

DEVOTIONS

FOR THE SEASON OF



LENT

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

527 WASHINGTON STREET

READING, PA 19601

(610) 374-4861

WWW.TRINITYREADING.ORG

JESUS IS WITH US IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

Dear members and friends of Trinity,

The Sunday Gospel readings in this season of Lent are multi-layered and, for the most part, quite lengthy. Drawn from both Matthew and John, they tell us how Jesus encountered situations that encompass a whole range of human emotions. We read of his temptation in the wilderness; his conversation at night with Nicodemus, a curious Pharisee; the way he met the physical and spiritual needs of a Samaritan woman at a well; the transformation he granted to a man born blind; and the new life he bestowed on Lazarus and his grieving sisters. Taken together, these Lenten gospels impart the truth that Jesus is with us in all circumstances.

Our inter-generational Lent planning team hopes that these devotions, written and illustrated by Trinity members, will lead you to your own prayerful reflections and help you prepare to hear the Gospel in a new way each Sunday. Because they are preparatory, the devotions are based on the reading for the forthcoming Sunday. Begin each week by reading the Gospel at the beginning of each section (maybe you'll want to do that on Sunday night) and then, using the daily devotions as your guide, reflect of the passage throughout the week. (Some sections will include a "bonus" Saturday devotion; when they do not, use Saturday as a time for personal meditation.) For the week prior to the Sunday of the Passion, you are offered the complete passion narrative according to Matthew, broken down by days, to prepare you for Holy Week.

Thank you to our writers and artists and to our planning team. It was a privilege to serve with Avery Mazur, Jen Mazur, Raye Watson, Bruce Ilgen, Bernadette Ilgen, Steve Welz, Deaconess Deborah Graf, and Karen Eddinger to design not only this booklet, but the entire season of Lent. May you be blessed during this holy season with the knowledge that Jesus is with you in all circumstances, even to eternal life.

In his love,

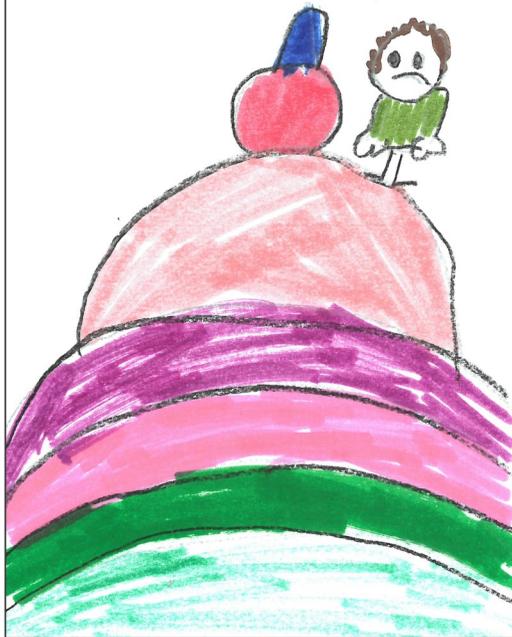
Pastor Alan Wolkenhauer

Lent, 2020

"Command these stones
to become bread"



"Throw yourself
down, for it is written"



"If you will fall down and worship
me"



Matthew 4:1-11 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

✠ Ash Wednesday, February 26 ✠

Even though we have just started into the season of Lent the message of Christmas is still in my mind. 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.' Somehow the message of Christmas seems out of place here and yet this is what it means for Jesus to be human. Who can read this and not see themselves as the object of temptation? We don't need high pinnacles or mountains; we can fall to Satan's temptation in many ways, but we know Jesus has gone before us. The angels will minister to us also, celebrating His victory.

—Berni Ilgen

✝ Thursday, February 27 ✝

So here we have Jesus led up by the spirit to be tempted by the devil. He is there 40 days and 40 nights and hungry at the end of those days. This was a time when he would be most vulnerable to any temptation put before him. I would think those days were time for solitude and reflection but then the devil shows up and puts him to the test. First the devil goes to Jesus' most basic need of nourishment, but also questions his identity. The second temptation is for Jesus to throw himself down off a pinnacle of the Temple. There again he questions not only his identity but whether or not God would come through for him. The third temptation is about promising power if Jesus was willing to worship the devil.

What was the devil hoping for; that Jesus would be weak, full of doubt, in despair? I would guess that we have all been in that desert; feeling empty, questioning whether or not God is by our side, leaving us to feel anxious, lonely, and sad. And in our own despair we have those voices in our head saying so many negative statements to reinforce the despair and to tempt us away from God.

