

2026

Lenten
Devotional



the Episcopal Church of
St. Peter
& St. Paul



INTRODUCTION TO OUR LENTEN DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Once again, we find ourselves on the pilgrim way of Lent. On behalf of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, I want to thank our many parishioners and friends who contributed to this year's Lenten Devotional Guide. I especially want to thank Billy Harrison and all the others who helped line up submissions and Greg Went for producing this document in both print and digital formats.

The Episcopal Church of St. Peter and St. Paul has offered this ministry of introspection and hope for its parishioners since 2001. Tom Mimms, its founder, continues to provide valuable guidance in this endeavor. These heartfelt daily readings come from many sources, including favorite *Bible* verses, the *Book of Common Prayer*, hymns and theological writings.

I want to especially thank those who came through in our hour of need and offered fresh perspectives on this crucial season. Every voice deserves to be heard.

The "wisdom of the crowd" has become something of a cliché of late, yet I think you'll agree after reading this that together we are much wiser than we are alone. We hope you find as much inspiration from reading these as we did from writing and compiling them.

- Lee Woodward

ASH WEDNESDAY
February 18, 2026

Joel 2:15:

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly.

We begin Lent today, a season of turning and returning to God. We start with the solemn acknowledgment that we have turned away from God, and that we need God's help in returning to him. And we gather today together to make a right start of this season of penitence, to acknowledge that we are dust and to dust we shall return. We read the words of the prophet Joel (2:1-17) who told the people "sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly." How does one "sanctify a fast?"

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are the two specific fast days in the Episcopal Church. You may fast at other times, but these two days are particularly set aside for fasting. There are many ways to fast, from complete abstinence to simple food in small portions, to abstaining from certain kinds of foods, such as meats or other luxuries. Fasting is not dieting—it is not seeking self-improvement, but rather a continuous mindset of reliance on God and an awareness of God's provision and presence despite whatever hungers we feel.

An 'unsanctified' fast would be focused on ourselves, or mere suffering without purpose and without God. A sanctified fast, on the other hand, is a discipline of self-denial in order to call our attention to God. A fast is sanctified—made holy—by God's purpose and God's presence. Our purposeful and holy time of 'less' with God opens our eyes to God's provision for us and God's blessings to us. As we train ourselves more and more to turn our hearts to God, we prepare ourselves for the feasting of Easter, when we rejoice that God brings us through any wilderness equipped and strengthened by his grace, prepared for new life in him.

Gather with us today. Learn and find strength through the words of your brothers and sisters in Christ in this book each day. Turn your hearts to God each day in Lent, with God's purpose and God's presence, and thus prepare for a more joyful Easter.

- The Rev. Tom Pumphrey





Thursday, February 19, 2026

Mathew 22:37-39

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

When asked which is the greatest of the commandments, Jesus sums it all up in two quotes from Hebrew scripture (Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 19). Upon these hang all of the law, as well as two thousand years of Christian tradition. The Pharisees in their efforts to trap Jesus in a legalistic argument have instead trapped themselves.

Jesus goes on to tell us stories, such as the memorable one of the Good Samaritan and then asks us, “Who is your neighbor?” The answer, as any Christian knows in their heart of hearts, is “We all are.”

In 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 Paul tells us “Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs.” I believe he could well have added that it knows no social status, nationality, political affiliation, denomination or gender identity.

It is so easy, here on the doorstep of Lent, to become so caught up in our sacred obligations that we forget their purpose. Rather than, “What can I give up?” or “What should I give up?” the better question, it seems, is “*What have I allowed into my life that gets in the way of my truly loving God and loving my neighbor as myself?*”

*Lord, help me to give up from my life all those things that separate me from you and from my neighbor.
Amen.*

- Lee Woodward



During Advent, we waited on Jesus to arrive, and so he did. We watched as the world recognized and welcomed him at the Epiphany. In the weeks that followed we continued to celebrate a new year, full of hope and expectation. We learned more about Jesus and various stages of his life in ministry.

Now it is Lent. Now we wait again. We spend the long night watches in reflection and meditation, the focus turning inside to our very souls. We meditate on Christ’s presence within us and what that really means. What will the miracle of Easter do for us, how will it change us?

