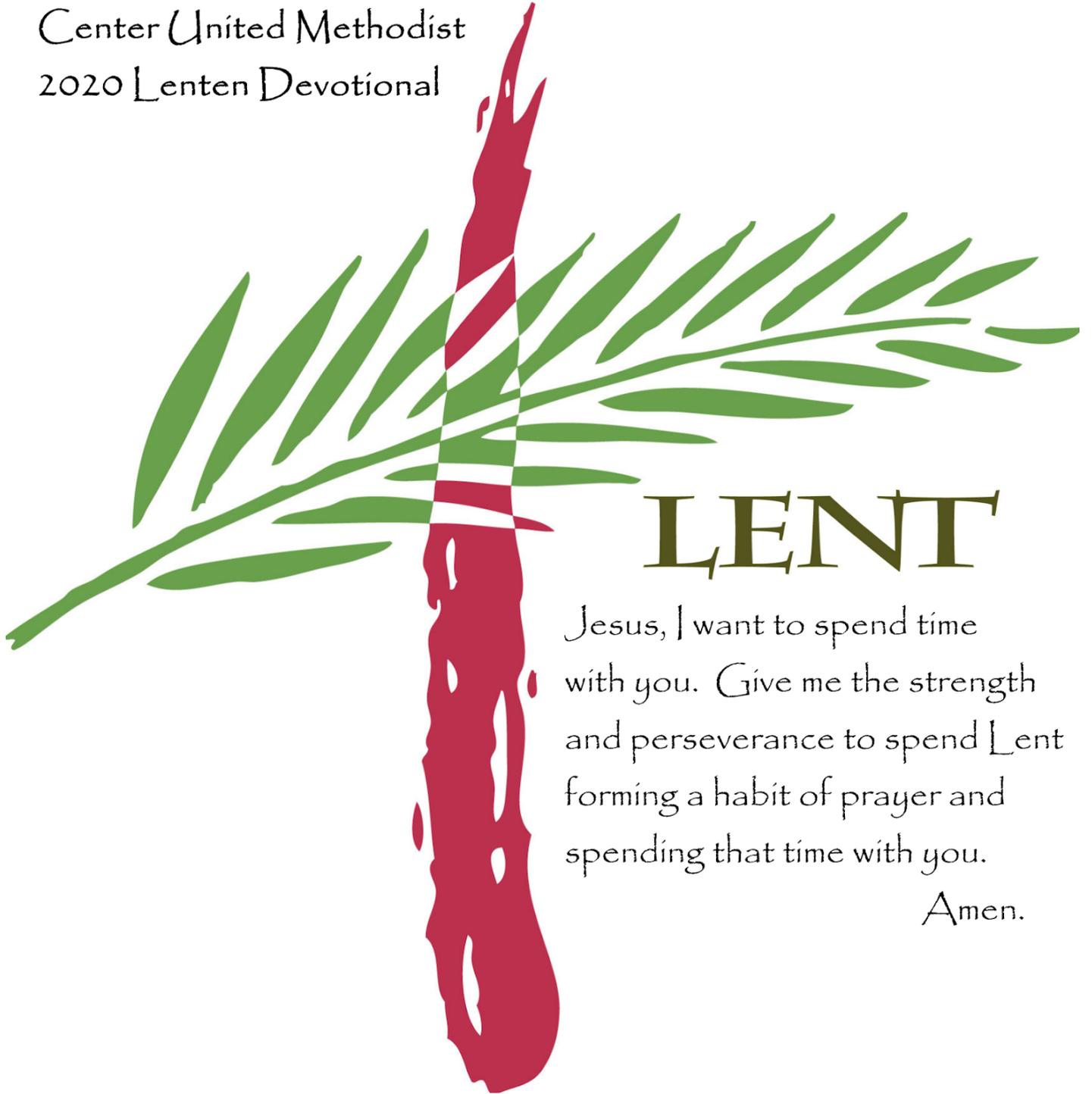


Center United Methodist
2020 Lenten Devotional



LENT

Jesus, I want to spend time
with you. Give me the strength
and perseverance to spend Lent
forming a habit of prayer and
spending that time with you.

Amen.

Lenten Day: 1 - Ash Wednesday, February 26

Scripture: Psalm 51:1-6

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,

so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass
judgment.

Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother
conceived me.

You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my
secret heart.

Devotional:

The image of wearing ashes upon our foreheads and our hands is a powerful one. It is a declaration to every person who sees you. Some might look upon your face with wonder. Some might look upon your face with curiosity. Some might look upon your face with communal pride. Some might look upon your face with disdain. Those ashes publicly declare that I am a Christian. They declare that I have practiced my faith during the week, not just on Sundays. Those ashes declare that I know my life is finite, so I must prepare for the life that is to come. They declare that I have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but have been redeemed in Christ's sacrifice.

The Psalmist is acknowledging the fact that they have failed, both by their free will and when they were not even aware that they were causing pain to another. Admitting our sins can be difficult and painful...we do not enjoy pointing out our wrongdoings. But it is overwhelmingly liberating! No longer do I need to hold this hurt in my heart. The guilt that has weighed me down has been lifted! When we confess our sins, both those we know we have committed and those we do not even realize, it gives us the opportunity to start anew again each day. Take this opportunity to start anew this Lent.

Pastor C. Drew Myers

Prayer:

O God, I invite your merciful, cleansing presence to wash me thoroughly, to wash me deeply, to flow into the dark places of my life and remove all that would come between you and me, leaving me filled with your wisdom and truth. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Lenten Day: 2 - Thursday, February 27

Scripture: Psalm 51:7-13

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.

Devotional:

I wonder what life would be like carrying your sins without knowing the path of redemption through Jesus Christ? I am pondering what that would feel like as I read this scripture. If you had no way to clean the slate, what would that really feel like? Is just saying "I'm sorry" good enough? This scripture has me feeling thankful for having a relationship with Jesus Christ. I read this scripture and find comfort in knowing that while sin has entered my life, Christ, and only Christ alone, can cleanse my heart of the sin that has entered. I can't just simply say "I'm sorry" and move on. I must take ownership of the sin and give it to God. I look to this verse as a blueprint that if I am sincerely asking for forgiveness from sin, I am looking to change my heart to reflect what I have asked forgiveness for.

Scott Fennell

Prayer:

Dear Lord, I want you to restore the joy of my salvation by putting a right and new spirit within me. Help me make the right choices in my life today so you can create in me a clean heart and make this possible. Amen.

Lenten Day: 3 - Friday, February 28

Scripture: Psalm 51:14-17

Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,
 O God of my salvation,
 and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.
O Lord, open my lips,
 and my mouth will declare your praise.
For you have no delight in sacrifice;
 if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.
The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
 a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Devotional:

(Narrated by an action movie announcer) "Delivery from bloodshed! Songs of Righteousness, David's declaration of Praise! Coming soon to a theater near you!"

It sounds like an action hero has just saved the land and it's time to rejoice! But that's not the case!

Psalm 51 was written while David's son to Bathsheba was dying. David was begging for his boy's life and was terrified he was going to lose God's blessing. (Don't forget David was the one who took on a giant with a slingshot and won because God was on his side!) The arrogance of being a king made David want more and more. He finally realized it was humility that God wanted, not something physical, but a broken spirit.

What are you trying to give to God? Does he want it? Is your spirit in the right place?

Gabriel Pawloski

Prayer:

Lord, help me to not just be content with what I have, but to celebrate all of it as your gift to me. I pray with John Wesley, "Let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things, let me have nothing." Amen.

Lenten Day: 4 - Saturday, February 29

Scripture: Matthew 6:1, 5-6

[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.

“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.”

Devotional:

We all know someone who is “always on”—everything they do is a big, attention-seeking production. The only pronouns they seem to know are “I, me, my and mine!” While that behavior may turn heads and gain attention for them at the moment, it does not attract true friends. In fact, we often tend to walk the other way when we see someone like this coming. We have no interest in even conversing with them, much less having a relationship with them because they are so self-absorbed. We would much rather have a real and meaningful relationship with someone that is heartfelt.

That’s the kind of relationship God wants to have with us and that we desire to have with him. When we pray, it should not be a performance for others to see. Prayer is a personal conversation between you and God. That is not to say that praying in public is a bad thing! There are plenty of scripture verses that encourage us to pray with each other and for each other. But praying to impress others is not where God wants our heart to be focused. Praying a blessing over our food at a public restaurant is not a bad thing when the goal is to actually thank God for the food and ask for his blessing over it. Praying in a public restaurant so that others can notice how much more “faithful” you are than them would not be a sincere act of gratitude towards the God of the universe!