But Jesus held his ground. He didn't need to do magic, didn't test God and worshiped only what is God. At the end of this passage the angels came and ministered to him. As humans we struggle with life's challenges. But instead of moving away from God, we need to face our despair but not give in to it. When we embrace despair, and turn to God, hope comes alive. And as Jesus was ministered by the angels, we too will be ministered by God's unfailing love.

Dear God, In our darkest hours help us to be steadfast in our commitment to you and guide us on our journey so that we will never be separated from you. Amen

✝ Friday, February 28 ✝

When I was a young boy, I remember hearing the above reading and thinking that temptation was like Superman, a figure which was very popular in my youth. When I became a teen-ager, my trust in Satan began to lessen considerably. In my adult years, I paid little attention to that idea. When I took the job at Trinity, I was very busy with my children's choir, youth choir and adult choir and I rarely thought about it. Now, in my retirement, I'm very busy taking care of Joan, along with my daughter Donna. By myself during the day, I find myself thinking about many things, especially my faith, and especially my neglect of understanding that temptation is real. The following response, which I used at the beginning of some of our services, has been very helpful to me.

SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us.

Melt us, Mold us, Fill us, Use us.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us.

—Don Hinkle

✝ ✝ ✝

✠ Saturday, February 29 ✠

Temptation: the desire to do something, especially something wrong or unwise; or a thing or course of action that attracts or tempts someone.

So what exactly does this mean in our daily lives? For many of us, food is a daily temptation, but there are so many other temptations we don't even give a second thought.

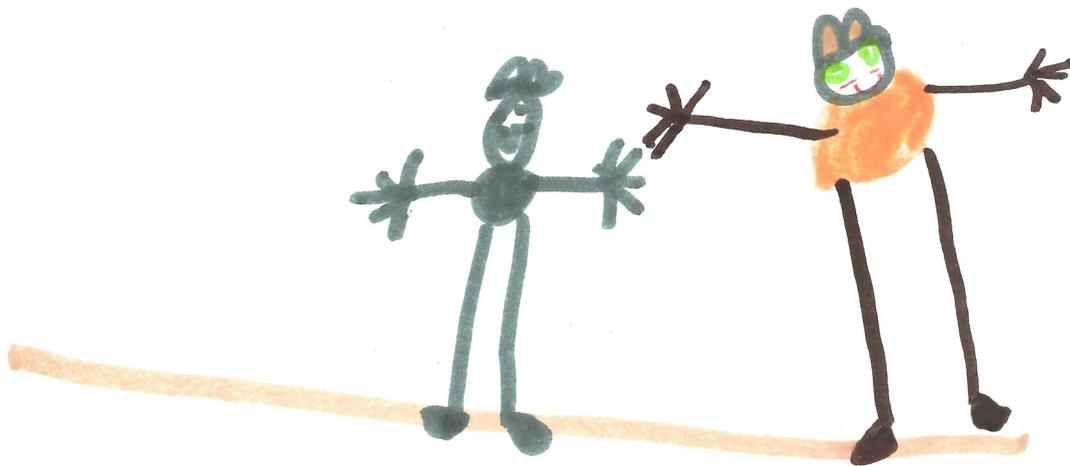
How about the temptation to cross the street so we don't have to deal with the homeless person? Or the temptation to gossip about our friends, neighbors, family members, co-workers? How do you deal with the temptation to call in sick when you just need a day off? Or making the excuse you already have plans when you just don't want to spend time with the person asking? It's just everywhere, isn't it? This sneaky thing called temptation permeates our daily lives minute by minute.

It's enough to be overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. If we face temptation the same way our Lord, Jesus Christ did, by focusing on "what is written." We know that God is with us every minute of every day, just waiting for us. All we have to do is ask for guidance and support.

So the next time we are faced with a temptation, maybe the best approach is to stop, pray, and ask for guidance, knowing God is always with us. May we all have a meaningful Lenten season on our journey to Easter.

—Vickie Unruh

For Good So Loved
the World



John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

✝ Monday, March 2 ✝

As a former teacher I know how important it is for students to ask questions. Answers provide information and stimulate more questions. We all have questions we would like to have answered, but sometimes, as adults, we are hesitant to ask our questions: we feel awkward, embarrassed, sometimes even stupid because others “get it” and we don’t. Nicodemus did not seem to have any of these issues. And Jesus – he had answers, answers that are very important for all of us.