Every single morning, I repeat these words: “Lord, open my lips and my mouth will proclaim your praise,” from Psalm 51. Rarely do I stop and think about what this means in my life. How am I doing this? Am I even doing it at all? This year during Lent I will meditate on these questions and listen for God’s response- as it comes in His own time. How do I, Yahweh, proclaim your praise?

Then, as the long night is over, we wait again, but only briefly. We say Christ is risen! And so, he is! Will I rise with him, a new soul, a stronger voice with which to proclaim him? I believe the answer is yes!

- Darron Kendrick



Friday, February 20, 2026

Luke 6:27–38

Jesus said, “I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

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

Commentary

Today’s lesson from Luke recounts our Lord’s “sermon on the plain,” the shorter version of Matthew’s “sermon on the mount.” This part of the sermon is tough to hear. Frankly, loving my enemies and doing good to someone who hates me are ideas I’d rather “think about” than practice.

Later in our text, however, is a command that may be the toughest of all: “Forgive,” said Jesus, “and you will be forgiven.” Say what? They suggest a transactional *quid pro quo* that God’s forgiveness of me is predicated on my forgiveness of others. Do I see any hands raised who’ve pulled that off?

Digging a bit deeper, I was reminded that the Greek verb, here translated “forgive,” is ἀπολύω (a-po-LU-o). Luke uses this verb 13 times, but only here, in the entire gospel, do the NRSV translators render the verb as forgive. In the other 12 places, they translate the verb as “send away,” “set free,” and “release.”

What if we substituted “forgive” with “release?” “Release, and you will be released!”

Our souls’ hurt, brokenness, and scar tissue is no illusion. Others have and do and will disappoint us. Times are, we hurt ourselves.

The gift our Lord gives in these six words wraps forgiveness in the garment of choice. When we release ourselves and others from the “whatever,” grace is able to finally do its restoring work. The hands of our wounded soul open up, refusing to hold in its once fierce grip whatever or whoever it was that hurt us.

And in doing so, we find healing release. The beast of resentment and grievance no longer stalks us. Releasing “it” to God, we discover we have been released, freed, and made new.

Tim Owings, Ph.D.

Member, Trinity Episcopal Church, Asheville, NC
(brother of Beth Dulson)



Psalm 139 1-15:

1 Lord, you have searched me out and known me; you know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

2 You trace my journeys and my resting places and are acquainted with all my ways.

3 Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, but you, O LORD, know it altogether.

4 You press upon me behind and before and lay your hand upon me.

5 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain to it.

6 Where can I go then from your Spirit? where can I flee from your presence?

7 If I climb up to heaven, you are there; if I make the grave my bed, you are there also.

8 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

9 Even there your hand will lead me and your right hand hold me fast.

10 If I say, "Surely the darkness will cover me, and the light around me turn to night,"

*11 Darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day;
darkness and light to you are both alike.*

12 For you yourself created my inmost parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

*13 I will thank you because I am marvelously made;
your works are wonderful, and I know it well.*

*14 My body was not hidden from you, while I was being made in secret
and woven in the depths of the earth.*

15 Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb; all of them were written in your book; they were fashioned day by day, when as yet there was none of them.

Many years ago, at a Brotherhood of St. Andrew meeting, Peter Williams selected this psalm of David for the Bible study. It resonated with me immediately and in a way I could not have imagined.

A short time after that I laminated these verses and began reading them every morning as a start to my day. For the last several years I have studied these verses more and more and have given them a lot of thought as to exactly what the author meant by them.

They clearly suggest that God knows everything and to try to hide from God is both foolish and futile. I find it helpful to be regularly reminded of this. After reading and studying a number of commentaries on Psalm 139 I have come to recognize these three truths:

1 God's omnipresence - God is everywhere, at all times, and in all places maintaining relationships with everyone simultaneously. But it's not just that God is everywhere - **God is everywhere with me.**

2 God's omniscience - God possesses infinite knowledge of the past, present, and future. And it's not just that God knows everything - **God knows me.**

3 God's omnipotence - God is all powerful, possessing unlimited and absolute power to do anything with his perfect and holy will. It's not just that God created everything - **God created me.**

What an awesome God we have.