Instead, when you go into your room and shut the door, you shut out the world and its influences. When you set aside a time and space to find your quiet center, not just to speak to God but also to listen, you will develop a close, personal and rewarding relationship with your loving Father.

Millie Napoletano

Prayer:

Our gracious heavenly Father, guide us as your people to become what you want us to become, willing to listen to your call. Equip us for all that you ask. In Christ’s name I pray. Amen.

Lenten Day: 5 - Sunday, March 1

Scripture: Matthew 6:9-15

[Jesus said,] “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.

Devotional:

I remember a time when someone I desired to have a friendship and relationship with hurt me deeply. I was crushed by their behavior towards me. It would have been easy for me to hurt them back. In my humanness, I am sad to say, I considered and imagined it. But what true satisfaction would that bring to me? Was this competition of inflicting pain on each other worth something to me? In my deep disappointment, I turned to willing them forgiveness and praying for them. It was not easy by any means. I had to force myself to do it but it became easier with each day and each prayer. Those prayers began to change and heal my heart. God was revealing to me that there were deep wounds in this person's past that had caused them terrible pain and allowed them to hurt others. I started to pray specifically for this pain to be released from their heart so that healing could begin for them. Throughout the years, I have continued to pray for that person because I cared for them and loved them. At times, I had to love and pray for them from a distance.

The miracle of this story is that God had restored that relationship for me. This person has miraculously found a faith and relationship with Jesus that they were vehemently opposed to years ago. God knows our hearts, he knows our pain, he hears and answers our prayers. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we need to believe every word of it. We need to not only speak it, but we need to live and act on each word.

I think back to actively working on willing forgiveness to that person and how difficult that was for me at first. I am reminded of how God forgives me every day for my thoughts, deeds and actions. He began a healing in both of our hearts that day and the blessing was a restored relationship. He does hear our prayers and fulfills the desires of our hearts. Praise God for sending us his only son, for we all need a savior.

Remember to stay humble in your actions, words and prayers this Lenten season. God wants to change your heart for the good of his kingdom. He truly wants the best for you and he wants to bless your life.

Kami Halleran

Prayer: Holy God, as I pray for your perfect will to be done on earth—and in me, I know I must be willing to let go of the wrongs done to me and to let go of those times when I have followed evil rather than you. Help me, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Lenten Day: 6 - Monday, March 2

Scripture: Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills—
 from where will come my help?
My help comes from the Lord,
 who made heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved,
 he who keeps you will not slumber.
He who keeps Israel
 will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper,
 the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
 nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil;
 he will keep your life.
The Lord will keep your going out
 and your coming in
 from this time forth and forevermore.

Devotional:

I worked at the Valley Daily News when I got out of school in an entry level job. It was steady work but I was not making much money. One day my mother told me that Westinghouse Electric in Cheswick was hiring and that maybe I should think about putting in an application. To make her happy, and because I didn't really think there was a chance of getting a job, I told her I would. The next day I made my way down Route 28 but did not see Westinghouse until I was near RIDC Park in O'hara Township. I did not know what they did there but I decided to stop and fill out an application. Six months later they called! I came home from work one day and my mother met me with an excited exclamation that Westinghouse had called me for an interview! Forty one years later I retired from Westinghouse/Emerson.

I've had many such experiences and the Lord proves over and over to me that "my help comes from the Lord." Believe it or not, I am still surprised when I see his hand at work in my life and in the life of my wife, sons, their wives, my grandchildren and friends.

As we go out, we should remember that when we worry about the many situations that we encounter, God is guiding our footsteps even when we do not realize it. I want to praise God for all that he has done and will do in my life.

Alan Fennell

Prayer: Lord God, direct my heart to turn to you when I face trials in my life and when problems seem to overwhelm me. Give me strength to face each day. Amen

Lenten Day: 7 - Tuesday, March 3

Scripture: Matthew 5:43-48

“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.”

Devotional:

I come from a military family, so the concept of loving your enemy is often a struggle for me. My dad served in World War II and Korea, while my oldest brother served in the Vietnam War. My other brother and I served during the Cold War. What we had in common was the fact that we prepared every day to protect our great country from our enemies. So how was I able to learn to love our country’s enemies? I would like to share two stories.

While in Germany, I had the honor to meet a German World War II pilot and he shared that during the war, he and his family lost everything. His story put things into perspective that sworn enemies and I have something in common: we have families.

The other time I had an opportunity to be in the presence of an enemy was when I was escorting a team of Russians that were doing an arms control inspection at one of our military bases in Germany. A Russian general who I was escorting said through his interpreter, “You know Sergeant Richards, there is no such thing as an ugly Russian woman.” He paused and then said, “You just need more vodka.” Everyone laughed. I learned that even enemies could joke with each other. I’m not sure I loved the German pilot or the Russian general, but I know that for a brief period of time, they were not my enemy.

In today’s scripture, Jesus calls us to love our enemies. I think the only way that this is possible is to put things into perspective and find a common ground. Even in our current divisive country, there is always something we have in common such family or even humor. In verse 48, Jesus also calls us to be perfect. Although I’m far from perfect, I know that Jesus wants me to strive every day to become more like him. Loving your enemies is one way to become more like Jesus.

Jason Richards

Prayer:

God, today I am going to meet some unlovely people. I will need your help if I am to love them. Fill me with your Holy Spirit so that I may live out your commandment to love everyone. Amen.

Lenten Day: 8 - Wednesday, March 4

Scripture: Matthew 19:13-15

Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

Devotional:

The image of Jesus laying his hand on little children is very powerful. Jesus was blessing the children and praying for them. Jesus also made it clear that all children are welcome and belong to his kingdom.

I believe all children are a gift from God. As a parent, I have always felt it is my responsibility to encourage my children to have a relationship with Jesus. I strive to love my children as God loves me. I love seeing a church that has so many children learning the word of God. I also like to see that our church encourages our youth to be active in our services.

It is my desire to support those who are looking to adopt, foster or sponsor children around the globe. I also desire to see the day our culture views abortion differently than we currently do. Again, I believe all children are a gift from God.

Brian Pomfret

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for the unconditional love that you provide each and every day. Help me to remember that your love is not something that I need to work for, but it is just given. Remind me to come to you as my ultimate provider. Amen.

Lenten Day: 9 - Thursday, March 5

Scripture: Luke 18:9-14

He 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."

Devotional:

I catch myself doing this daily. We all do it consciously and subconsciously. I may see a person suffering from homelessness and I try not to make eye contact as I pass. I thank God that I am not in that situation or wonder what they did to become homeless. Or, I may see a disabled person and think, I am so glad my children don't have that. I judge. I place my own expectations on what is acceptable or normal on others. Sure, that may be human nature, but that is not Christian nature. We are all called to love, to serve, to be the least of these and the hands and feet of Christ. My circumstances could change in an instant. Tomorrow, I could be the person being judged. In reality, I have just as many or more problems behind the veil of perfection that I portray on Facebook. I may have a perfect family photo with my children looking at the camera smiling angelically while being lovingly held by my husband. That is what I let people see. The reality may have been that it was the 27th photo attempt, the children were either threatened with time out or bribed with a treat. My husband and I may have argued about something in the course of this perfect picture. But none of you can see behind the scenes unless I share it. How dare I worry about looking perfect whilst judging others on things that may be beyond their control, when I have just as many issues behind closed doors?

After reading this passage, I see that there are definitely circumstances where I am more of a Pharisee than a humble tax collector. I let my own self-righteousness get in the way of living out what I am called to be as a Christian. Leave it to Jesus to use someone like a tax collector, who would have been despised by a good upstanding Jew, to teach us a lesson in humility. None of us are worthy. None of us are free from sin. None of us can get into heaven on our own merit. Only Jesus was and is able to do that, and he shared that beautiful gift with us. He was willing to pay a debt he did not owe so we may be free from sin as well. Humility allows us to open our hearts to Christ's love for all, even the unlovable. Be the hands and feet of Jesus to all! Eternity with Jesus will be far better than any fleeting thing here on earth!

Hannah Daugherty

Prayer:

O Lord, help me to remember your words and to approach your throne in prayer, with a humble heart and not a self-righteous attitude. I ask this in your name. Amen.