Curiosity is a gift. God gave it to us because he wants to hear our questions. He wants to give us answers that no one else can. He wants us to know that there is no question or person that is unimportant to him. Curiosity has a broad spectrum and he is encouraging us to use our gift to make us able to help answer the questions of others. It’s called sharing the gospel.

—Marian Jameson

✝ Tuesday, March 3 ✝

Jesus says “No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” Nicodemus is curious as to how you can be born from above. Jesus says that we are born of flesh and the Spirit. We are born believers of Christ through His teachings on earth as the Son of man as well as through His Spiritual teachings as God’s Son. Whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

As a Christian, it can be difficult for me to understand the concepts of the Son of man and God’s Son. While I see myself in my life here on earth, I need to have faith and believe in scriptures about God’s Son to know that my spirit will live on eternally. This amazing process will be an ongoing one for me!

—Mike Faust

✝ Wednesday, March 4 ✝

Everyone is curious. The extent of our curiosity is determined by age and life experiences. Nicodemus was curious. Nicodemus was so curious that he went and spoke to Jesus to get answers to his questions. We can't go directly to Jesus to get answers to our questions but we can study his teachings and go to God in prayer. We can use our curiosity to help us do God's work. Have you ever thought about what you can do as an individual or what we can do or continue to do as a congregation? Our curiosity can lead us down many paths as we continue to strive to understand what God has in store for us as we try to get our questions answered.

–Raye Watson

✝ Thursday, March 5 ✝

When I read this passage, I wondered, how can you be born again? How is Jesus the only person who ascended into heaven when there were other people who believed in God/Jesus who also died?

I think Nicodemus was feeling limited in knowledge – he realized that since he did not fully understand earthly things, he could not understand heavenly things.

I think Jesus was feeling – “Really, this guy is the one teaching Israel the ways of the Lord when he doesn't understand earthly things?”

Reading this passage makes me feel like my knowledge of God (from my earthly perspective) is so much smaller than I thought it was and that when I get to heaven, I will know God so much better – I will have a much better understanding.

– Declan Rosenbaum

✝ Friday, March 6 ✝

What do you wonder about the story of Jesus and Nicodemus?

- We wonder where this story took place because in one version it said that it took place in Jesus's house and another version said that it took place outside.
- We wonder what the actual question was that Nicodemus wanted to ask Jesus.
- We wonder why Nicodemus went to talk to Jesus when he knew it was dangerous.
- We wonder why he didn't know more about Jesus because he was a Pharisee.

What do you think the characters felt?

Nicodemus may have felt curious because he wanted to know more about Jesus and the way he taught. He may have been confused because he didn't know what Jesus meant by being "born again." We wonder if he was anxious because he didn't want to be caught talking to Jesus. Jesus may have felt annoyed because Nicodemus didn't know much and glad because Nicodemus asked all the questions.

How does it make you feel?

We were nervous because if the Pharisees find him with Jesus we wonder what would happen to Nicodemus. We feel confused because of what Jesus said when he answered Nicodemus about being born twice and we want to know if you have to believe in Jesus in order to get into heaven (which makes us sad if we don't get to see pets in heaven because they can't believe in Jesus).

— Abbie and Danielle Smith

✠ Saturday, March 7 ✠

Nicodemus

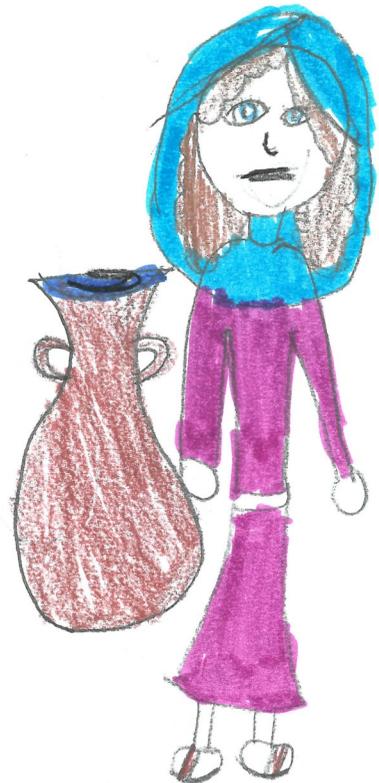
When I received the Bible passages I was to study and write on with a consideration of “Curiosity,” I swallowed hard and said “Give it a try.”