- John Patton



Saturday, February 21, 2026

Matthew 4: 1-2

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry.

I see Lent as a season of renewal and boy did I need it after this past year. 2025 was painful—losing my mother, father-in-law, uncle, and several life-long family friends. By the end of it, I felt exhausted and grateful simply to turn the page of the calendar. Entering 2026, I felt a renewed sense of hope.

Starting Lent on Ash Wednesday (as this winter has shown thus far) I expect it to be cold and dreary. A clear reminder of what the Lord tells Adam in Genesis 3:19, “By the sweat of your face You will eat bread Until you return to the ground, For from it you were taken; **For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.**” A clear consequence of disobedient choices made. Ash Wednesday reminds us of our mortality “you are dust.” It can feel stark, even discouraging, but this truth prepares us for the hope that follows.

I think about Matthew as he talks of the *original* Lenten time experienced by Jesus.

I imagine that feeling as a person of means to just buy or make something to ease that discomfort, but I see that as just the beginning of coming temptations. I was thinking about the purpose of and how I approach Lent. Then while doing so, I came across this quote from St (Mother) Teresa of Calcutta:

“As Lent is the time for greater love, listen to Jesus’ thirst ... He knows your weakness. He wants only your love, wants only the chance to love you.”

I usually treat Lent as a time to do with less and do things for my spiritual health that I should be doing anyway. Identifying the things holding me back and introducing separation between myself and God. This is totally my definition of sin. Known and unknown. Things done and left undone. Life sure carries a lot of potential examples outlined by all of those circumstances. Mother Teresa certainly knew true suffering first-hand. My business travels took me to Calcutta (Kolkata) about six years ago. Previously I had thought I had seen the worst pollution and circumstances while visiting other cities, but I was sorely mistaken. Calcutta showed me that there are indeed worse places. In spite of all the suffering she saw and experienced, St Teresa framed it in a different way for me. She reminds us that love and the opportunity to rediscover Christ, mend and strengthen bonds are the true heart of Lent.

Jesus was baptized and then led into the wilderness and the darkness of the desert by the Holy Spirit only to emerge into the light of the Resurrection.

Yes, winter is gloomy, cold and depressing, and so the season of Lent can be as it kicks off with a reminder of our pending mortality. Maybe you also enter this Lent carrying grief or weariness, and perhaps you too are seeking a way to reconnect with God in a difficult season. The beauty, however, is that we know what comes next. Jesus came to seek and save sinners by cancelling our record of debts. Lent invites us to walk with Him from the wilderness to the glory of His resurrection.

Ask yourself what is one way I can open myself to God’s love today?

Let us pray...

Heavenly Father, we come before You today with a desire to open our hearts fully to Your love and to remove the barriers we have placed between us. We recognize that trials, tribulations, and demands of the day have created a distance in our relationship.

Lord, we ask that You, through the power of the Holy Spirit, cleanse us from all that hinders our closeness to You. We surrender these burdens to You and ask for the strength to let it go.

*“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me”
(Psalm 51:10).*

Help us to rest in the truth of Your unwavering, unconditional love. Teach us to walk by Your word rather than the feelings of the day. We give You permission to work in us, to purify our hearts, and to align our will with Yours.

In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

- Andy Creed



Hebrews 10: 24-25

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Bless Our Church

When I was in high school, we had a wonderful preacher at our church, Dr. Jack Meadors. One Sunday, he challenged the congregation to make it a daily habit to pray for the Church. He suggested that this could be as simple as adding one line at the end of a family blessing: *“And Lord, please bless our church.”*

It really caught on, and many families accepted the challenge.

About seven months later, Dr. Meadors shared a story from a recent Sunday dinner he had attended. As was customary, he was asked to bless the meal. When he finished praying, a little boy tugged on his father’s shirt and whispered, **“He didn’t bless our church!”**

Even today, I continue to add *“And Lord, please bless our church”* whenever I give a blessing.

