



LENTEN
REFLECTIONS
2020

CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

HOLY WEEK SPECIAL SERVICES

* *Services will be livestreamed*

APRIL 5 | PALM SUNDAY

Recital: 4:30 PM | *Sanctuary*

Choral Evensong: 5 PM | *Sanctuary*

Prophets, Poets and Preachers: D. S. Martin, poet, reflection

APRIL 6 | HOLY MONDAY

Holy Eucharist: 7 PM | *Sanctuary*

APRIL 7 | HOLY TUESDAY

Holy Eucharist: 7 PM | *Sanctuary*

APRIL 8 | HOLY WEDNESDAY

Tenebrae: A Service of Darkness 7 PM | *Sanctuary*

APRIL 9 | MAUNDY THURSDAY

Service of Foot-Washing and Holy Eucharist*: 7 PM | *Sanctuary*

APRIL 10 | GOOD FRIDAY

Solemn Liturgy*: Noon | *Sanctuary*

Choral Stations of the Cross: 7 PM | *Sanctuary*

APRIL 11 | THE GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER

First Service of Easter: 7 PM | *Sanctuary*

Paschal Feast to follow | *Guild Hall*

APRIL 12 | EASTER SUNDAY

Holy Eucharist: 7 AM | *St. Dunstan's Chapel*

Easter Egg Hunt: 10:30 AM | *Front Lawn*

Festal Holy Eucharist*: 9 & 11:15 AM | *Sanctuary*

Services with full choir, organ, and brass.

Nursery care available for children under the age of three years old.

Brass & Organ Recital: 4:30 PM | *Sanctuary*

Easter Choral Evensong: 5 PM | *Sanctuary*

Prophets, Poets and Preachers:

The Rt. Rev. Bonnie Perry, Bishop of Michigan, homilist

ASH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26

By the Reverend Dr. William J. Danaher, Jr. | Rector

"... and your Father who sees in secret will reward you ... and your Father who sees in secret will reward you ... and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

Matthew 6:6,18

READING FOR THE DAY: MATTHEW 6:1-6,16-21

REFLECTION

Lent begins with a very public act of piety. We receive ashes on our foreheads, and we are told, "From dust you were made and to dust you shall return." Nonetheless, despite this very visible act, Lent is a season of inner transformation. Whatever disciplines we might or might not do mean nothing if we are only changed on the outside. For our "Father ... sees in secret." God is not interested in outward conformity but in our spiritual renewal. Lent celebrates Jesus' journey to his death and resurrection. To observe it faithfully, we must participate in a spiritual journey that follows the figure of Jesus' death and resurrection. We must die to those parts of ourselves that keep us from God. Thereby, we become ready to be reborn as the people God created us to be.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

Take a moment to reflect on what is keeping you from experiencing God's love in your life—a hidden shame, a fear, a self-doubt, a resentment, a distrust, a wound. While at prayer, place them in the merciful hands of Jesus, who has come so that such things no longer have power over you. Resolve to place these same sins in Christ's hands each day until they become like the ashes that slowly fall away from your forehead.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27

By Joe LaVela

He said to them, "But who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Messiah of God."

Luke 9:20

READING FOR THE DAY: LUKE 9:18-25

REFLECTION

Jesus asks the disciples who the crowds say he is, and gets a variety of answers, all wrong. Then he asks the disciples who they say he is, and Peter responds, "The Messiah." Peter had the right answer, but he did not understand its implications, which Jesus was then quick to point out: Jesus would suffer, be rejected and killed, and *anyone* wanting to be his follower would have to take up their cross and follow him into that. Not once, but daily.

The question of who we say Jesus is, then, does not get answered with words, at least not words alone. The real answer is seen in the lives we live, in daily actions that show that we understand the implications of what we say on Sunday mornings. And when they do, then the answer to the question of who we say Jesus is helps us know who we are, too. We do not lose our lives when we deny ourselves for Jesus' sake; we save them. We get to discover our true purpose and live it out.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

In what ways do the things we do today show that we believe Jesus is our Lord and Savior and that we understand the implications of that belief?

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28

By the Reverend Chris Harris | Associate Rector

And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

Matthew 9:10-13

READING FOR THE DAY: MATTHEW 9:10-17

REFLECTION

As followers of the Way of Jesus, why are we called to break bread with strangers and those whom we consider to be outsiders, outcasts, others – or even our enemy? My quick answer is because in the eyes of God all people are beloved children of God! Sharing a meal with the "other" is a good place to start to live into that reality. My longer (and perhaps harder) is that the "other" is precisely the person to whom we are called to build relationship and to reconcile with. If all we do is break bread with those who look like us, think like us, share our politics or our theology, we run the risk of only building upon an already inherent "tribalism," rather than building the Kingdom of God. Moreover, it turns out it's mutual. The "other" also happens to be the only person who can also heal us, make us more whole, and more fully human – more fully alive! It turns out, it's the other who completes us so that together, we might become the Body of Christ.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

Take a moment and think about who the "other" is for you. Is it their age? Married or single? Their income or education? Whether they watch FOX or read the New York Times?

Whoever that person is for you, use the 40 days of Lent to invite them to dinner for no other reason than to get to know them and to hear their story. And then see what the Holy Spirit does next!

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29

By Sarah Buckley | *Communications Director*

After this he went out and saw a tax-collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up, left everything, and followed him.

Luke 5:27-28

READING FOR THE DAY: LUKE 5:27-32

REFLECTION

Following someone without question isn't meant to be an easy task. Yet we see that Levi did so without hesitation, when Jesus calls him to be one of his disciples. Jesus then dines among the tax-collectors, despite the Pharisees' and their scribes' complaints that it was forbidden to sit at table with tax-collectors and sinners. To sit at a table with someone meant to treat them as a sister or brother.

Yet in response, Jesus says something quite powerful: "I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners." Jesus' mission was not to further along those who were just, but to offer sinners the opportunity to repent. Instead of continuing to segregate and oppress those seen as sinners, Jesus saw this as an opportunity to reintegrate and embrace them.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

When have you recently accepted and included someone you normally don't? Did it surprise you? Has there been an opportunity where you could have included someone but didn't?



FIRST WEEK IN LENT

AFRICAN CROSS

Artist/ Year Unknown

From the Collection of The Rt. Rev. Robert Wright, Bishop of Atlanta

SUNDAY, MARCH 1

By Janice Lovchuk | Receptionist & Ministry Assistant

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Matthew 4:7

READING FOR THE DAY: MATTHEW 4:1-11

REFLECTION

Jesus was steadfast in adhering to and believing the Word of God even when he was tempted and tested several times by the devil. Jesus was adamant to serve only God.

We realize that we need to live by the Word of God and serve only God, and we know angels will be amongst us and around us to protect and guide us. The angels will bear us up to withstand difficulty or attrition, and the love of God will be revealed and uncovered to us.

Nothing can break us from the love of God.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

When have you felt broken and had to rely on the love of God?

MONDAY, MARCH 2

By Meredith Skowronski | Executive Assistant to the Rector

"Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

Matthew 25: 34

READING FOR THE DAY: MATTHEW 25:31-46

REFLECTION

A saint that has been an inspiration in my life is St. Teresa of Avila who said this:

"Christ has no body now, but yours. No hands, no feet on Earth, but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ looks compassion into the world. Yours are the feet with which Christ walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which Christ blesses the world."