The entire passage deals with Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, sometimes viewed by us with some suspicion. Out of curiosity, he came to Jesus “by night” and was clearly not receiving Jesus’ teachings with any attitude of understanding or acceptance. John ends the meeting there. I suppose Nicodemus left troubled and Jesus was disappointed. So be it.

But, surprise! Nicodemus is mentioned again in John 7:50 where he defends Jesus in a meeting of the Sanhedrin (the highest Jewish Court) and again in John 19:40 when he brings “about a hundred pounds” of anointment for Jesus’ burial. Possibly, in his curiosity he found something in that man Jesus that the other Pharisees absolutely refused to recognize. Indeed, early Church tradition has Nicodemus present at the Crucifixion and assisting Joseph of Arimathea in taking Jesus’ body down from the Cross by pulling out the “Holy Nails” and later helping Mary Magdalene lay the body in the tomb. John 19:40 seems to confirm part of this account. (See also: JCJ Mitford, Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legend, p. 182 (1983). So it appears that Nicodemus finally found the Holy Jesus and is not quite the ogre some make him out to be.

—Donald Bobb

Give me a drink.



John 4:5-42

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

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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 truth."

The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you." Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" They left the city and were on their way to him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

✝ Monday, March 9 ✝

What do you wonder about the story?

I wonder why did Jesus not reveal who he truly was right at the beginning of the story. Why didn't she just give him the water when he asked? Why didn't the Samaritans and Jews get along?

What do you think the characters felt?

The Samaritan woman felt surprised that a Jew talked to her and that it was Jesus.

The Samaritan woman believed in Jesus.

The disciples were surprised to see the woman and Jesus talking.

The people were happy that Jesus came.

How does it make you feel?

I feel special because God gives all of us living water. I feel good that the Samaritan woman and the people found out that it was Jesus.

—Jacinda Motley

✝ Tuesday, March 10 ✝

Jesus and the woman both desired water to slake physical thirst at Jacob's well. Jesus, as Messiah, ignores the Jewish prohibition against socializing with a woman and a Samaritan.

Asked by the woman why Jesus asks water from her, He turns it around stating that if she were to request water from him she would receive living water as his Gift from God which forever satisfies thirst of the soul and provides abundant or eternal life.

A concept as yet unknown to the woman, such true worship occurs as a clear personal understanding of one's relationship with God, not on the mountain (Garizim) or in the Temple but in Spirit and Truth. Such true worshipers are sought by The Father.

Jesus uses metaphor to reveal the unseen within the experiences of life: water from Jacob's well that satisfies Israel's physical need; living water that nourishes the spirit in abundant, eternal life.

This passage describes Jesus' self revelation, the nature of true worship and his breaking down limitations and boundaries that cause conflict: male/female, Jews/Samaritans (righteous/heathen), and worship domains (Mt. Garizem, Temple/in spirit and truth).

This story invites us to go beyond the concrete, and observable as disciples of Jesus, to break down barriers of gender, nationality and worship, and to lead others to abundant life as they discover Jesus as Savior and Lord.

✝ Wednesday, March 11 ✝

The living water that Jesus is talking about is the Holy Spirit. To whomever asks, it shall be given. Whoever believes shall receive. The woman came to the well needing physical water but what Jesus was teaching her was that she needed to believe in God as her savior. She would not find happiness and peace in the physical world (desires of the flesh) but in belief in the Holy Spirit, putting her trust in God.

The woman also shared her experience with her community, thus spreading the word of God as we have been taught to do.

It is our job to go and do likewise. Believe and trust in the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and our needs, both physical and spiritual, will be satisfied.

Blessings to all from down South,
—Kaye Allen Endres

✝ Thursday, March 12 ✝

Often when we read the story of the “Samaritan woman at the well” we associate it with learning about Christ as the Messiah. This is most definitely a central theme and it is a story of hope and salvation for all. However, I would like to suggest another perspective from which we can approach the story. A perspective that revolves around evangelism and what happens to us as “people of faith” when a stranger comes to us asking for a “drink.” A “drink” can be anything from a meal, to a dollar, to help with bus fare or a ride home.