Lenten Day: 10 - Friday, March 6

Scripture: John 17:1-5

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

Devotional:

Lately when I turn on the TV or radio I hear people talking about their successes in life throughout many different career fields. In sports, there are broadcasters and athletes talking about playoffs, bowl games, the Super Bowl, the Stanley Cup and other championships. In the entertainment industry, there are different types of music, movie and TV awards. Politicians are running ads about everything they have done and what they can do. Many of the people are at the peak of their careers. Every now and then you might hear of someone "thanking God" or "giving God the glory" for the win or award.

When I read the scripture for today's devotional something that stuck out to me was that Jesus was in the peak of his ministry and he was giving all the glory to God. Jesus glorified God by finishing the work God gave Him to do. He didn't slack or give up when times were hard. He didn't take all the praise for himself, but instead he asked to be glorified so that he could give the Father God all the glory. Jesus' devotion is much deeper than just saying "I give God the glory." It's knowing God and having a relationship with him. This is encouraging to me as I go through life. Christ's example reminds me to continue to work hard in all that I do and to give God the praise and glory.

Zach Carroll

Prayer:

Lord, let us feel your presence in our lives. Help us to understand your plan for our lives and to do our best to follow your lead. Amen.

Lenten Day: 11 - Saturday, March 7

Scripture: Romans 8:26-27

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Devotional:

Our inability to pray, or to pray about the correct things, is met by the Holy Spirit who acts as the middleman to get the correct message to God. Sometimes in prayer, you can get emotional or anxious about expressing yourself. The Holy Spirit can decipher the true intentions and deliver that message to God. Do not be afraid to pray, as the Holy Spirit knows our hearts.

Lysle Reichenbaugh

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, intercede for me in my weakest hours. Teach me how to pray. Forever will I praise and thank God for his infinite mercy and his immeasurable blessings in my life. Amen.

Lenten Day: 12 - Sunday, March 8

Scripture: Psalm 116

I love the Lord, because he has heard
 my voice and my supplications.
Because he inclined his ear to me,
 therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
The snares of death encompassed me;
 the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
 I suffered distress and anguish.
Then I called on the name of the Lord:
 “O Lord, I pray, save my life!”

Gracious is the Lord, and righteous;
 our God is merciful.
The Lord protects the simple;
 when I was brought low, he saved me.
Return, O my soul, to your rest,
 for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

Devotional:

A few years ago I was faced with a life-and-death struggle. My diabetes sent me into organ failure and I was in extreme danger. My husband, children, grandchildren, Pastor Drew and Lindsey stood around me praying at different times in the intensive care unit. The Lord heard all the prayers and healed me. I still have diabetes but I carry the Lord's grace with every breath and am forever grateful to him and to all who came to help me.

Many times I have found Psalm 116 to be true. At my low points God heard my prayers and saved me. I feel he walks with me everyday. My hope is to stay healthy, do his work and give him the glory!

Judy Carroll

Prayer:

Thank you, Father, for always hearing my voice, knowing and providing what my heart needs even before I do. Amen.

Lenten Day: 13 - Monday, March 9

Scripture: Romans 5:1-5

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Devotional:

OK...these verses were difficult for me to figure out what I was supposed to take away or learn from them. Are the verses about *faith*, *peace* or the *Holy Spirit*?

For me, I have complete *faith* in God. For example, I drive a school van. I have eight kids (precious cargo) that I must get to school safely. It is very dark in the morning and I am driving on back, country roads. So, I say a prayer each morning or the night before. I pray: Dear God, keep us safe and protect us on my runs today. Please, don't let me hit any deer or anything for that matter. Amen.

Then, I am at *peace* and have all the *faith* that God is with me.

Now, as far as the *Holy Spirit* goes, it's that voice (God) inside me that speaks to me or guides me every day. Well, I don't always listen to that little voice and I do what I want. Then I kick myself later. I knew I should have listened to God! Well, hopefully this was a lesson to help me grow in Christ. God is so patient with us and his grace is amazing!

Here is a note from my study bible that I think says it perfectly: With all this loving care, how can we do less than serve him completely!

Robin Richards

Prayer:

O God, as we encounter problems along the way, let us receive them with gratitude, knowing that they are working for our good to bring us into our heavenly reward—a hope that never disappoints us. Amen.

Lenten Day: 14 - Tuesday, March 10

Scripture: Romans 5:6-11

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Devotional:

Imagine yourself in a courtroom on trial for some misdeed. You know you are guilty, you know there will be punishment. All the excuses and rationalizations you have said to yourself now seem irrational. The realization of your guilt is staring you in the face. Why have you done such a thing? What did it cost you? How are you ever going to say I am sorry to all of those people you have hurt?

Judgement is upon you and you stand to hear the verdict. As you stand and all eyes are on you, the words you hear are “not guilty says the Lamb of God.” As you fall on your face with gratitude, a new heart emerges—a clean heart, a clean spirit, a renewed soul.

Christ has paid for your sin so that you might share his love with the world. We all fall down in life. Life is a struggle of learning and growing. Let Christ lift you up and fill you with the joy of knowing he is Lord and that your sins will be forgiven. Turn away from your sinful ways and let the love of Christ fill you to the brim.

Cheryl Cherry

Prayer:

God, you prove your love for us yet again through your Son Jesus. Thank you for daring to die, even when I was your enemy, so that I would be reconciled to you. I praise you and give you the glory for today. Amen.

Lenten Day: 15 - Wednesday, March 11

Scripture: Exodus 17:1-7

From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink."

Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?"

But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?"

So Moses cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."

The Lord said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink. Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

Devotional:

I'm not always a very *patient* person. I like things to always fall into place in my favor. I expect the Steelers to win a Super Bowl; the Pirates to win a World Series and the Penguins to win a Stanley Cup—every season! I expect the radio and TV sports talk shows to broadcast without me having to see and listen to ads. (Never mind that it's the ads that pay for the broadcasts). I even expect traffic signals to always be green when I approach them. I used to avoid praying for *patience* because I knew God would test my *patience*. Well, he's done that and has taught me to show more *patience* in the future!

Speaking of a lack of *patience*, the Israelites didn't show much of it to God and Moses in their journey through the desert after God delivered them from Egyptian bondage. In Exodus, we read about their constant complaining to Moses and God. This showed a lack of faith and *patience* with God and how he had provided for their past and present needs. To teach the Israelites a valuable and hard lesson, God allowed them to wander around in the desert for 40 years until those who did the complaining and showed a lack of *patience* with the Lord had passed away. They never saw the Promised Land!

Please see the concordance in the back of your bible for more scriptures on patience and don't be afraid to pray for patience. God will surely give it to you!

Ron Pappafava

Prayer:

Gracious God, rather than constantly asking you to be with us, teach us the wisdom of being with you and living by your will. Amen.

Lenten Day: 16 - Thursday, March 12

Scripture: Psalm 95:1-6

O come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his also.
The sea is his, for he made it,
and the dry land, which his hands have formed.

O come, let us worship and bow down.
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

Devotional:

Did you ever hear someone singing and think to yourself “Boy, I wish I could sing like that?” I think back to when my middle daughter was only 4 or 5 years old and we were in church and she was singing “EVERY FAMILY SHALL BE INSULTED AND EVERY HILL MADE LOW” at the top of her lungs. (The correct words were “Every valley shall be exalted and every hill made low”). She was singing—praising the Lord! She did not have the words exactly right but she did have her heart exactly right!

I like to think that the Lord got a little chuckle out of that (I know we did) but he is not looking for perfection, only a willing spirit. Sometimes we just need to go back to being “kids” and give God our all! Even if we can’t carry a tune in a bucket or get the words exactly right the Lord will know that our heart is “right!”

Chuck Pacek

Prayer:

Dear Lord, hear our praise. We give thanks to your majesty through our voices and our hearts. Hear our holy symphony as we bow our heads in worship. Praise you, King of Kings. Amen.

Lenten Day: 17 - Friday, March 13

Scripture: John 4:23-24

[Jesus said,] “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”

Devotional:

When reading Jesus' words in this bible verse, a word that stuck out to me was true. According to the dictionary, the definition of true is "in accordance with fact or reality." I found this to be so intriguing when thinking of how it relates to today's verse. Often times in our faith walk we can get so distracted by life. Maybe things aren't going the way we planned, unexpected changes happen or we get so busy with work and families that our time with God falls by the wayside. Sometimes life just gets hard and our realities seem too much to handle. But in this verse we get to understand that worship should be our reality. It should be our truth. Worship is a gift we have to connect with God. To find those moments of difficulty and bring them to the one who can ease our worries and give us peace beyond understanding.