This passage from Matthew along with this quote from St. Teresa is a constant reminder to me to remain watchful and to be ever-present in my life. It is an enormous but tremendously beautiful charge that Christ has given us: "as you do it to the least of these... you do it to me." What a weight and responsibility, but at the same time, what an incredible gift!! Jesus trusts me enough to love others as he does.

It is easy for me to become so engrossed in the business of the day, my checklist of "to do's," and my work and family obligations that I often miss opportunities to truly serve others. If only I could, with every breath, remember what I am called to do: to love God and to love my neighbor. And how better can I show love to my neighbor than by seeing them and serving them where they need it most?

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

Can you take some time during your day today to be acutely aware in the present moment? Whom do you notice around you that you can serve?

TUESDAY, MARCH 3

By Tiffany Morris-Street | *Administrative Assistant*

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

Matthew 6: 10-13

READING FOR THE DAY: MATTHEW. 6:7-15

REFLECTION

When we pray, is it in supplication to God? Do we trust that God's will is the best path? The Lord's Prayer is the first formal prayer many Christians learn and yet it can be the most difficult to follow. It is easy to turn to God with prayers of thanksgiving, but when life gets tough, as it inevitably will, are we willing to say to the Lord, "Your will be done"?

Our most fervent prayers often begin with a big ask: "Please, God, help me find a new job," "Lord, make my loved one well," "God, bless us with a child." In these instances, faith is needed to trust God's will. We do not have control over the outcomes, yet we spend hours of worry and concern over them. Instead, let us trust in God, or as the country song by Carrie Underwood more colloquially states, let "Jesus... take the wheel." Trust that, even when life does not seem to be going the way you had hoped for, God has a plan, and it is marvelous.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

What outcome have you been praying for that you can prayerfully give to God and say, "Your will be done"?

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4

By Linda Truxell

When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation."

Luke 11: 29-30

READING FOR THE DAY: LUKE 11:29-32

REFLECTION

Despite Jesus having performed multiple miracles and curing a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, the Pharisees were unconvinced that he was the Messiah. They said, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you." Jesus condemns their desire for a sign as an indicator of evil. His answer is that, just as the people of Nineveh had the sign of Jonah, the sign for this generation would be his own future death, burial and resurrection.

In the Old Testament, the Prophet Jonah was commanded by God to go to the city of Nineveh and warn the people that God was going to destroy them because of their wickedness. Jonah disobeyed God and ran away by boat to the city of Tarshish. God then sent a severe storm that the crew blamed on Jonah's disobedience and threw him overboard into the sea. The sea calmed and Jonah was swallowed by a great fish; he remained in the belly of the fish for three days and nights before being spat safely onto dry land. The second time God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh, the people believed God, turned from their evil ways and repented.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

What might everyday signs of the "life and death and resurrection" of Jesus look like? What keeps us from seeing them?

THURSDAY, MARCH 5

By Chas Kipp

"Is there anyone among you who, ... 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!"

Matthew 7:10-11

READING FOR THE DAY: MATTHEW 7:7-12

REFLECTION

"Hey dad, can we have ice cream for lunch?" I'm sure my children were not thrilled when I suggested a sandwich instead. Trying to do the best thing for their health and well-being ("happiness" intentionally omitted) challenges any parent. Imagining how God must feel is completely beyond my limited mental faculties. God promises to answer our prayers. Christians know that asking for the winning lottery numbers is akin to rum raisin at noon. Yet we have enough to always be generous. This passage has vast layers but two are my focus as we enter Lent.

Be mindful of what we ask our Father. Asking for ice cream (or winning lottery numbers) may elicit a different option or seemingly get no answer at all. That does not mean you will not receive what you need according to God's omnipotence. This is the most challenging part of the Gospel: faith: faith that our Father will do what He knows is best. The answer may be delayed, it may be profoundly different than the prayer. To have faith is to accept that God's understanding is as limitless as his love for each of us and the world.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

How can each of us improve our prayer life and nourish our faith that God will always do what is "right," even when we really just want that mint chocolate chip ice cream?

FRIDAY, MARCH 6

By David Jensen

“Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.”

Matthew 5:25-26

READING FOR THE DAY: MATTHEW 5:20-26

REFLECTION

Events that seem to be of little significance when they occur may be seeds of something of great importance later on. They can lead to major challenges, conflicts and turning points in life. Decisive moments can be influenced by what may seem small to us. Pray to see where God may be leading us in the little things. For example, our words. They are powerful: they can kill, or they can bring life.

The Pharisees were mainly concerned about love of God rather than love of neighbor. But for Jesus the two are linked intimately. He draws attention to the importance of right relationships with God and others. Reconciliation and forgiveness are at the heart of all relationships, because God is relational and a God of relationships.

Our lives are made up of an endless set of small moments; so many of them involve others, our family, our friends, our business associates, and our neighbors.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

How well do you do when you experience conflicts in your relationships? May God give us the grace and presence of mind to make the most of every opportunity to love, and when we say something we should not have, the courage to make it right.

SATURDAY, MARCH 7

By Meredith Skowronski | Executive Assistant to the Rector

“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?”

Matthew 5:43-44

READING FOR THE DAY: MATTHEW 5:43-48

REFLECTION

This is one of those passages that I feel like we hear “all of the time” and that makes me glassy-eyed. “Love your enemies...” Yup. I know. Check. So, when I was assigned this passage to reflect upon, I challenged myself to read it with fresh eyes and an open mind. “What new lesson could God be trying to teach me through this?”

It’s amazing what God reveals to us when we take the time to listen. There were a couple of new thoughts that came to me as I read and reflected upon this passage this time around. The first is that God does not discriminate. His sun “rises on the evil and on the good” and God “sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” It’s as if God is saying that every day is a fresh start for everyone. His sun rises on us all and we have a choice each day to recognize and acknowledge that sunlight (be righteous) or we can choose to ignore it (be unrighteous).

Secondly, it struck me that this passage challenges me personally, as a child of God, to do more and to be more. If I only love those who love me, how different am I from anyone else? If I only greet my brothers and sisters and not those who are foreign to me, how am I any different from those who do not have the light of Christ? It is through stretching myself and “perfecting” myself—by showing love to my enemies, to those who are foreign to me, and to those who I find it hard to love—that the light of Christ within me shines more clearly. And when that light shines, it not only illuminates outwardly to others, but it lightens something within me, too.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

Take some time today to identify someone in your life that you find hard to love. Reach out to them in some way.



SECOND WEEK IN LENT

IMITAZIONE DI CRISTO

Roberto Cuoghi, 2017

Italian Pavilion, Venice Biennale

SUNDAY, MARCH 8

By Nathan Costa | *Assistant Director of Music & Liturgist*

"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."

John 3:8

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 3:1-17

REFLECTION

As people of faith, we're sometimes called upon to have answers to theological questions, Biblical conundrums, "church teachings," and the like. John's gospel even provides the ever-curious Nicodemus to pose questions of faith to Jesus himself, as student to teacher, not unlike Socrates' interlocutors in Plato's dialogues.

In this long discourse that famously proclaims the new life made possible in baptism, Moses' foreshadowing of the resurrection, and the depths of God's sacrificial and saving love, there also lies a truism of the Spirit, that, no matter how much we know — "Are you a teacher of Israel and do not know such things?" Jesus asks Nicodemus and, by extension, us — like Socrates, we ultimately "know nothing" of the baptismal life we claim. Jesus says we know the presence of wind by its sound but know not from or to where it blows. So too this baptismal life: no matter what we think we may know about Jesus' teachings to Nicodemus, ultimately we know only the Spirit's presence, but nothing about where it will take us — in our continual rebirth, our life's constant dying and rising, and the consequences of and our response to God's saving love.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

How do we wrestle with what is known and knowable, and unknown and unknowable in living out our baptismal life?