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Like the Samaritan woman we are often taken by surprise by these situations and may not know how to react. We may turn away or overthink the situation or simply do nothing. We may question whether if we give a person money will they use it for a necessity or will it be used for drugs or alcohol or some other non-necessity? Often we let the judgements of our secular society be our guide. However, Jesus says in his Gospel that even if we give a “drink of cold water” to one of the least of his brethren we give it to Him. If only we’d leave the judging of the sincerity of the person requesting up to God’s judgement, we’d probably be far more blessed. We as believers can be both the recipient of “living water” and the conduit to others.

This story is about having an encounter and experiencing the light of Jesus’s truth and love shining on us and providing us with an opportunity to share it with others. We may need to ask God for courage to respond the next time we are faced with a situation in which we find ourselves uncomfortable or facing a person in need who looks or sounds different than us. We might be the witness that person may need to know they too can experience the “living waters” and the gift of faith that is available to each and every one of us. The next time a person “asks you for something to drink” (symbolically), try following the Samaritan woman’s example and go against the tide. The living waters will bubble up in you and be evident as you share the abundant grace God offers us.

Prayer - Heavenly Father, give me the courage to be bold in order to share your “living water” and fill me with your holy joy that bubbles over and transforms me for all to see. Amen

—Pam Wasmuth

✝ Friday, March 13 ✝

The encounter between Jesus and the Woman at the Well is an extraordinary one masked in the ordinary. A man and an unmarried woman, a Samaritan and a Jew; this collision of identities and social contexts should rarely lead to conversation and connection. Jesus' disciples were 'astonished' when they returned to find that the two were speaking with one another.

This is an encounter marked by boldness and vulnerability. It breaks all kinds of rules - particularly the unspoken ones that we tend to be the most reluctant to break.

Jesus truly *saw* her - a woman likely bearing the stigma of multiple marriages, who had come to draw water at the hottest part of the day, perhaps to avoid the shame-inducing gazes of other women drawing water. The two asked questions of one another, listened well to the answers, and the encounter quickly became transformative.

What does this mean for me, as a young 20-something in the figuring-it-out stages of my personal and professional life? As a first-year medical student, I spend much of my time encountering people for brief moments. I spend days in clinic, moving in and out of exam rooms, and encountering folks who are brand new to me for mere minutes at a time. In a similar way, the work of building new relationships with my classmates often feels confined to the times-in-between. We get to know each other before lecture, in the hall, over our lunch break, or walking home from the library. Some days, my thirst for meaningful encounter is left unquenched.

I guess I am left with questions about what it means to make space for more encounters in my own life that involve bearing witness to one another - pausing long enough to really see and hear the person in front of me. In what ways can I break the rules that deserve breaking, and embrace vulnerability towards an end of deeper, more nourishing connections?

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Jesus says to his disciples: “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” The hope lies in the fact that this food - this being seen and heard by one another - is nourishment that we always have access to. We can aim to choose connection, and get tired and stressed and fail to find it, and then we can try again the next day. I am convinced that this kind of bearing witness to one other is a need that we have, and we thirst for it just as we thirst for water.

—Shea Kelly-Buckley

✝ Saturday, March 14 ✝

A “Who’s on first?” encounter at a well.

The encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well has all of the elements of awkwardness, confusion and paradox that a logical person has every urge to avoid. However, John uses this event to illustrate yet another of Jesus’ signs or revelations of his identity.

The Samaritan woman, immediately aware of the awkward situation confronting her, responds with a practical question: “Where’s your bucket?” Similarly, she initially expects the “living water” offered by Jesus to arrive in like form. However, Jesus references the living water in the context of eternal life, and the woman, evidencing her intelligence, quickly perceives that this is no ordinary Jewish man. Consequently, when Jesus tells her to go call her man (wouldn’t she need help to carry all of that water?), she elects not to tell a low-risk lie to a stranger and instead answers truthfully. He responds with a revelation of her entire life that quickly confirms her perception

that she's talking with a prophet and that the living water is not something to be carried in a bucket but the promise of eternal life. The discussion turns away from water to the coming of the Messiah and Jesus' disclosure of "I AM" the Messiah leads to an immediate life transformation. She abandons her bucket and runs to tell her fellow citizens what she has discovered. Jesus eventually responds by accepting her invitation to stay with and teach the Samaritans for two more days.

One Bible scholar, Nicholas King, observes that the bucket represents the woman's former life, which she abandons in favor of her new life as a missionary. He also observes that the disciples had no clue of what was happening and had to have the "harvest" explained to them.

Interestingly, in this event she identifies Jesus as "Lord" (the first person in the Gospel to do so), and he is also identified as "Greater than Jacob," "Prophet," "Messiah" and "Savior of the world."