So why is it that when life gets hard sometimes, it's harder to give our whole selves to God? This verse reminds us that no matter what we are facing, God is in the center of it just waiting for you to hand it over to him. To give him your whole self. To make him your reality. When life feels too big and you feel too small, take heart in the fact that the God we serve is bigger than all that we may see. Let that be your truth and follow you everywhere you go each day.

Ashley Carroll

Prayer:

Father, I praise you with my whole spirit. Please help me to remember that you have no boundaries and that you are everywhere I go. Thank you for the assurance that you are always with me. Amen.

Lenten Day: 18 - Saturday, March 14

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 13:5-9

Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, indeed, you fail to meet the test! I hope you will find out that we have not failed. But we pray to God that you may not do anything wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. For we rejoice when we are weak and you are strong. This is what we pray for, that you may become perfect.

Devotional:

We have encountered many experiences in our daily life that have tested our faith. From when our children were born as early as 27 and 30-week preemies, to enduring the death of a loved one, these experiences can take its toll on a person emotionally and mentally. Being a parent to teenagers and dealing with the curve balls that daily life throws our way is a struggle. As a couple going through these times together, we have to lean on each other and stay strong for one another.

Knowing of your faith and how you get tested is one thing, but God is always there for you to lean on and help guide you through the most trying times in your life. He does hear our prayers.

Erik and Michelle Majocho

Prayer:

Holy God, gracious God, you prove me and try me, you test my heart and mind. Keep me in the knowledge that your steadfast love is always present with me, enabling me to walk in faithfulness to you and to others. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Lenten Day: 19 - Sunday, March 15

Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-19

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Devotional:

In this prayer to the Ephesians, it's important to note that Paul bowed down before the Father indicating the respect that God deserves. He then says that every family in heaven and on earth is all joined as one family with the same Father. As Christians we should realize that we are all joined together as one through Christ. Paul continues by adding that he wants us all to have inner strength provided by the Holy Spirit, and in doing so Christ will take residence within our hearts. Lastly, he tries to explain God's love for us. It's so great that it goes beyond what we can truly understand. His love is all encompassing; it's eternal.

When I joined Center Church, I had never been part of any "organized religion." It didn't take long to realize and understand that we were now part of a family. That was especially true when I was hurt at my job. I got phone calls and cards from my church family. People were praying for me not just here locally, but my Mom received calls from people she hadn't talked to for several years. They said they had seen my name on prayer request lists, that they were inquiring about my well being and letting her know they were indeed praying for me. Keep in mind, I grew up a little over an hour north of Center Church. Word had spread quickly within this "family" that we are now part of.

1 John 4:8 (NIV) says "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." When someone accepts Christ as their savior, they become part of God's family and a transformation occurs within their heart. As it says in Ezekiel 36:26 (NIV) "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." Once this occurs you can only slightly comprehend the love God has for us all.

Troy Crissman

Prayer:

Dear Father, maker of all the universe, boundless in wisdom, knowing no limits, draw me close to you as I pray. Remind me that talking with you will strengthen me in the days to come, and I will give you all the praise. Amen.

Lenten Day: 20 - Monday, March 16

Scripture: Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
 He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
 he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
 for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
 I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
 your rod and your staff— they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
 in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
 my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
 all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
 my whole life long.

Devotional:

Psalm 23 is reminding us that the Lord is both a provider and protector. He is the shepherd and we, as God's children, are the sheep. God knows all of our needs and, while we may not know these needs in the moment, he is there to make our paths clear. There are times that we can wander off into dark places, whether these hardships be with relationships, jobs, school, unexpected tragedies or illness. God our shepherd will be there to guide us during these hard times and as Christians we can be confident that he is always with us leading the way. After he leads us through these difficult times, we can look forward to the victory of reaching the Lord's table and being overcome with the Holy Spirit. Think of this as God saying "You did it, well done!"

Psalm 23 closes with a reflection of God's promise. This Psalm prepares the way to show the ultimate act of God's steadfast love, giving us his son to take away all our sins and enabling all of us to live with God forever in heaven.

As for me, I do believe that God is always with me, providing for me and my family and continually protecting us. I have dealt with many unforeseen hardships and was thankful for God's guidance and protection during these hard times.

Danielle Pomfret

Prayer:

Dear Lord, I thank you for your presence in my life, the promises that you give and direction you provide as my shepherd. Amen.

Lenten Day: 21 - Tuesday, March 17

Scripture: Ephesians 3:20-21

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Devotional:

Each and every day of every week brings new experiences and challenges to our lives. Some of these events are welcomed with open arms and others bring trying, lonely and difficult times. There are times when we feel like our tank is “empty” and we don’t know how to move forward. The exhaustion, both mental and physical, paralyzes you and you almost feel smothered.

These are the times when this scripture from Ephesians should be a positive reinforcement in your life. God can take away the “empty” and fill your heart to capacity. He has an immeasurable amount of love for us and can strengthen us. God is waiting for us to come to him in prayer when we are feeling down and need to feel his perfect love. God can fill the emptiness in our hearts with such abundant love!

Melissa Scalamogna

Prayer:

O God, may our hearts and lives be filled with all Christ-like love this day. Amen!

Lenten Day: 22 - Wednesday, March 18

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-18

But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Devotional:

For more years than I care to remember, I drove to and from Pittsburgh to work. It's been challenging on a daily basis. Most days I would see examples of aggressive drivers driving dangerously. I can't in my right conscience say it did not stress me out sometimes and even make me want to confront them or hope the police saw and pulled them over. But one time I was a passenger on this same commute and my driver decided to "get even" with an aggressive driver, each one trying to make the other one wreck, while shouting less than pleasant words at each other. I literally feared for my life. I thanked God immediately when they finally gave up this senseless and dangerous road rage driving.

It is not good when we let events of the moment control our emotions so strongly that we act vengefully without thinking of the consequences. As the scripture reads, "See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all." Their actions were intentionally negative. But on another note, have any of you made a careless driving move while your thoughts are preoccupied, such as narrowly missing other vehicles at intersections or when changing lanes? I hate to admit it but I have, especially if something was weighing heavy on my mind, like worrying about a seriously ill loved one. When I realize my mistake, I definitely thank God that he spared me from what could have been something bad, be it an accident or negative reaction from those offended. I now try to be more patient with others who may do this to me because they may not be doing it intentionally, they may be grief stricken or deep in worry with issues that momentarily shadowed their judgment. It is not for us to judge and seek our own revenge, but instead we could learn to be calm and less judgmental ourselves so that only God is in control and for that we are eternally grateful. "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." What a beautiful way to look at our daily happenings. I pray that we will all try not to "sweat the small stuff," as they will just cloud our ability to see how many blessings we have every single day.

Dawn Montgomery

Prayer:

Lord, let me be as forgiving as you. Open my heart to be joyful for all the things that you will use me for, even if I don't understand them, as I know it is your will. Amen.

Lenten Day: 23 - Thursday, March 19

Scripture: James 5:13-16

Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

Devotional:

No way, it's not happening. It can't happen right now. I don't have time for it. Maybe I can talk myself out of it.

What is IT? IT is being sick. There's never a good time or a right time to be sick. When we feel illness approaching, we wish it not to be true, we attempt to pray it away before it even sets in. Because we know there is no such thing as a good time to be sick, we do everything we can to avoid it, from washing our hands to staying home from parties during the holidays. Do we attempt, with the same fervor, to keep our faith from getting "IT?" Can you feel your walk with God becoming ill? Does it start with letting a swear word slip or becoming too angry with a driver who cut you off? When these things happen, I know that my walk with God is not as healthy as it needs to be. It's time to pray it away before it even sets in. Prayer for a closer walk with God results in instant healing, for we know he is listening, he is gracious and he is happy to have us closer to him – we have been forgiven. And while prayer for healing of physical illness may not have immediate results, we know from reading today's scripture that prayer is powerful and effective. Isn't it great to know that God has given us the superpower of prayer? Let's use it!