MONDAY, MARCH 9

By Kellie Herdade | Youth Minister

Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying...

Luke 6:27-28

READING FOR THE DAY: LUKE 6:27-38

REFLECTION

What an indescribable joy it must have been for Simeon to finally see what he had been waiting for. I wonder if he was patient while waiting on God. I wonder if he had ever thought God was answering and then found out it wasn't so. I know that when I wait on God for answers, I am not always patient: I am a doer, and waiting is difficult. I must constantly remain in communication with God so that I don't start imagining that I have the answer. I believe there is a calmness or a knowing that comes to us when we are guided by the Spirit. I love this best when teaching young people and I mouth wisdom and later think, "YES, thank you God, for there is no way I came up with that!" It's a beautiful thing when we allow the Spirit to guide us.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

When looking for God's instructions or answers, how do you wait?

TUESDAY, MARCH 10

By Robert Carrigan

"[The scribe and the Pharisees] love to be greeted with respect in the marketplace and to be called 'Rabbi' by others...But you are not to be called 'Rabbi' for you have one teacher and you are all brothers."

Matthew 23:7,8

READING FOR THE DAY: MATTHEW 23:1-12

REFLECTION

My pretense was an antique house in Boston. Shame followed my recognition of the pretense, and my shame was soon eclipsed by several bad events. But at each of three bad turns, I prayed to Jesus and was relieved by God as I worked my way along the path to humility.

The path to humility is long and difficult. You are not alone in your journey — Jesus is with you and God is watching.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

Try to recall a situation in which you sought and were pleased by praise and accolades for an accomplishment. Then, having read the passage above, work through what you did and how it felt when you were praised. Did you benefit? Were you satisfied? Recognize the connection to humility given to you by God.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

By Jill Bednas | Minister of Membership & Engagement

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom."

Matthew 20:20

READING FOR THE DAY: MATTHEW 20:17-28

REFLECTION

While reading this passage, my mind kept drawing me to the mother of James and John and her large request. She seeks a position of importance for her sons, to sit in prominent places beside Jesus. I wonder about that. We all want good things for our children, but is it power and status that she seeks for them? Or something else? Jesus explains that it is for God to decide the path chosen for them. Jesus goes on say, when he is counseling the angry disciples, that the way to greatness is not by the example of the current rulers. This was applicable in Jesus' time and to me. This also sounds incredibly applicable to current times. First, you must serve. Seek to serve others, and not to be served.

It is not for you to say what God's will is. It will be seen. Wait, be patient, and serve.

I often say to my children, be of good service to others.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

How, where, when ... can you serve?

THURSDAY, MARCH 12

By Kate Bell | *Director of Children's Ministries*

But Abraham replied, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony."

Luke 16:25

READING FOR THE DAY: LUKE 16:19-31

REFLECTION

In this parable, the rich man did nothing to help Lazarus when both were alive. After both have passed, the one who struggled (Lazarus) is blessed with joy and the one who focused on himself (the rich man) finds struggle. This parable is also a reminder and lesson not to overly cherish worldly and earthly possessions, because they are of no value in the afterlife. As folks tend to say, "You can't take it with you!"

I've been going through a personal journey over the last few months of making more with less—sharing more of what I have, giving away, recycling and purging the extra things that seem to be distracting me from serving God. It's not been an easy process, but I am starting to see the benefits. My thought is that if I have less to physically care for, I will have more time to serve others and find joy with the gifts that are around me. God gifts us with amazing things, not necessarily material in nature, but of divine beauty. Did you see the sunrise? Have you felt the breeze? Did you smell the cookies baking? Did you feel the hug from a friend? Or are you distracted?

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

I wonder, what is the purpose to hold on to more than we need? What benefit is there in keeping a large collection of things, when some folks go without? Can you find a way to serve another in a way you have not done before?

FRIDAY, MARCH 13

By Melinda Saylor

Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, the tenants treated them the same way.

Matthew 21:36

READING FOR THE DAY: MATTHEW 21:33-43

REFLECTION

Our lives are affected by many variables and influences that shape who we become. The inception of social media has increased the constant barrage of incoming messages we receive on a minute-by-minute basis. These messages and social status norms increase our sense of needing to belong. To be a member of the popular crowd, the beautiful people, can make us feel good. Being accepted adds to our self-esteem. Once you're a member, how often are you willing to deviate from your group? The Pharisees and priests were not willing to deviate from their group and accept the messages from God. They continued to treat people the same way and could not accept another path.

To receive God and Jesus in your heart enables you to deviate from the crowd. It empowers you to make the difficult choice to be different, while knowing it may disconnect you from your group. To take a chance on welcoming a stranger, helping someone out, making a difference in someone's life is an incredible gift we all are capable of doing. Welcome a different path from the norm, discerning right from wrong, and see where it might take you. Lead your life with grace, generosity and integrity and you too will feel enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

How do you like to be treated in life? How do you approach and treat others? Do you stand up for what is right? Do you make a difference?

SATURDAY, MARCH 14

By Victoria Lorenzi-Jump | *Pastoral Care Associate*

Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found."

Luke 15:31-32

READING FOR THE DAY: LUKE 15:11-32

REFLECTION

This parable reminds me how important love and forgiveness truly are. Could you forgive a family member for all the hurt they had caused you? What if they did not ask for your forgiveness—they just expected it? Could you forgive them then? I realize forgiving is extremely difficult, but without forgiveness we cannot heal. Even when the person is not looking for forgiveness from you, for your own sake forgive yourself for the ill feelings you have for them. Be that person you would want God to be toward you one day.

Judgment seems to be a part of forgiveness. Are you judgmental of yourself or others? Do you lead with judgement before knowing the entire story? People do not always appear to be who they are. We show strength when we are feeling weak. We show confidence to hide our insecurities. We look attractive when inside we feel unattractive. We outwardly display at times someone we are not. Since God gives us patience to forgive ourselves without judgement, shouldn't we offer that same patience with non-judgement to others?

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

What did it feel like the last time you forgave someone?



THIRD WEEK IN LENT

PISS CHRIST

Andres Serrano, 1987

Stux Gallery

SUNDAY, MARCH 15

By Silvia Karlsson

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.

John 4:39-41

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 4:5-42

REFLECTION

What strikes me the most about the Samaritan woman story is the fact that Jesus, a Jewish man, reaches out to a Samaritan woman. Jews did not associate with Samaritans, and Jesus not only talks to her and the others that come, but he stays with them and offers them salvation! He could have stayed only among the Jews, but he reaches out beyond his people and opens up salvation to all of us. Talk about a diversity and inclusion program! Through that one conversation with one person who is different, many of her people come to believe.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

In this Lenten season, what are you going to do to reach out to those who are different from you?