Prayer:

Father in heaven, help us to realize that your love is boundless and that Jesus is not always found in all of the likely and obvious places. May we be open to the perceptions and wisdom of the stranger, those different from us, and even those of different religious practices or beliefs through whom you choose to reveal your truths. Amen

—Steve Welz



John 9:1-41

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. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided.

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So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet." The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

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Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

✝ Monday, March 16 ✝

John's book, "written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and through believing you may have Life in his name" (John 20:31) presents Jesus as the Word through whom "all things came into being." (John 1:3) John's story tells how a man born blind, not by any human cause, changed to a life with sight. The story continues describing the man's reaction and the reactions of those around him to the transformation that took place.

Reflecting on this story we approach communion with deeper insight. Through grace, one can see the things of the earth transformed; indeed, transfigured. Through Jesus, our lives are changed.

How do we react?

—Bruce Ilgen

✝ Tuesday, March 17 ✝

The theme of transformation really speaks to me because I know what it's like to have a transformative experience. Just like the blind man was healed by Jesus, I was healed through the support of my family and friends. At the beginning of 2019, I was in a bad place in life. My health was not the best, and I felt very alone in the world.

However, I found God in a hopeless place. I found God in my friends, who made me laugh and supported me through these tough times. I found God in my family who stuck by me through everything I was going through. I feel as though my life has transformed from one full of difficulty and sadness to one of hope and joy. God has been with me through this entire past year, watching over me and helping me become my true self. Similar to the healed blind man, I have transformed from a struggling young man into a confident and happy person. God has opened my eyes and allowed me to see the good things in life.

—Danny Kelly-Buckley

✝ Wednesday, March 18 ✝

What Blindness ?

The writer of John presents in metaphor the juxtaposition of opposites: The Pharisees as upholders of The Law vs. Jesus who brings Good News; Darkness vs. Light; physical vs. spiritual blindness. The man's blindness from birth was due neither to his parents' or to his sin, but was a metaphor for the absence both of physical and spiritual light which was restored in the act of Jesus' healing, coming into the man's life.

The man knows that his sight could have been restored only by God. When Jesus reveals himself to be the one who gave him sight, the man confesses his belief in God and worships Jesus. Jesus then says that he has been sent as Judge to challenge those in sin who claim righteousness through The Law and to transform, through faith in Him, spiritual blindness into Light.

—Amy Barrett

✝ Thursday, March 19 ✝

I've been struggling with social anxiety for quite a long time. One of my biggest problems is having to make decisions, especially when it comes to food shopping. It's not that I'm a picky eater. I love all types of food and cuisines. The moment I walk into a grocery store, I feel completely overwhelmed. There are too many options, too many decisions to make. It's more than just choosing between crunchy or smooth peanut butter. I need to think about the size, shape, brand, price and color of the jar.

I remember a day last year when the anxiety became so intense, I left the store with nothing in hand. For a while, I survived mainly on university food. But I knew that making my own food would be healthier and far less expensive.

I asked friends and family for advice. I tried online grocery shopping. I even went through a month of group therapy. Eventually, I discovered a strategy that works for me. Whenever I find myself in a grocery store aisle and feel a wave of panic coming on, I stop. I close my eyes, take a deep breath, and remember God's presence. God is with me wherever I am, whenever I have to make a decision, however small that decision might be. Remembering this has helped me manage my anxiety, transforming my life for the better.

—Kathrine Graf

✠ Friday, March 20 ✠

St. John is the preeminent evangelist provocateur: inviting us, teasing us, challenging us always to look deeper into his portrait of Jesus as God's Word become flesh. His portrayal of Jesus restoring sight to the man born blind is a prime example. At first glance it is a remarkable ophthalmic miracle, albeit accomplished by rather unsanitary means. Mud made from Jesus' spittle is no match for the antiseptic precision of ophthalmologists' lasers today. But it worked! Oh, my Lord, how it worked, generating a 42 verses-long drama about sight and blindness, faith and willful disbelief.

That's at first glance. Peering deeper, we see that this is the fifth of Jesus' seven "signs" in John's Gospel. Through them, Jesus shows the nature and purpose and power of his Incarnation: these signs are God's works – God's light shining in the darkness of this world. Water into wine, a blind man sees, dead Lazarus is raised to life: Jesus' signs, God's works, dramatic, miraculous transformations all. Wonder-works, to be sure, but their purpose is to call us to see and be transformed ourselves.