Alyssa Watson

Prayer:

O Lord, you are the great physician and our heavenly Father who made us and loves us. It is you who we look to for healing of body, mind and spirit. Thank you for your love, mercy, and grace. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Lenten Day: 24 - Friday, March 20

Scripture: Acts 4:23-31

After they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. When they heard it, they raised their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and everything in them, it is you who said by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant:

'Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples imagine vain things?
The kings of the earth took their stand,
and the rulers have gathered together
against the Lord and against his Messiah.'

For in this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

Devotional:

They (Peter and John) went back to their friends and told them what had happened. They were threatened not to speak of the truth. They stood up for what they believed in. They decided not to obey orders. They all prayed to the Lord to help them through a dangerous and difficult time. They prayed for courage. The Lord comforted those with his presence and gave them the strength they needed.

Sometimes it is difficult to stand up for what is right. Current events here in the USA and all over the world show that. We should look to do the right thing even if the popular opinion is opposite of what we believe in.

Peggy Hunkele

Prayer:

Lord, you are awesome! Thank you for giving us the bible and letting us talk to you. I pray that you fill your servants with the Holy Spirit and give us the boldness to share your word today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Lenten Day: 25 - Saturday, March 21

Scripture: Psalm 5:1-4

Give ear to my words, O LORD;
give heed to my sighing.

Listen to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God,
for to you I pray.

O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch.

For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil will not sojourn with you.

Devotional:

Every day we have a choice to get out of bed on the “right foot.” It usually sets the tone for the entire day. Many folks are not “morning people” and may require coffee, a hot shower or something else to motivate them and get their day started. Soon life’s stressors begin to attack. Whether it’s an unexpected task at work, the feeling of catching a cold or perhaps your basement flooded; the hustle and bustle of daily life can be consuming.

Recently, when my basement flooded again my first thoughts were, do I have the right cleaning products left to prevent mold? Can I borrow fans and blowers from dad’s shop again? Do I have enough money to buy more gallons of Drylok until we can afford excavating and proper drainage outside? By now I’m consumed with worry, anxiety and fear. Do you get angry with God for unexplained events? I was upset and discouraged. As I began to reflect on my day’s events, I realized the beginning of my day should start with prayer. It should not take a bad situation and hopes of God coming to my aid to lead me into prayer. Prayer was my last resort. Prayer should be first! The world is full of sin, corruption and difficult times. The best solution to all of these things is God and prayer.

Renee Kuhns

Prayer:

O God, sustain me through trying and difficult times. Help me not to be discouraged, but to maintain my zeal and continue to be strong in spirit, serving you always. Amen.

Lenten Day: 26 - Sunday, March 22

Scripture: John 9:1-7

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

Devotional:

"Blind from birth." This man was "Blind from birth" the scriptures say. But aren't we all blind from birth? Newborns are registered as legally blind when they are born. They can see their mother's face when held to her breast, but not much more than that. I can remember when my own firstborn began to recognize me. What a thrill! Blind at birth, but then there were moments when he began to focus and respond to familiar faces and sounds, especially mine. Might that be how God feels when we begin to focus and respond to him as someone most familiar to us? I think so.

All of us are born legally blind. But by some miracle, slowly, we get healed of our sightlessness. What is the miracle that happens to us? This man was being questioned if it was his parent's or his own fault that he was blind. Jesus quickly addressed that saying "...he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him." It was no one's fault. It was indeed for the glory of God. So Jesus went on to touch the man, give him further instructions and then he was healed! A miracle indeed! He would become a living testimony his whole life. His life would bring glory to God as God's works were being revealed in him.

Our miracle is that we get to seek Jesus all along our life's journey. Along the way, we get healed of our blindness, and hence, we too bring glory to God, as his works are being manifested in us. Healings are never just one shot deals. They continue as we live and move and have our being in Christ Jesus. The more of his light that we let in, the more potent our healings become and the more his mighty works are revealed in us. Our blindness and short sightedness are only temporary if we allow our Lord to heal us.

This Lenten season, let us remember none of us have 20/20 vision yet! That kind of perfect vision will come on the other side. As a young wife and mother, I remember thinking I had so many answers to life's queries. And then my Mom would gently remind me, "Honey, you haven't lived long enough yet." How true. And so today, I can say with confidence, "I once was blind, but now I see..." because the light of Jesus is healing me.

Darlene Ryniec

Prayer:

O God, help me with my blindness. Reveal to me what I should be doing for you. Reveal through me your light so that others can see your good works in the world. We ask this through your son, Jesus. Amen

Lenten Day: 27 - Monday, March 23

Scripture: Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!
If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.
I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;
my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.
O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem.
It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

Devotional:

So here we are at day 27 of our Lenten devotional – roughly 4 weeks into maybe a new routine or experience for some; while for others, it's an extra or different approach to their daily devotions. So how is it going? Are you seeing or feeling any results, is it making a difference or is it becoming part of your daily routine? Has it changed anything in you or around you?

I learned a long time ago when you want to change things in your life for the better, you need to get into a serious routine and stick with it—for me the first 3 weeks are the real test. Daily routines must be adhered to no matter what and then the next 3 weeks are the deal breaker. Either you give into the changes you've committed to and know you are on the right path, or you don't and you tell yourself I'll try again – maybe next week...

OK, so what does this all have to do with our scripture today – Psalm 130?

For me it is about verse 6 - "I wait for the Lord – more than watchmen wait for the morning." I know that I am a watchman, that was made clear to me in my late teens by my grandfather. The watchman is found throughout the Old and New Testament. It is a person who has been called to serve others as a teacher, prophet and protector. It's someone whom God has asked to be diligent in prayer, service and commitment.

The watchman is to observe everything around him, to take measure of society's behavior and to share God's messages of warning, repentance, instruction and the good news of salvation.

In our daily prayer time, who are we including in our prayers? Is it just family and loved ones, friends and those hurting people we hear about at church or in Sunday school? Are we praying for the people who are in our everyday lives – our boss, co-workers, fellow students, teachers, clients, patients, delivery people and the folks doing 80 MPH on the road next to you? Are these persons in your PRAYERS? They should be. If you want to make a difference in the small world around you, start by giving the people who are part of your daily life over to God in prayer. These folks are a part of your daily life whether you admit it or not. They have joys and grief just like you do. They are probably dealing with the same stress you or your family and friends are dealing with each day. Why shouldn't they be in your prayers? Don't you think God would like to bless them – maybe though you or vice versa? Try it for a couple of weeks and see if God doesn't make your daily life a little bit better. Sometimes prayers are all we are able to give to others.

Be a Watchman/Watchwoman every day ...

Marc Fleischman

Prayer: Thank you, God, for your enduring love that welcomes us back into your arms. In humility, we await your word of forgiveness. Amen.

Lenten Day: 28 - Tuesday, March 24

Scripture: Psalm 102:12-17

But you, O LORD, are enthroned forever;
 your name endures to all generations.
You will rise up and have compassion on Zion,
 for it is time to favor it; the appointed time has come.
For your servants hold its stones dear,
 and have pity on its dust.
The nations will fear the name of the LORD,
 and all the kings of the earth your glory.
For the LORD will build up Zion;
 he will appear in his glory.
He will regard the prayer of the destitute,
 and will not despise their prayer.

Devotional:

Choices. Every day, every moment, we make choices. We choose what to eat, what clothes to wear, what we wish to do with our time and who we choose to spend it with. Some of our choices offer immediate rewards, while others may cost us greatly. It may be as simple as choosing to do a quick devotional instead of watching the morning news. Other times, it may be choosing love and forgiveness in the face of an argument. When we face struggles, we can choose to rise up in prayer or we can fall to temptation. When we see someone hurting, we can choose to show compassion or walk away. When relationships crumble, we can choose to rebuild or tear them down.

There is so much pain and separation in our world right now. Will you choose to rise up, be different and show compassion towards others? Faith helps us cling to a sense of hope and joy that only God can provide. Center Church family - We urge you to be prayerful and persistent in looking for opportunities to spread God's love, hope, forgiveness and joy this Lenten season.

David and Autumn Turk

Prayer:

Dear Lord, I look to you to build up our nation and its people. Please use me as your servant and help me to live in a manner that helps to rebuild and not to tear down. Amen.

Lenten Day: 29 - Wednesday, March 25

Scripture: Psalm 141:1-3

I call upon you, O LORD; come quickly to me;
give ear to my voice when I call to you.
Let my prayer be counted as incense before you,
and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice.
Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD;
keep watch over the door of my lips.