MONDAY, MARCH 16

By Anonymous

“Truly I tell you,...there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”

Luke 4:24-26

READING FOR THE DAY: LUKE 4:23-30

REFLECTION

It's been remarked that people can stand just so much truth. But Jesus seems to ignore this warning in his inaugural sermon at his hometown of Nazareth. Having delighted his hearers with what sounds like resoundingly good news in his reading from Isaiah, he goes on to rock everyone's boat by observing that in times of national disaster, the prophets Elijah and Elisha were sent to bring comfort only to non-Jewish strangers like the widow in Sidon, or, worse, military leaders of national enemies like Naaman the Syrian. Who is Jesus to sell his hometown this load of unfamiliar, even unacceptable, ideas? What's more, how dare he challenge old cherished beliefs about who are God's favorite folk? Us, that's who! Don't confuse us with uncomfortable facts.

But here, as elsewhere, the good news Jesus brings is as much for aliens and even vaguely suspicious folk "out there" as it is for the home base. But it may sometimes be more acceptable to the outsiders, who can receive this radical good news at face-value because they are not carrying all the baggage of prejudice and assumptions which prevent the hometown hearers from really hearing what Jesus so dearly wants them to hear. So his old friends and neighbors try to crucify him.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

How familiar does this incident sound to you? Do you dare to believe our gracious and always truthful Lord can change your own heart and mind as well as the hearts and minds of your least favorite people?

TUESDAY, MARCH 17

By Michael Odette

Then Peter came to him and said: "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him: "Not seven times, but I tell you seventy-seven times."

Matthew 18:21-22

READING FOR THE DAY: MATTHEW 18:21-35

REFLECTION

As I read this passage from the Gospel of Matthew, I'm struck by how emphatic Jesus is... seventy-seven times.

I'm not truly sure that I've learned to be forgiving even one time, in the way that Jesus means, let alone seventy-seven.

How can it ever be so?

Yet Jesus clearly and simply commands it to me.

How can it it ever be so?

I pray for guidance to understand and learn the meaning and actions of real forgiveness, that I might receive the blessings of grace Jesus intends us to receive and to give as forgiveness, this day and always.

Teach me forgiveness, Lord Jesus, as you have forgiven us ... seventy-seven times and counting. Amen.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

I can only imagine baby steps, as I take Jesus' command to heart. I'll strive today to remember small kindnesses and forgiving acts, and open my eyes and my heart as I grow in forgiveness and gratitude.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

By Jessica Neeper

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

Matthew 5:7-9

READING FOR THE DAY: MATTHEW 5:7-9

REFLECTION

This reading has always befuddled me. On the surface it seems rather simple, and as a teaching directly from Jesus, I categorize it as a "need to know" teaching. Honestly, I am never one to feel merciful or pure in heart and I am definitely more of a troublemaker than a peacemaker. As a result, I have felt that this reading was for other people and realized my great disconnect with the passage. This time I look at it with new eyes and heart to want to understand.

Jesus, as the crowds gathered, went up a hill to teach. In this moment, Jesus highlighted mercy, purity of heart and peacemaking. I believe that when he said, "Blessed are the peacemakers," he intended an inner peace and joy that comes from being right with God. When Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful," mercy is intended as forgiveness and compassion. And finally, when Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart," from a pure heart come good things, inner purity and singleness of mind. I have learned that this is a paradox between the present and the future. Perhaps for us to acquire these states is to do so in the present impacting a future outcome.

How? It all happens with grace directly from God. The truth is, we are "the beloved," we are "the called." We can do all things in Christ who loves us beyond measure. With this knowledge of being deeply loved, we can attempt to go forward with God's help, to give mercy, have peace in our hearts and attempt to cooperate. Perhaps we can become peacemakers in an election year. Perhaps we can give mercy, or have compassion on others struggling in jail, ill, homeless, or hungry. Perhaps we can have a renewed singleness of mind through a concerted effort of personal growth with God.

This application of grace applied to the present has the power to impact our environments, therefore impacting our world. To strive to see the kingdom of God brought about on this earth, in this time, will be through our acts of compassion, singlemindedness in following God and our direct cooperation and reconciliation. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

THURSDAY, MARCH 19

THE FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH

By Jordan Braciszewski

After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

Luke 2:46

READING FOR THE DAY: LUKE 2:41-52

REFLECTION

Many times we find ourselves ashamed because of answers we do not have, errors we have made, or ways in which we have wronged others. When others ask us difficult questions, we find it difficult to say, "I don't know," and instead make up answers to save face. This passage in Luke shows us that even Jesus – the Son of God! – seeks answers from elders in order to grow closer to his Father and be a teacher to us all. He shows us that all fall short, no one has all the answers, and that listening, curiosity, and openness will help grow our relationship with God and others.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

When we see our own lack of knowledge or experience, can we pause to open our minds, hearts, and souls with curiosity as Jesus has done, rather than close ourselves off with embarrassment or shame?

FRIDAY, MARCH 20

By Amy Ryberg

“Teacher, you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; and ‘to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,’ and to love one’s neighbor as oneself.’ —this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

Mark 12:32-33

READING FOR THE DAY: MARK 12:28-34

REFLECTION

We are all familiar with this passage, but how do we actually live it? Ritual, church attendance, doing things in prescribed ways, may help point us to God, but they are not God, just as pointing at the moon is not the moon. They do not make us holy, nor do they win us favor in God’s eyes. We may do these things to prove to ourselves and others that we are religious or spiritual, or perhaps, in hopes that they will help us become closer to God. But, more importantly, “burnt offerings and sacrifices” may actually keep us FROM God.

We can become legalistic, compulsive, sanctimonious, avoidant. We can check the box that we are “good Christians.” Even well intended activities and objects can become addictions, superstitions, substitutes, or distractions.

“Be still and know that I am God.” Stillness and silence, given to being with God, with no agenda and no expectations, is a time-honored way of nakedly offering ourselves, our time and our attention to God. Allow God to touch our hearts by saying, “Here I am, Lord.”

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

What would our days be like if we actually centered them around loving God and our neighbors (who are God’s creations, as are we)?

SATURDAY, MARCH 21

By Betsy LaVela

God be merciful to me, a sinner.