At the conclusion of this fifth sign, Jesus asks the man whose eyes he opened, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, 'And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.' He said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he worshipped him."

This, then, is a different kind of seeing: not optical but spiritual. This is what we mean when we say, "I see," in the sense of "now I get it," "now I understand," "aha!" Seeing in this sense is that profound transformation of heart and mind and spirit which compels us to confess, as John the Evangelist does at the beginning of his Gospel, "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)



John 11:1-45

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them."

After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

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Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him.

Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me."

When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

✠ Monday, March 23 ✠

This is a very serious story. Lazarus dies and Jesus came with his disciples. He met up with Martha, and then Mary. He was very sad about Lazarus passing away. He told them that if you believe in me, you will never die. He went to the tomb with Mary, Martha, his disciples, and the Jews who were with Mary and Martha. Jesus prayed to God, had the stone moved, and Lazarus got up.

When I hear this story, it makes me feel both happy and sad. I'm sad because Lazarus passed away, and it made Jesus sad. I'm happy because at the end Lazarus was alive. It was a miracle, and it made more people believe in Jesus. You will die some day and there is nothing you can do about that, but after you die you'll go to heaven with Jesus, and God, and the disciples. You can always celebrate life and your birthday in heaven.

***Avery's note: Her birthday is actually the day of this devotion.

— Avery Mazur

✝ Tuesday, March 24 ✝

To me, this passage truly calls into question one of the very foundations of faith – what happens when you die. It touches on traveling in the light, in that faith, and holding on to the promise of eternal life. I helped Avery write her reflection first, selfishly as it helped me gain a better understanding of the passage because of helping an almost-ten-year-old process such a complex story. She would talk, and I would type. It made me realize that, on some levels, I have become like some of the doubters in the crowd, maybe because of knowing the pain of end of life of family and friends. So then how does one gain back that faith and understanding? Maybe try to look at what life, and faith, are through the eyes of a child.

—Jen Mazur

✝ Tuesday, March 25 ✝

According to the dictionary, life is defined to be the time between birth and death. Each one of us has been given a different amount of time in our lifetime according to God's plan. It was apparent that Lazarus, who dearly loved and believed in Jesus, had his life shortened by an illness. Martha and Mary because of their faith, love, and devotion to Jesus summoned him for the sake of their brother. What tremendous faith in eternal life these women possessed.

I can't imagine the overwhelming joy they both experienced upon seeing their brother become whole again. What would you give to be able to sit, talk, and spend time with

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someone who has passed on the way Martha and Mary were able to do? As we rush through our daily routines and schedules, we sometimes take life around us for granted. So enjoy this lifetime on earth to the fullest, spend as much time as you can with family and friends, and be ever mindful that life can be gone in a twinkling of an eye.

—George and Pam Sonon, Jr.

✝ Thursday, March 26 ✝

I shared with Pastor Alan that Lazarus was “off-limits” for me during my parish ministry. I have no memory of preaching on this passage from John 11!

Best-selling books about “near death” experiences have never interested me. Those who serve in chaplaincy or are caregivers in hospice and “end of life” situations have my utmost admiration. As a pastor I realize in hindsight my reluctance to admit my discomfort around death. The trappings and wrappings in the story of Lazarus were not for me.

In addition, I had that strange notion that the raising of Lazarus impinged if not intruded on the brilliant light of Easter—the resurrection of Jesus Christ! Why does John insert this story when readers might confuse “resuscitation” with “resurrection”?

For years I identified with Martha who wants to hurry Jesus to the scene. Lord, what took you so long? If you have been here my brother would not have died!

In the Bible it is surprising how many people had an experience of God “in the wilderness” - not when life was busy and bright, but in the dark times when life was bare and barren.

In pastoral ministry I sometimes experienced the “dark night of the soul.” Because I thought a good pastor always looked on the bright side of things I avoided sharing my feelings with God or congregation. I regret that now!

Spiritual transformation does not happen only at the light level. God is there in our darkness when we are willing to realistically face our shadow side. Days when we are down, dispirited and discouraged may create a greater capacity for love and compassion.

The name Lazarus means “God is my help”! God can always find time for you and for me! Don’t sleep on God! Let the light shine in our darkness! Amen.