Devotional:

Have you ever said something and immediately wished you could take it back? Sometimes controlling our tongue can be very difficult. But the simple truth is that words can hurt. Most of the time we don't mean for our words to be hurtful, but without knowing a person's history or personal struggles, we may make a comment that offends or hurts someone without even knowing it. As an example, I think of how this affects our IHN guests. Questions often come to the guests out of concern, not necessarily out of just being curious or nebbly. But sometimes those questions can seem very intrusive to someone who feels judged just because of their homeless situation. Simple questions like "Have you found a house yet?" or "Where have you looked for a job?" can appear to be judgmental to someone who's at the lowest point in their life.

I personally have had someone within our own church make comments to me that were very hurtful. I truly believe it wasn't intended to be hurtful. The comments were made as an observation, not as a criticism, but they hurt just the same. I believe we all need to be mindful of the words we use and why we use them. We need to remember the words of the Psalmist to call upon the Lord to set a guard over our mouths and to keep watch over the door of our lips.

Karen Snair

Prayer:

O God, like David, I come defenseless and vulnerable before you. There is nothing that I can say or do to make you listen to me, and yet I know that you do. I raise my hands and know that you are in charge; and with you in charge, I am safe and loved. Amen.

Lenten Day: 30 - Thursday, March 26

Scripture: Philippians 1:3-6, 9-11

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Devotional:

I believe we are to be kind to ALL people in this world. We don't have to know what their problems are. We pray for them and ask God to be with them and keep them safe. We are to love everyone. We are all to help people who need help. I feel good helping others in some way or another.

Yes, God has given back in what you do. Our church is full of a lot of good people working with God in such things as the music, the children and the senior adult ministries. May God bless all in our church. The Pastor and his wife are doing a great job. We will keep up the good work forever. Pray for all!

Dave and Fran Minner

Prayer:

Father, help us to remember our faithful friends whom you have placed in our life. Let them know in their heart that we are thankful for their partnership in the gospel. Just as those who have fostered my relationship with you, motivate me to help others grow closer to you. Amen.

Lenten Day: 31 - Friday, March 27

Scripture: Romans 12:9-12

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.

Devotional:

How often do you really love other people? This verse talks about not pretending to love others, but to really love them. What does real love look like?

Real love looks out for what is best for the other person. It doesn't just say and do what makes other people happy. Real love stays the same. It doesn't change based on how someone treats you or how you feel. When you love someone with God's love, it doesn't matter how that person responds, rather what matters is how you respond.

Real love, the God kind of love, isn't always easy to live out. It takes guts. It takes putting aside what feels right at the moment and responding to that person in love. When you choose to love, it makes a difference, especially to those who don't know Christ. Choose to demonstrate crazy love today to someone who might be hurting. You never know who you might win for Christ by choosing to love!

Donna Corbin

Prayer:

Lord, I thank you for how you have loved me, and I ask that you teach me to love my brothers and sisters in the same way. Amen.

Lenten Day: 32 - Saturday, March 28

Scripture: Psalm 80:3-7

Restore us, O God;

let your face shine, that we may be saved.

O Lord God of hosts,

how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

You have fed them with the bread of tears,

and given them tears to drink in full measure.

You make us the scorn of our neighbors;

our enemies laugh among themselves.

Restore us, O God of hosts;

let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Devotional:

It was a warm spring evening at the beginning of May 1979 and we were at The Villa restaurant in Cadogan. We, meaning myself and 11 friends, were celebrating our upcoming high school graduation knowing that, in just a few days, this chapter of our lives would close and a new one would be opening. We had a grand time reminiscing throughout the evening. Many of us had started first grade together.

As the evening was coming to a close and we asked the waitress for our checks, she replied "they have all been paid for." We were dumbfounded! She pointed to a table with two older couples who were just finishing their dinners. I remember how the one couple was dressed—both all in white. She wore a white summer dress and he had on white slacks and a white polo shirt. My friend Drew and I were elected to go over and express our thanks. As we went over and they spotted us coming their way, they just smiled and shook our hands. We thanked them and visited for a few minutes before wishing them well. As it turned out, they enjoyed our evening as much as we did saying that it brought back many memories for them about their school days. It turns out the couple in the white (who bought our dinners) were the owners of Calvert Whiskey. They had flown their plane to McVill Airport and were enjoying dinner at The Villa.

Over the past 40 years, I have thought of the kindness these folks showed us. Thinking, praying and doing for others is the selflessness God wants us to emulate. In our world there is so much "what's in it for me" attitude that it is like a breath of fresh air to do something nice for others. Let his light shine through you, as you spread God's grace through your service to others.

Kim Suhan

Prayer:

O God, let our prayers embody the selflessness of Jesus, hoping that your will and ours become one. May tears shed—not for ourselves but for others—release us from stress as the warmth of your love shines on us and creates in us new hearts. Amen.

Lenten Day: 33 - Sunday, March 29

Scripture: Luke 18:1-8

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Devotional:

My favorite prayer is The Prayer of Jabez. Jabez didn't pray quietly in a corner. He cried out to God "Bless me oh Lord, and enlarge my territory!" And God granted his request.

James 4:2 reminds us, "You do not have because you do not ask."

Do you trust God? Have you ever said of a friend or family member: "I would trust them with my life?" How much more should you then trust God? Too many of us live our lives worrying about tomorrow and wishing for our lives to be better, but don't know what to do about it. God knows our every need and sees every desire. He feels our pain and despair. In turn, God desires to hear our cries and fervent prayers, over and over again. Bug him!

Continually praying for something proves to God that we trust he is listening and that we believe he will grant our requests. Prove your trust in God by praying fervent, unrelenting prayers each day. He longs to hear your voice, deepen his relationship with you and prove his unabiding love for you.

Oh that I may be caught praying when Jesus returns for his faithful!

Kim Hines

Prayer:

Father, help me to pray boldly, faithfully and fervently, knowing that you love me more than anyone on earth that I could ask for anything. Amen.

Lenten Day: 34 - Monday, March 30

Scripture: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-24

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!

Let Israel say,

“His steadfast love endures forever.”

Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.

This is the gate of the LORD,
the righteous shall enter through it.

I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.

The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the LORD'S doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Devotional:

There are days that I reflect on my life and the illnesses, anxieties and losses I experienced and think, wow, how did I get through? I drew nearer to God in those times, that is how. God showed me mercy in my suffering, goodness with all the loving people he surrounded me with, and hope and peace with his promise of a bright tomorrow. I give thanks to the Lord!

Be a vessel of expression and gratitude for the Lord. He has given you another day. He made today and is giving it to you. How exciting! He wants you to get it right. To do this, we must remember to have salvation or faith. Go out and celebrate his mercy. Show others the compassion and forgiveness he has shown you. Take ownership of God's goodness and trust that he has got you in whatever you are going through right this minute. Tell others of God's goodness! Always have hope, peace and enthusiasm for today and the future with God as your rock and your salvation. Have thankfulness. Thank him daily for his presence in your life. This is pleasing to him. Let's get it right today!

(Reference: Britt, M. (2020) *Daily Word*. Missouri: Unity Worldwide Ministries)

Jayme Beer

Prayer: O Lord, your doings are a marvel to behold! You grant us the gift of another day when we have done so little to deserve the days that have been. Who else would do that? Who else would hold out hope that *this* day, we might yet get it right? I rejoice and am glad in the day and in you. Amen.

Lenten Day: 35 - Tuesday, March 31

Scripture: Psalm 118:25-29

Save us, we beseech you, O LORD!"

O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD.

We bless you from the house of the LORD.

The LORD is God,

and he has given us light.

Bind the festal procession with branches,
up to the horns of the altar.

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God, and I will extol you.

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever.

Devotional:

We had moved to Arizona in our golden years to play golf, swim and give up cold winters. So we bought a house, made new friends and found a great church fellowship. Then a new family situation arose that made us feel like we should move back to PA.

At first, we worried and agonized over how to handle the situation. One of our new friends, our handyman, was a Mormon. During our time in Arizona, we had many conversations with him. Even though he had different religious beliefs, we all loved the Lord. He was driving by our house and stopped to say hello. He always had an opinion so we discussed our problem with him. He listened, then simply said to put a 'For Sale' sign in the front of your home and let God give you an answer.