Luke 18:13b

READING FOR THE DAY: LUKE 18:9-14

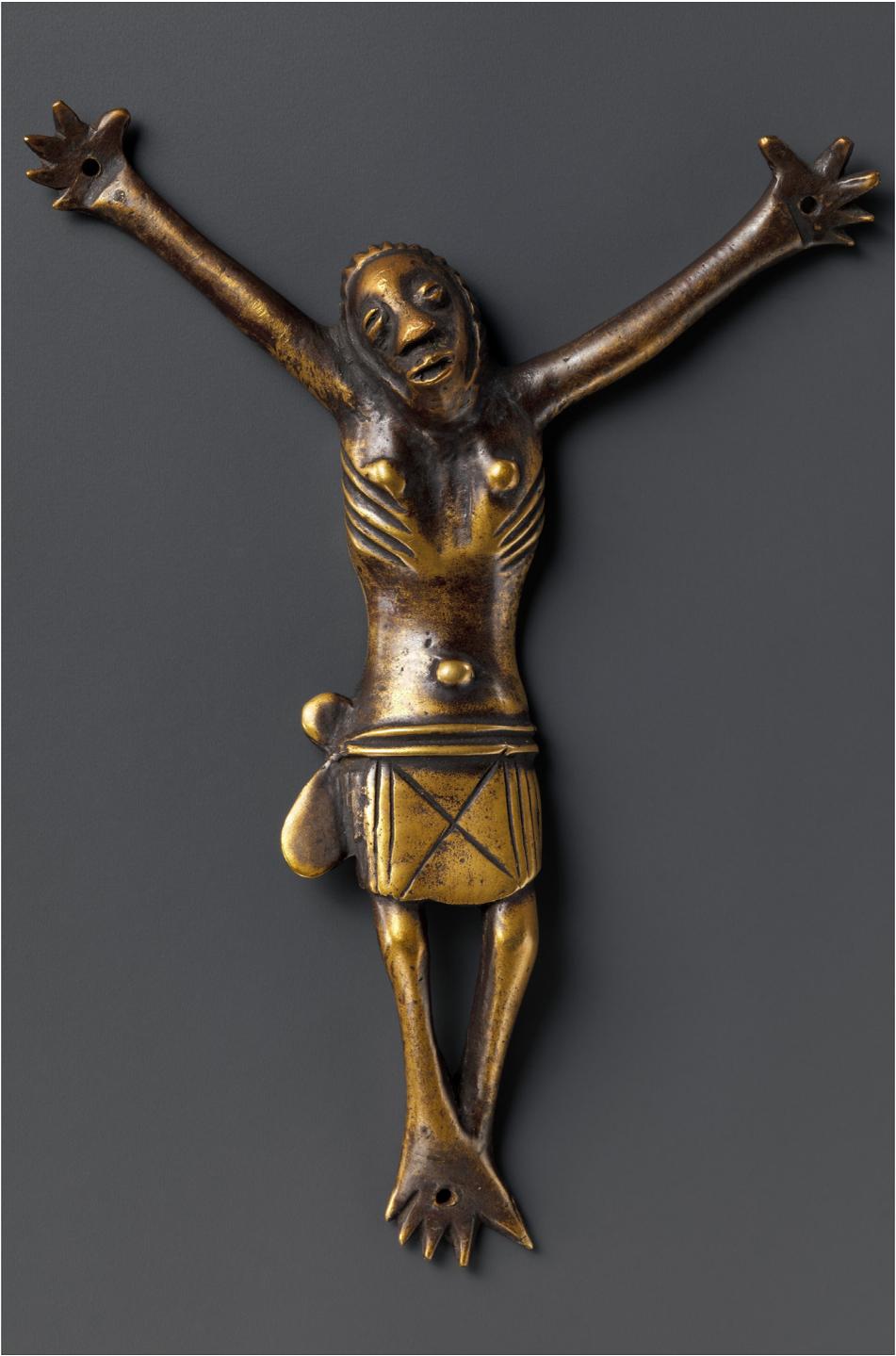
REFLECTION

When we need God's unconditional mercy, it's there. God has mercy to give — even to those who have judged themselves unworthy. In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, the latter shows us by his actions that he considers himself unworthy. The Pharisee, on the other hand, thinks that God has rules about who receives the gift of mercy and that he qualifies. Yet there are absolutely no limits to God's mercy and loving-kindness.

To visualize this, go find the following: a small jar with lid; sand or sugar; a marble or round stone. Place the marble in the jar... that's you. Cover the marble with the sand or sugar (that's some of God's abundant mercy.) Tightly cover the jar. Now shake it up and down (the ups and downs of living). Notice that in both the ups and downs, you (the marble) are surrounded by God's mercy. It's there for you.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

What does God's mercy (the sand) do for you (the marble)? Try it and see!



FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

CHRIST

Artist Unknown, 18–19th Century

Metropolitan Museum of Art

SUNDAY, MARCH 22

By Patrick Gahman

He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

John 9:25

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 9:1-41

REFLECTION

Close your eyes and count to five. Total darkness. That was the blind man's reality all his life. But one day Jesus found him, told him what to do, and suddenly he could see! Some of the religious authorities were upset that this miracle had been performed on the Sabbath. They threatened him and his family asking them how this happened. They called him a sinner and also the One who performed the miracle. He had, no doubt, been dubbed "sinner" all his life based on the disciples' question to Jesus in verse 2. His answer was simple: "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

Sometimes we don't know what we don't know. God finds us in our spiritual darkness and gives us sight. Ask Jesus to show you where you are spiritually blind so that he will open your eyes.

MONDAY, MARCH 23

By Troy Dostert

When the two days were over, he went from that place to Galilee (for Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in the prophet's own country).

John 4:43-44

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 4:43-54

REFLECTION

It is sometimes easy to forget the hardship, struggle and frustration that can accompany the life of faith. This is especially so when it comes to the need to address injustice or wrongdoing in our world. Jesus embraced this prophetic role during his ministry, and he was accustomed to paying the price when his message either fell on deaf ears or, in some instances, generated fierce opposition. Although Jesus received a steady stream of accolades for the numerous miracles he performed, when he offered more challenging truths to those unaccustomed to having their assumptions or privileges called into question, his audiences could and did turn on him with a vengeance.

Importantly, Jesus approached these situations with a certain shrewdness, planning his tactics in a way that would maximize the effectiveness of his ministry by allowing him to find the people who would most eagerly receive his message. If this meant leaving Judea for Galilee or Samaria, where his hearers could include less “righteous” Jews or the more widely-reviled Samaritans, Jesus was perfectly willing to follow the urgings of the Spirit in order to proclaim the Kingdom of God to anyone receptive to it. While Jesus never shrank in the face of antagonism, at the same time he sought opportunities to find those for whom his message would bear the most fruit. During our own Lenten wanderings, may we find sustenance in the awareness that Jesus’ own “home” was wherever he was welcomed—and may we be open to seeking surprising opportunities to bring God’s liberating message to those who most need it.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

In what ways is God sharing our sorrows—and our joys—today?

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

By Mollie Proctor

One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"

John 5:5-6

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 5:1-18

REFLECTION

Jesus questions this lame man, knowing that he has been in this condition for quite some time. Perhaps the lame man does not know how to get out of his predicament and feels destined to this life of infirmity. Alternatively, since this is the only life he has known for thirty-eight years, he may be comfortable enough to stay in his situation. So, Jesus asks if he wants to be healed.

This is a very reasonable question that Jesus asks of all of us. Jesus is listening for our answer to this question at all times. Jesus is ready to heal us. Yet there are various scenarios that Jesus encounters when he asks. Some are not willing to be healed. Some prefer to continue to live the life that is known and become anxious about living a different life — there is comfort in the known. Change can be scary. Some do not have a firm idea of what they really want to be healed in their life.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

How have you followed instructions and trusted without hesitation in your life?

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION

By Greg McMillion | Sexton

But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus."

Luke 1:30-31

READING FOR THE DAY: LUKE 1:26-38

REFLECTION

We see in the story that an angel was assigned to deliver the message to Mary, who was a descendant of David, to bring forth a promise to all of us. We have a promise dealing with our Redeemer, something that seems so impossible. But in our redemption, we can see what he has promised us.

First, we see that Mary was blessed to be the one chosen by the Father God to give birth to our Redeemer, and a blessing was given to her cousin in her old age to have a child. Second, we see an example of God doing the impossible thing in our lives: Mary had never known a man, and Elizabeth was too old to give birth to a child.

As we read this, may it be an example for me and you to know every day that we have a God who works in doing impossible things. We look to God and listen to the message that comes to us every single day with the opportunity for the impossible to take place in my life and yours.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

I pray as you read this that you will be blessed in courage to believe that the impossible can take place in our lives if we believe and trust God. One day at a time.

THURSDAY, MARCH 26

By Nathan Costa | Assistant Director of Music & Liturgist

"You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life."