—Elton Richards

✝ Friday, March 27 ✝

Mary and Martha sent a message to Jesus notifying him that their brother, Lazarus, was very sick. They knew Jesus could heal his illness, as they had seen him do many miraculous things. Jesus stated that his sickness would not end in death, but rather He would receive glory from it. Disappointment ran deep when Jesus did not make it in time to heal Lazarus. Lazarus was dead.

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A few days later, Jesus travelled to Bethany. Grieving, Mary and Martha informed Jesus that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. Conversing with Martha, Jesus told her:

“I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?” When Jesus saw the sisters and the other people weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled; anger built and he wept.

Jesus asked them to take him to Lazarus’ tomb and ordered the stone to be moved.

“So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, thank you for hearing me. You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me.” (vs. 41-42)

Lazarus emerged.

Jesus’ mission was not about his friend’s timeline, but God’s. The Lord’s timing is always right. God is able to surpass even our greatest expectations of him, which in turn increases our faith.

Prayer: Dear Lord, increase our faith. Help us to build our faith by praying, trusting, and moving in Your timing and in Your way. As we wait, lead us to a greater faith and greater revelation of You and our situation. May we be reminded that your timing is always right. Amen

—Lauren Wasmuth

HOLY WEEK



Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What will you give me if I betray him to you?' They paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

The Passover with the Disciples

On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?' He said, 'Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, "The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples." ' So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; and while they were eating, he said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.' And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, 'Surely not I, Lord?' He answered, 'The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.' Judas, who betrayed him, said, 'Surely not I, Rabbi?' He replied, 'You have said so.'

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Peter's Denial Foretold

Then Jesus said to them, 'You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written,

"I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep of the flock will be scattered."

But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.' Peter said to him, 'Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you.' Jesus said to him, 'Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.' Peter said to him, 'Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.' And so said all the disciples.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.' And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.' Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Again he went away for the second time and prayed, 'My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.' Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.'

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The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.' At once he came up to Jesus and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' and kissed him. Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you are here to do.' Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?' At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.' Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.



HOLY WEEK—WEDNESDAY

Matthew 26:57 – 27:10

Jesus before the High Priest

Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered. But Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and going inside, he sat with the guards in order to see how this would end. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death, but they found

none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, 'This fellow said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days." ' The high priest stood up and said, 'Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?' But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, 'I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'You have said so. But I tell you, From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.'

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?' They answered, 'He deserves death.' Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him, saying, 'Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?'

Peter's Denial of Jesus

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, 'You also were with Jesus the Galilean.' But he denied it before all of them, saying, 'I do not know what you are talking about.' When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.' Again he denied it with an oath, 'I do not know the man.' After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.' Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, 'I do not know the man!' At that moment the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: 'Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly.

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Jesus Brought before Pilate

When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

The Suicide of Judas

When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. He said, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' But they said, 'What is that to us? See to it yourself.' Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, 'It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money.' After conferring together, they used them to buy the potter's field as a place to bury foreigners. For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one on whom a price had been set, on whom some of the people of Israel had set a price, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me.'

Pilate Questions Jesus

Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus said, 'You say so.' But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, 'Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?' But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Barabbas or Jesus?

Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, 'Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?' For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgement seat, his wife sent word to him, 'Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him.' Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, 'Which of the two do you want me to release for you?' And they said, 'Barabbas.' Pilate said to them, 'Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?' All of them said, 'Let him be crucified!' Then he asked, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Let him be crucified!'

Pilate Hands Jesus over to Be Crucified

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.' Then the people as a whole answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children!' So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

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HOLY WEEK—THURSDAY

Matthew 27:11-31

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.



HOLY WEEK—FRIDAY

Matthew 27:32-56

The Crucifixion of Jesus

As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.'

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Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, ‘You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.’ In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, ‘He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, “I am God’s Son.”’ The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

The Death of Jesus

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!’

Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

The Burial of Jesus

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

The Guard at the Tomb

The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, ‘Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, “After three days I will rise again.” Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, “He has been raised from the dead”, and the last deception would be worse than the first.’ Pilate said to them, ‘You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can.’ So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.



Palm/Passion Sunday: April 5—one service at 10:00 AM

Maundy Thursday Worship: April 9 at 7:30 PM

Good Friday– The Seven Last Words of Christ

April 10 from noon-3:00 PM. Come and go as you desire.

Easter Sunday—Resurrection of Our Lord, April 12: One worship service will be held in the Nave at 10:00 AM, with a wonderful Easter breakfast and a fun Easter egg hunt for the children preceding the service (bring a basket or bag for your eggs!).