Psalms 118:25-29 says to beseech (beg) the Lord for he is steadfast and his love endures forever. If we can just leave all in his hands, we know he will deliver. In our new journey, we had so many times to give thanks. No, we didn't see the Red Sea part, but we saw so many miracles that assured us How Great Thou Art.

John and Marian Clicquennoi

Prayer:

Dear Lord, we ask that you continue to bless us in our daily lives and, Lord, we ask that you give us the strength to praise you and be grateful even when things might not be going quite the way we have scripted them. Amen.

Lenten Day: 36 - Wednesday, April 1

Scripture: Matthew 21:1-5

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately."

This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying:

"Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

Devotional:

Take yourself back in time about 2000 years. You are waiting with several others along a hot dusty road leading into Jerusalem. You have heard that your king is coming. Not the Roman emperor, but the one who is going to deliver you from the harsh oppression of the Roman conquerors. He will probably ride in on a warhorse, appropriate for a king, with his army marching behind. Then you hear the crowd noise starting to rise. At last our king is coming! But wait. What is this? You see a man riding on a donkey, and there are a few stragglers behind him. And you are thinking to yourself, "This can't be our mighty king, the one who is going to defeat our enemy and set us free".

While reading Matthew 21:1-5, the main focus seems to be the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy. But one word has always stood out for me. HUMBLE! In a state of humiliation, Jesus rode a donkey, not a warhorse suitable for a king making his triumphant entry. And it wasn't even his own donkey; he had to borrow one. Jesus never sought glory and he had no use for pride. He came not to be served, but to serve. During his Sermon on the Mount, he stressed meekness and humility, and he set an example by living his life that way. He tells us that if we wish to reign with him in his kingdom, we will have to be meek, lowly and humble, not rich, strong and prideful. It's easy to say, but very difficult for us to do. And we can't do it by ourselves, especially in today's culture of instant gratification and the "it's all about me" attitude. We need the Holy Spirit to help us. Sure, we can do it for an hour, maybe even a day. But a life of humility? It takes constant prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit to transform us and keep us on that narrow path. And the reward for a life of humility? We get to reign with Jesus in his kingdom for eternity. Lord, help me to be humble and constantly remind me that "it's not about me, Lord, it's all about you." By the way, the next time Jesus makes his triumphant entry to claim his kingdom, he will be riding a great warhorse followed by a vast army. What a grand and glorious sight that will be!

Bob Betush

Prayer: Lord, thank you for showing us the way to eternal life. Let your teaching continue through our own faithful educators. Help us to grow and learn in the ways that you taught us. Remind us to praise you for all things, not just those things which satisfy our own earthly needs. Amen.

Lenten Day: 37 - Thursday, April 2

Scripture: Matthew 21:6-11

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

“Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Devotional:

Last year we had the opportunity to worship on Palm Sunday at one of the most important churches in both historic and modern Methodist Christianity: Wesley Chapel in London, England. The church is attached to the home in which John Wesley died, and directly across the street from where his mother Susanna and many famous Brits are buried. However, with this opportunity came the disappointment that we would not be worshipping at home with our Center Church family. It was certainly both exciting and difficult. But our Palm Sunday was filled with joy and celebration as following a brief worship in the Church itself, we took to the streets in celebration. We marched alongside hundreds of other Christian disciples from at least 10 different countries of origin, waving palms, following a donkey, and carrying a cross in celebration of this joyous moment. I will never forget the fact that our procession was so long that the front of the procession would be on one verse of a hymn and the back would be an entire verse behind! But we did not care because it was about joy, celebration, worship and community.

It is nearly impossible for us to understand the joy, celebration and hope these persons would have been experiencing when Jesus was riding triumphantly into Jerusalem. This is the savior we have been promised for thousands of years! Finally, the one the prophets have been foretelling has arrived to change the entirety of everything we know! It is beyond anything we could possibly imagine. He is not just a savior for me personally, or for my direct family, or for my broader community, but the savior for all of humanity. Hosanna! Glory to God in the Highest! Hallelujah!

Pastor C. Drew Myers

Prayer:

Dear God, please help us as a church to be obedient and resist what is wrong in Your eyes and to act in ways that please You, for the glory of Your name. Amen.

Lenten Day: 38 - Friday, April 3

Scripture: Matthew 7:7-11

“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!

Devotional:

I was born into a Christian family and we rarely missed church. Though I didn't always walk the straightest path, I didn't fall off of it. I praise God for steering me forward—peer pressure sure is scary. Looking back, there were many people surrounding me who were good examples of what this scripture asks us to do.

I saw my parents give in many different ways to the church and to the community. My father was an electrician and would accept an alternative in lieu of money if the family couldn't afford to pay him. Grocery stores would give my dad day-old bread and other items that they couldn't put out but that were fit to eat. The neighbors knew that if they needed any of these items, they had only to ask. My mother baked for all church functions. Their home was used by the church for sunrise services and apple butter fundraisers. Many family members sang in their church choirs, some traveling to other churches to share the gift they had been blessed with.

Tithing happens in many forms. God blessed us in many forms in return. Bart and I were blessed with good jobs, comfortable homes and talents that we joyously shared with our church. I have seen God bless my family over and over again. My children and I have seen God use our talents to bless others. God's blessings are meant to be multiplied—the more one gives, the more one should receive.

If you are blessed by giving, please share your experiences with others. We should be bursting at the seams with stories of how God has blessed us. Think of the good God could do if everyone lived a life of blessings given and received. A wise preacher once said, “Give expectantly. This is the one place it is okay to ‘test’ God.” God relishes the opportunity to show what he can do with your giving and your requests. Give him every opportunity to show you what he can do in your life.

Ginger Hoover

Prayer:

Father, let my asking, searching and knocking be done in accordance with your will. Prepare me to receive, find and have doors opened so that, as your child, I may participate fully in your family. Amen.

Lenten Day: 39 - Saturday, April 4

Scripture: Philippians 4:4-9

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

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Devotional:

We have all had trials in our lives...personal, family, health, friendships, jobs, you name it. Every one of us. So how can we overcome the fear, anxiety or stress we encounter? Over the years and through repeated interventions by our Lord, I have come to believe fully and trust completely in God's interventions. Sometimes it is immediate, sometimes it's in his time. I must say it is not always what *I* wanted or thought it *should* be.

Do not worry—these are the words I have always turned to. Put it in God's hands. One time I was stressing about finding a sitter when I had my second child. Both grammys rightfully thought this would be too much to handle. Something told me to "just take a walk" and I did with both children, the stroller and the dog. I remember thinking "turn it over to God." Along the way I met up with one of my neighborhood friends. A conversation ensued and it turned to me needing to find a sitter. She said "I have just been looking to take on caregiving in my home." She was a member of my church and had two adopted children of her own. It was a match made in heaven and she loved my children for years. This is a simple example but it was the first time I remember actually saying "God...I turn this over to you. I am overwhelmed."

Carol Watson

Prayer:

Dear Lord, help us to remember that you are always with us, shielding us with your peace and love. It is you who we must seek to ease our worries. We rejoice that you are near. Amen.

Lenten Day: 40 - Sunday, April 5

Scripture: Matthew 21:12-17

Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He said to them, "It is written,

'My house shall be called a house of prayer';
but you are making it a den of robbers."

The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became angry and said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read,

'Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies
you have prepared praise for yourself?'"

He left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

Devotional:

Have you ever taken children to a special event only to find out that what they find special about the event is something you overlook? As a parent, you are excited to take your children to their first Pirates game. You arrive at PNC Park and see their awe. The kids talk excitedly about the huge size of the stadium and the towering lights, not the Pirates warming up on the field.

In this text, Jesus defended the sanctity of the temple, his Father's house. The children, with childlike wonder and true faith, ignored the chaos and rightly praised the Son of the Most High after seeing his miracles. The chief priests ignored "the amazing things" Jesus did and focused their attention on the children who were not praising them. When Jesus spoke, the priests were unable to interpret the Old Testament to see a prophecy fulfilled. With mind blindness, they focused on the children rather than the one that was performing miracles and fulfilling prophecies.

Life is complicated and difficult. The good news is that when we face trouble, Jesus has shown us again and again that, like the temple children, if we approach any situation with faith and open hearts, he will give us the peace and protection we seek. Like the children crying out in the temple, let us praise our God. Let us truly make Center Church a "house of prayer."