John 5:39-40

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 5:30-47

REFLECTION

The first promise made by candidates for ordination as deacon, priest, and bishop in the Episcopal Church requires this very claim about scripture and eternal life: "I solemnly declare that I do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation." And candidates make this same claim at each ordination (!) — as if the previous one(s) were not binding the next time around, or, more likely, to reiterate this important statement about the prominence of Scripture in the life and leadership of the church.

Candidates for baptism and confirmation — our common life in Christ — make no such claim. Our baptismal covenant has us promise to proclaim the gospel "by word and example," but it makes no assertion linking scripture and eternal life. Scripture, Jesus says, is indeed testimony, the only witness we have to his life on earth and to the working-out of God's promises in history, and as such it contains "all things necessary to salvation." But our coming to Christ — to the waters of rebirth and refreshment, baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ — is a *choice* to have life and to give continued witness and example of the living good news.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

How might we choose every day to "come to [Christ] to have life"?

FRIDAY, MARCH 27

By Victoria Lorenzi-Jump | *Pastoral Care Associate*

"But after his brothers had gone to the festival, then he also went, not publicly but as it were in secret."

John 7:10

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 7:1-2,10,25-30

REFLECTION

Are we hiding from something in our lives? Certainly, there have been circumstances in our lives that called for us to be discreet. When we try to keep something hidden from others, is it for good intentions? Can secrets keep people safe? When children know secrets, they struggle with the burden, and eventually tell all.

In this parable Jesus travels in secret to the temple to teach, even though the Jews are looking for him. This secret kept him safe so he could do God's will. God knows all our secrets.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

What secret do you have for God's will?

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

By Anonymous

When they heard these words, some in the crowd said, "This is really the prophet." Others said, "This is the Messiah." But some asked, "Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he?"

John 7:37-39

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 7:37-52

REFLECTION

Jesus has gone to Jerusalem for the great autumnal festival of Succoth, which even today recalls for Jews the wandering in the wilderness before they settled in their promised land. And water was not easy to come by in the desert. So Jesus stands up on the last day of this festival to proclaim himself as the source of water: pure, eternally flowing, and free for the asking. This water is the Spirit of God, Jesus' and his Father's gift which will sustain and refresh weary believers every day of their lives.

But in the face of such an overwhelming promise, the crowds—and later, the religious authorities—begin to nit-pick about prophecies of the Messiah's origins, or to sneer at Galilee as a backwater filled with uneducated hicks from whom the Messiah cannot possibly come. Only a few, and among them the Temple police who have been sent to arrest Jesus as a rabble-rouser, seem to hear what he actually says: that out of our dry, often sad, conflicted and dispirited hearts can flow living water—not stale, standing water, but water clear and bubbling with life. "Never," say the police, "has anyone spoken like this."

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

When you are deeply moved by what your heart tells you is the truth, what moves you the most—a background check on the teller, or the fruitful results of the message?



FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

CRUCIFIED CHRIST

Unknown, ca. 1260–80

The Met Fifth Avenue, Gallery 304

SUNDAY, MARCH 29

By Troy Dostert

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.

John 11:33-35

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 11:1-45

REFLECTION

The raising of Lazarus from the tomb is one of Jesus' most well-known miracles. Not only does it display Jesus' power over death in a particularly vivid way, it is also a foreshadowing of his own death and resurrection. Yet in some ways, the most gripping aspect of the story is what happens before the miracle: the moment when Jesus arrives to see Mary, Lazarus's sister, and the many others who are gathered in the midst of their grief over Lazarus' passing. All Jesus has to do is witness the scene and he is instantly struck to the core, and he responds by instinctively sharing their sorrow.

In our rush to get to the culmination of the story and to experience Lazarus' resurrection, it is easy to miss the potency of Jesus' simple yet profound impulse in shouldering his friends' burden of suffering. To know what it is to live in a world of deep joys and deep sorrows, and to experience our humanity in all its fullness—this was Jesus' lot on earth. And it gives us the reassurance that, no matter the struggles we face, we worship an incarnate God who suffers and rejoices right alongside us.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

In what ways is God sharing our sorrows—and our joys—today?

MONDAY, MARCH 30

By David Jensen

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor."

Luke 2:52

READING FOR THE DAY: LUKE 2:41-52

REFLECTION

This is the only story in the gospels about Jesus between his infancy and his public ministry as a man. Jesus' parents, and Jesus himself, were devoted to the law of Moses. They loved it, studied it, obeyed it. The story is centered at this crucial turning point in every Jewish boy's life, his twelfth year.

Verse 52: *"He increased in wisdom."* How can this be? Fully God and fully human? It is not easy to imagine how Christ can be God and not be omniscient. Evidently the incarnate Christ was able somehow to bracket or limit the actual exercise of his divine powers so that he had the personality of God (basically, the motives and will of God), but the powers of knowing all and the infinite strength of God he somehow restrained. They were his potentially, and thus he was God; but he surrendered their use absolutely, and so he was man. Therefore, the child standing before us here in the temple is not so different that he can't serve as an example for us and our children.

I think we can learn something here from the way Jesus related with these teachers. There are four things to see:

1. he sought out teachers and sat in their midst;
2. he listened;
3. he asked questions;
4. he gave answers.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

How do we increase in knowledge and understanding? By the example of Jesus, find yourself wise teachers who love God; listen to them, ask them questions, and keep asking until it all begins to fit together, and have them ask you questions, and give them your answers. If Jesus did it, we should do it.

TUESDAY, MARCH 31

By Kellie Herdade | Youth Minister

"And the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him."

John 8:29

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 8:21-30

REFLECTION

Maybe Jesus is telling us that a good way to never feel alone is to do what is pleasing to God. I know I have at times felt alone or left in darkness of my own making. It's not that God left me; it's that I could not see God because of the sin or self-centeredness that I was covered in. It is difficult to feel God's presence when you are doing things that He would find unpleasant. Usually we are trying to hide not only from God but from others when we are doing things that we know we should probably not be doing. Lucky for us, God gives us infinite do-overs so that we can feel close to Him again!

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

Do you need to reset to feel God's presence today?

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

By Kate Bell | *Director of Children's Ministries*

"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

John 8:32

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 8:31-42

REFLECTION

"The truth will set you free" is one of the most frequently quoted messages of Jesus. What is the TRUTH? And what is FREE?

Jesus wants to lead me into truth so that I may be free from sin. If I truly desire freedom, I just need to be ready to accept the truth. Simple? Maybe? There is nothing threatening or accusatory here; it is about trusting God fully and being loved deeply. Our love comes from the heart, and that is where we welcome, accept and hold God close to us. Sharing that love with others is what Jesus would want us to do. When I work with the children, I love to talk about how they sense God ("sense" being the physical: see, feel, smell, etc.). The conversations are simple and profound. Their words remind me to listen, to be aware, to understand the truth and the freedom that come from trusting God so beautifully.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

I wonder, where did you see God today?

THURSDAY, APRIL 2

By Stephanie Rose

Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word."

John 8:54-56

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 8:51-59

REFLECTION

From the earliest scriptures in Genesis, God has asked for obedience in exchange for his glory, and in this passage from John 8, Jesus tell us he will give us eternal life through obedience. These days we express our accomplishments by speaking about the "school we attended," "degrees we've earned" or "people we know." These subjects can be considered as egregious or braggadocios, because speaking on these things is acceptable and considered our calling card to the world. However on the other hand, things that usually surround glory, positive character or influence are not from external sources.

How do we know which is which? I think we express God's glory through integrity, truth, being loyal, willingness to sacrifice, being accountable, showing self-control, by being kind or friendly to a neighbor or someone we encounter. These, sometimes, may not be easy to do or the coolest thing. The gifts or fruits of the Holy Spirit found in Galatians are Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Forbearance, Gentleness, Faith, Modesty, Continency, and Chastity.

There are many ways of expressing our goodness to one another—by taking the time to call someone we haven't seen lately, or sending a greeting card, or a simply greeting someone with a smile. Then again, to know that some people aren't interested in your smile or kindness and to have the confidence that God will give you "a peace that passes all understanding," is pretty cool, too; to know that when sticks and stones can break your bones, words can never hurt you.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

In what other ways can we show God's glory to our neighbors and the people we meet?

FRIDAY, APRIL 3

By Nathan Costa | Assistant Director of Music & Liturgist

"If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

John 10:37-38

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 10:31-42

REFLECTION

I've often found that the 1960s folk hymn, "They'll know we are Christians by our love," to be problematic in our contemporary social and religious context. Is "Christian love" — love *by* Christians? *among* Christians? the song is not clear — distinct from the love of people of other faith? Even given Jesus' commandment to "love one another as I have loved you" (John 13: 34-35) — to love wholly, lavishly, sacrificially — do we really want to make a message of Christian exceptionalism about the essential human condition of love? Do Christians always love in ways of which we are proud?

Christian love-into-action may be a better way to express and proclaim a Christian faith. "Believe the works," Jesus says to his skeptics. *Facta, non verba* — deeds not words, goes the saying, and, as much as we might think otherwise, our actions often precede our own belief. So too will it be with others.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

How does the work we do everyday reflect and proclaim love of God?

SATURDAY, APRIL 4

By Kellie Herdade | Youth Minister

"Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done."

John 11:45-46

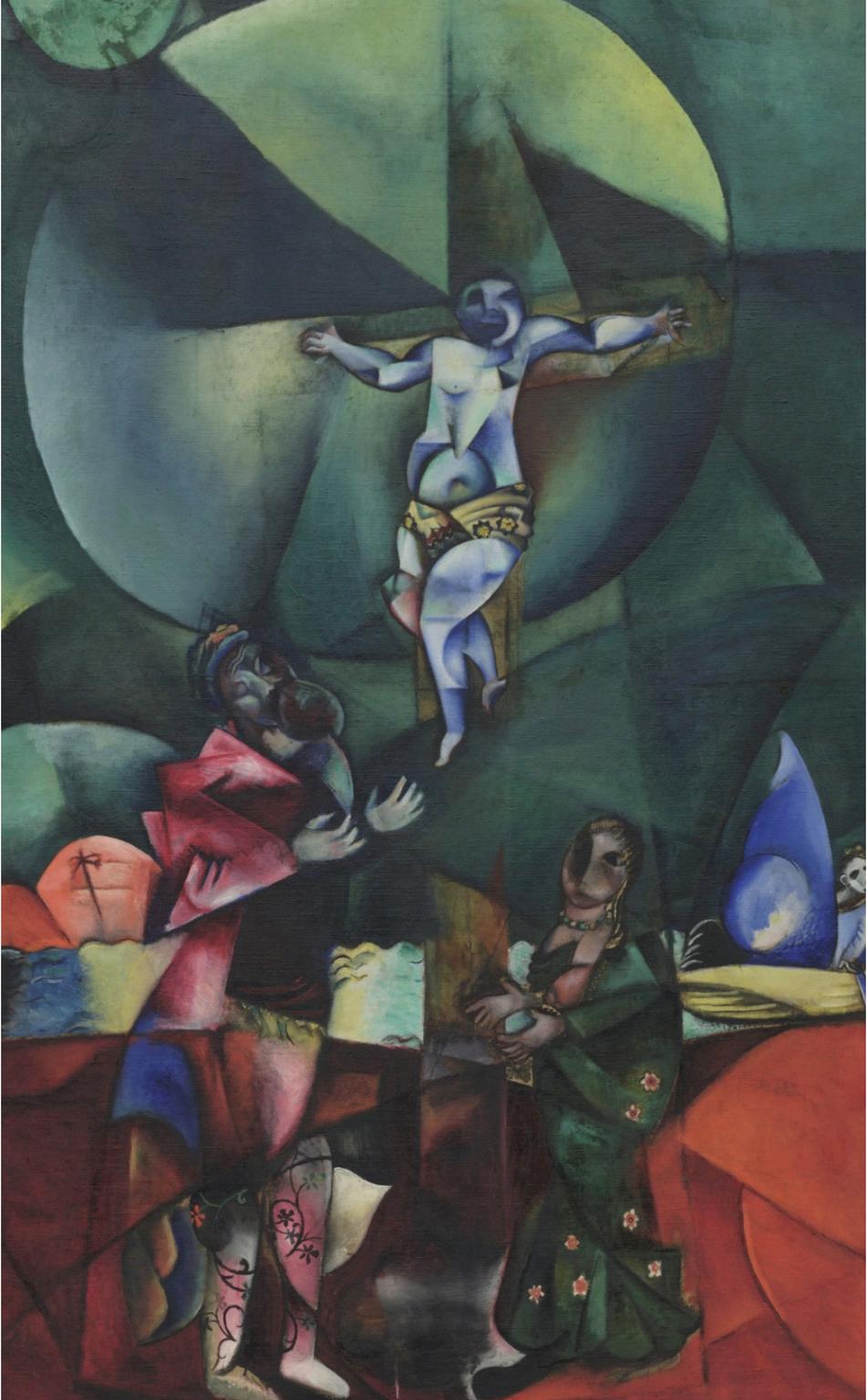
READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 11:45-53

REFLECTION

I wonder if they were jealous. Seeing someone do the incredible miracles that Jesus performed and witness the love that must have poured out from the people that were helped could make some green with envy. I know I have found myself watching what others do and feeling envious, maybe even talking snarky about them because of this envy. It's difficult to admit that it isn't always easy to cheer on those we wish we could emulate! I wish I could always have the spirit of the believer and not that of those who gossip their disbelief. I am so thankful that God is a God of grace.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

Is your heart one of the believer today, or are you letting envy blur your vision?



HOLY WEEK

CALVARY

Marc Chagall, 1912

Museum of Modern Art

PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 5

By the Reverend Dr. William J. Danaher, Jr. | Rector

"Hosanna!

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

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Matthew 21:9

READING FOR THE DAY: MATTHEW 21:1-11

REFLECTION

In 1991, while visiting the United States, Queen Elizabeth toured a housing project in the poorest neighborhood in Washington, D.C. A woman named Alice Frazier welcomed the Queen into her home.

No one had told Mrs. Frazier that the proper protocol was that no one should physically touch the Queen. So, Mrs. Frazier did what came naturally – she reached out and hugged the Monarch.

To everyone's surprise, the Queen smiled and returned Mrs. Frazier's hug. Known worldwide as "The Hug," the embrace symbolized a deep connection between two women. Community organizers credit it with playing a catalytic role in the neighborhood's revitalization.

Rituals reveal a desire for spiritual connection. Palm Sunday is one such ritual. Jesus enters Jerusalem and people greet him waving palm fronds – another ritual of royal visitation. Not a week later, the same people chant, "Crucify him." Palm Sunday therefore reminds us that we, who worship Jesus, will deny and betray him if given half a chance.