Bob Ehrman

Prayer:

Father, thank you for sending your Son to teach us how to worship you. Please help us to keep your church a house of prayer. Help us to pray in all situations and enable others to do the same. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Lenten Day: 41 - Monday, April 6

Scripture: Philippians 2:5-11

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus:

Who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth
and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Devotional:

It seems that for most of us, staying humble can be a difficult thing. Putting others before ourselves is what we are called to do. But if we are honest, do we? When we have made a mistake or wronged someone, admitting that fact or humbly asking for forgiveness can sometimes seem unbearable.

Yet this scripture refers to Jesus in human form as a humbled slave, even to the point of death—even death on the cross. Jesus, as an equal to God, instead humbly chose death for mankind's salvation. I think that an important part of this is that he didn't have to choose to die this way. But the bible tells us that God loved us so much, he chose to sacrifice his son, to save us from eternal death. There will come a day when EVERY knee shall bow at the sound of Jesus' name, and I for one can't wait!

Let us approach Easter with a more humbled heart, and always remember the undeserving sacrifice given to us by Jesus.

Sarah Pawloski

Prayer:

Dear God, encourage me as I relearn the goodness of being a servant. Help me to be like Jesus. Give me the courage to say, "Here I am Lord". In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Lenten Day: 42 - Tuesday, April 7

Scripture: Psalm 116:1-4, 12-13

I love the LORD, because he has heard
my voice and my supplications.
Because he has inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
The snare of death encompassed me;
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.
Then I called on the name of the LORD:
'O LORD, I pray, save my life!'
What shall I return to the LORD
for all his bounty to me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call upon the name of the LORD.

Devotional:

Growing up it was no secret to my parents that I always wished for a sibling. While I enjoyed the benefits of being an only child, I secretly longed to have the bond with a sibling that many of my friends had: someone to go on vacation with, to help with homework and share frustrations. As I grew older, I prayed that I might have a sibling, but also realized that as my parents were getting older, the reality of this was becoming slim. I was shocked and excited when in May 2003, the year of my 13th birthday, my parents told me I was going to be a big sister. To this day I remember the excitement and pure joy of an answered prayer.

Thinking about this story reminds me that although prayers may not be answered right away, they do not go unheard. It may take time for the right answer to appear, and it may even be "no." Keep praying and trust that God has a plan in store.

Lindsey Myers

Prayer:

O Lord save me! May your words become a part of me, may your words work through me and may I be aware of your presence wherever I am. Help me to pray continually as we go through Lent. Amen.

Lenten Day: 43 - Wednesday, April 8

Scripture: Psalm 139:1-5, 7-10, 23-24

O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
 you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
 and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
 O LORD, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
 and lay your hand upon me.
Where can I go from your spirit?
 Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
 if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning
 and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
 and your right hand shall hold me fast.
Search me, O God, and know my heart;
 test me and know my thoughts,
See if there is any wicked way in me,
 and lead me in the way everlasting.

Devotional:

As humans, it is natural that we go through stages of happiness and sadness, light and dark. I'm sure we all know someone that is living through some kind of darkness now in their life. Having gone through some dark moments myself, I know the one thing that truly brought me out of the darkness and into the light was knowing that God was with me, even in the darkness. And I can remember after those periods of darkness when I would be happy, that my happiness intensified and deepened when I remembered that God was with me in that as well. He will help us through the darkness, he will help us experience the light and he will lead us in the way everlasting.

RJ and Jillian Hughes

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, you are the creator of everything and a God that knows all. Thank you for all the blessings in my life and for always loving me. Please listen to my prayer requests, for I ask them in your son Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

Lenten Day: 44 - Thursday, April 9

Scripture: Mark 14:32-42

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Devotional:

Four years ago I was offered an assignment that definitely exceeded my comfort zone. As a member of the Gideons International, I have had the privilege of speaking in local churches and had recently qualified to be a banquet speaker. A group of six Gideon Camps in the eastern part of the state decided to have their annual Pastors Appreciation Banquets on consecutive days so they could have one Gideon Speaker and one Testimonial Speaker for all of them. I was asked to be the Gideon Speaker. I knew there would be several pastors and State Gideon officers at these banquets. The thought intimidated me, but I knew it was what God was requiring of me. I went to the Lord in prayer for guidance and direction. I had my Gideon friends lift me in prayer and trusting God, accepted the challenge. The first banquet was a large one and I made some mistakes but God was in control. It turned out to be a very rewarding and memorable experience. What God called me to do did not cost me my life, as God's call to Jesus in this scripture. But, the process was very similar. Like Jesus, I knew what God was asking me to do and I knew I could not do it alone. He prayed to the Father for guidance and asked his friends to join him in prayer as I did. Then Jesus just trusted him and did it, praying every step of the way. There are times this is what we all must do.

Ray Woodcock

Prayer:

Lord, as we think about this night when you were preparing for your greatest storm, help us to see the storm in others and pray for them. We could not be there in the garden with you to pray, but as you said of all good works, "Just as you did it to one of the least of these...you did it to me." Use me in being a praying instrument for you. Amen.

Lenten Day: 45 - Friday, April 10

Scripture: Matthew 27:45-54

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "This man is calling for Elijah." At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him."

Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

Devotional:

During the time elapsed in this scripture, there were some very incredible things happening. Darkness was occurring in the middle of the day for 3 hours. It's hard to imagine this didn't cause widespread panic—it would in modern times! As Pastor Drew has mentioned in his services, "the darkness shall not overcome the light." On that day, God removed the light.

Our everloving God left mankind in silence. This wasn't the type of silence you enjoy when sitting next to a creek with the birds chirping. It has been described as deafening silence—no sounds of nature, not even wind. God intended this because he knew that no words could describe what was about to happen.

Jesus, a man who had no sin, bore OUR sins. We can't even comprehend the amount of physical, emotional and spiritual pain he felt. Jesus felt isolation in his pain—his earthly friends had betrayed and denied him, his Father left him in darkness and alone, mankind left him to bear their sins. The silence was broken only by Jesus' cry to God.

I pray you find the reverence of this day. It's not just a day of mourning, sadness and pain, but also salvation. If we truly repent of our sins, we do not have to endure the pain and suffering that Jesus experienced. We can enjoy eternal life with him.

Matt Yonkoske

Prayer:

God, I can find no words that communicate my gratitude and appreciation for the debt that Jesus paid and the gift that you have given me through grace in him. Please empower me to live each day as a demonstration of my appreciation for your love. Amen.

Lenten Day: 46 - Saturday, April 11

Scripture: Psalm 46:1-3, 10-11

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.
“Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth.”
The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Devotional:

Fear can destroy us and undermine our faith, but this scripture encourages us to trust in God and reminds us of his power. No matter what happens in our lives, no matter how small and out of control we feel, we can remember that God is with us. We can't run away from our problems, they will still be there. We can't always fix our problems, but we can pray and ask for help. Lean on God because he is bigger than any problem. When life is falling apart, it's hard to be still but we need to slow down and remember that God IS God! You are not in control. If you learn to be still and quiet yourself before God, get on your knees and ask what HE wants you to learn and find the peace your soul longs for.

Heather Yonkoske

Prayer:

Thank you, God, for being my refuge and strength—the fortress in which I can hide my fears when my world erodes. Help me to be still so I can see the revelation of the plan you have designed specifically for me. You are God most high. Amen.

Lenten Day: 47 - Sunday, April 12

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—maybe found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the out-come of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Devotional:

Is it the journey or the destination? Is it the process or the result? Is it the hard work along the way or the achievement at the end? Is it the discipline or the reward? When I am raking and blowing leaves, it is definitely the result. When I am organizing my house, it is the journey. When I am studying for school, it is the reward. When I am reading or researching for growth, it is the process. Sometimes it is both. When I am gardening, I take joy from the work and the result. When I am working out, I embrace the discipline and struggle, but love the achievements.

Our Lenten and Christian journeys are hopefully both. Our final joy is in the salvation of our souls, but I pray you enjoy the process and discipline along the way. This journey is meant to be one of growth, improvement, and showing that we are capable of far more than we ever thought possible through the power and majesty of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is about many different things, and some of them can be difficult. I pray you embrace and enjoy the journey of this life of discipleship, as well as anticipate the ultimate reward of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Pastor C. Drew Myers

Prayer:

Resurrected Christ, come alive in us again and again, when we most need it. We claim the living hope that comes through new life in you. Amen.