However, standing behind this ritual remembrance is God's own deep desire for connection. Palm Sunday reminds us that, despite our failures, God's grace is supreme. The King of Kings still comes, because he knows that the end for him will not be death but resurrection. Because this connection comes by grace and is brought through his cross and resurrection, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

Today, remember God's deep desire for connection with you. Let your heart return this desire, which is your joy and life.

HOLY MONDAY, APRIL 6

By Kate Bell | *Director of Children's Ministries*

"Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."

John 12:3

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 12:1-11

REFLECTION

This story is a strange one if you have never read it before. Why would you pour expensive perfume on someone's feet and then use your hair to wipe it up? The visual is quite unusual. Understanding what the value is of an object is not an easy one for children to appreciate. The goal here is to communicate that Jesus is worth more than things that could wear out or be used up. What matters is putting Jesus first and recognizing that he is worth more than anything. Our choices need to be chosen with the intent of serving God.

Everything has a cost, and the cost of our sins should be death — BUT because of Jesus, we have received LIFE instead. There is no monetary value here. As we grow to appreciate and understand this truth, we should want to place Jesus first in our lives making sure whatever we do goes back to him. How do we do that? Praying, reading the Bible, giving thanks for God Sightings, and loving others, of course!

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

I wonder, how did you share God's love with another today?

HOLY TUESDAY, APRIL 7

By the Reverend Chris Harris | Associate Rector

“Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”

John 12:24-25

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 12:20-36

REFLECTION

This is the response Jesus gives when he is told that word of his ministry has reached the point that crowds of admirers, some of whom have traveled a great distance, have come and are waiting to meet him. Rather than prepare to meet adoring fans, Jesus instead looks ahead to his imminent suffering and death as if to ask, are they SURE that’s the Jesus they want to meet? It’s an important question, because depending on who we are, what we have, and what kind of God we are looking for, the Way of Jesus might seem disappointing or downright crazy! Jesus is NOT a messiah who will restore peace and justice in this world with divine might, but who in the ultimate reversal will render the unjust powers of this world powerless by laying down his life and inviting us to do the same.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

Are we ready to surrender in order to win? Are we willing to suffer to get well? Are we ready to die, so that we might truly live? And are we prepared to give our life away, so that we might keep it? Is this really the Jesus we seek?

HOLY WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8

By the Reverend Manisha Dostert | Senior Associate Rector

After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, "Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me." The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking.

John 13:21-22

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 13:21-32

REFLECTION

We are set up for failure — one of us will betray Jesus. Just as it was back then, so it is today with Jesus. Here, we think everything is going well in our life with Christ. We think that we as a church and people who love and believe in the good news of the Gospel will trust and follow Christ. We, of all people, will go wherever Christ leads us. We will even go to the cross because we believe in resurrection.

And yet, one of us will betray Jesus. One of us will wrap our arms around Jesus and stab him in the back by stopping short of believing, loving, sacrificing and trusting he will lead us past the cross. We look around at one another, uncertain of whom it will be. Will it be you? Will it be me? Who will begin to think, "What if living as if Christ is saving us makes me a fool? How can I back off this precipice that can lead to my own destruction?" What will we do when one of us betrays Jesus?

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

Lord, I will betray you. When I do, create in me a clean heart and renew my spirit. Amen.

MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 9

By Meredith Skowronskil *Executive Assistant to the Rector*

“Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.”

John 13:1-2,5

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 13:1-17, 31b-35

REFLECTION

Maundy Thursday is my favorite church service of the year — the incense, foot-washing, remembrance of the Last Supper through partaking of the Eucharist — these activities engage my senses in worship and place me within fingers-length reach of God.

For me, the story of the Last Supper is one of the most humbling and challenging events presented within the Scriptures. We all know that at the Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of his twelve disciples. But it wasn’t until recently that I stopped and realized that this also meant that he washed the feet of Judas—and that he did so KNOWING that he was about to be betrayed by him. He KNEW that one of his closest friends and confidants was going to set into motion his painful and excruciating death and yet he CHOSE to wash his feet.

This passage says that “...He loved them till the end... I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” I think about the times that I choose not to act out of love because I am stubborn or afraid of being hurt or because I am being selfish. But here is Jesus, humbling himself before the one person who is about to turn his back on him, here we see him loving the one person who is about to send him to his death. If Jesus can love Judas so completely, who am I to pick and choose to whom and when I show love?

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

How can I more completely embrace the love of God in my own life and reflect that love to others?

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 10

By the Reverend Chris Harris | Associate Rector

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

John 18:25-27

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 18:1 — 19:42

REFLECTION

When I read these verses from John, I realize how much of my sin is not even what I do, but what I choose to ignore. Often I choose to ignore problems I think are too big for me to solve. One example is the millions of people in our prisons, most of whom are black and brown, and the profits made off of their imprisonment by for-profit companies. Are any of my retirement stocks invested in those companies? I don't actually know. But I know that when Jesus was arrested and executed, the authorities didn't actually have a charge against him. He was a criminal not because of anything he had done but because of the way he was labelled and treated.

I have been happy to forget that in our country Jesus is locked up and continues to die without justice every day. Lord, have mercy upon me.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

What injustice have you ignored? Are you going to continue ignoring it?

HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 11

By the Reverend Manisha Dostert | Senior Associate Rector

"We remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead.'"

Matthew 27:63-64

READING FOR THE DAY: MATTHEW 27:57-66

REFLECTION

They sealed the stone, just to be sure. They mortared it to the tomb to prevent any shenanigans from the Jesus freaks who might try to make a point out of this travesty, or worse, deceive the people in thinking something miraculous happened. They were smart not to underestimate the people who followed Jesus. Jesus himself had the audacity to show up, tell people how to live fully, love them with abandon, and then assure them by saying even death would not stop him. Thank God the guards prevented confusion and chaos, for what would have happened if they had not taken precautions? Those dangerous disciples may begin to say and do things that would give people hope that there was more to this world than they could see. It was a good thing they shut this down, for now there is no confusion: Jesus is dead, sealed in his tomb. There is nothing left to see or do, except return to our lives and pick up the pieces.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

After death, what do you expect a mischievous, intrusive divine being who enters our world to do?

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 12

By the Reverend Dr. William J. Danaher, Jr. | Rector

Mary Magdalene went and said to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"

John 20:18

READING FOR THE DAY: JOHN 20:1-18

REFLECTION

The resurrection is not a reward for living a good life, but the power of God entering time and space. Just as God created all things when God said, "Let there be Light!" so God speaks again by his Word, his Son, who has been raised from the dead.

The resurrection begins today. Sin and death and evil have been vanquished. They may still be present in our world, but those things have been defeated by Jesus Christ.

Christ's resurrection is more than just the promise of a return of your love, a return of your hope, a restoration of your faith in humanity. The resurrection of Jesus Christ promises something that philosophers would call "natality," or new birth.

Christ's resurrection promises new birth. It is Christ who lives in you now. You have not been given an old love but a new love. This love will give you the power of loving in ways you never could love before, and of loving those who you could never love before.

You will be given the power to experience new hope. In the midst of hopelessness, you will be able to speak words of hope and share your own experience of hope in your life.

And you will experience new faith, not of faith based on exteriors or the things that you have inherited from previous generations, but alive and living faith today.

QUESTION/PROMPT OF THE DAY

Where in your life can you proclaim the victory of Christ's resurrection?



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