When I ask God’s blessing upon our church, I am praying for all of St. Peter & St. Paul — our clergy, vestry, staff, ministries, and yes, even our building. But it is also a blessing for everyone who worships and serves here.

As we enter Lent, many people choose to fast or take on a spiritual practice. Here is my challenge:

This Lent, I invite every family at St. Peter & St. Paul to end their dinner blessings with the simple prayer, *“And Lord, please bless our church.”*

Who knows? You may find — as I did — that this becomes a habit you continue long after this Lenten season. And if we all do this together, God will richly bless our church.

Dear God, thank you for the love, the community, and the ministries that we have here at St. Peter & St. Paul. Thank you for always watching over us. But mostly, we thank you for this time of Lent to reflect upon your Son Jesus Christ and Lord, please bless our church

- Stuart Wright



Sunday, February 22, 2026

Mark 2:1-5

And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Jesus is at Mary's home, and the crowds begin to gather around her house. People were pushing and squeezing together to catch a glimpse of this man of God and to hear his teaching. As Jesus teaches from inside the house, a group of four men approach the scene carrying their paralytic friend on a rug. They were coming to Jesus because they had heard of his miraculous healings and they were very determined to see him. But when they arrived, they could not get near the place. They set their friend down and they began to discuss what to do next. Do we go back home and try another day? But they were not willing to turn back so they started to hatch a bold and audacious plan. Yes, that's it, we will dig through the roof and lower our friend to Jesus.

In those days, roofs were made of branches, reeds and dried mud and clay and covered with clay tiles to keep the rain out. So, they worked out their plan, one was sent to search for ropes, another was looking for tools to remove the tiles and dig through the roof, and still another was working out how in the world they would get their paralyzed friend up to the roof. Once they had gathered all that they needed, they set to work. The people crowded around Jesus must have been glancing up at the roof at the noise as the friends started their work. My guess is Jesus took no notice and continued to preach. The dried mud and clay bound together by the branches and reeds began to give way, with as much raining down on the crowd inside as was being scooped out from above.

Just think what Jesus must have been thinking as the first dirt clods hit his head. This was Jesus' and Mary's own house! Any ordinary person would have been hopping mad if someone started tearing up their roof. "Hey! What do you think you're doing? You are destroying my property! Get down from there at once!!" But Jesus doesn't do any of those things. The gospel doesn't tell us Jesus' exact reaction, but I can imagine he was impressed with their effort and radical determination, and courage to make a spectacle of themselves. But the friends didn't care.

They had reached a pitch level of frustration and longing for their friend's healing. They were desperate, and desperate faith can prompt us to do strange things. They were determined to move all obstacles to get to Jesus. So, what was Jesus' reaction when the roof started to give way? I can only imagine what happened as Jesus looked up at them. What did they see in each other's eyes? Passion, faith, love? How tenderly Jesus must have gazed on them. How very blessed they must have felt when they saw the love in Jesus' eyes.

This story made me realize that it is my job to be a faithful and passionate friend. What greater thing can any of us ever do than help someone who is in trouble get safely to the feet of Jesus? Be bold, take a radical stand, make a spectacle of yourself, and carefully and prayerfully bring others to Jesus. He could be just inches away.

- Amy Stillwell



Monday, February 23, 2026

Daniel 9:9–10

To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness; because we have rebelled against him and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by following his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

In early 2024, at the annual Vestry Retreat, the assembled members discussed the state of Worship at St. Peter & St. Paul. It was noted that a core group of Parishioners had been meeting since February of 2019 every Monday morning at 7:00 am to share Morning Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer, followed by a bible study based on the one of the verses in the lectionary for that day. This prompted a discussion initiatives for expanding worship offerings including the service Evening Prayer in the BCP. The group used the opportunity to worship that day with the Evening Prayer service.

As a result, Vestry sponsored six Evening Prayer sessions on Thursdays during Lent in 2024. I took on the assignment to schedule the participants and lay out the readings for each Thursday. This experiment was a solid success in several ways. The Vestry experienced bonding as Officiants and as participants in the services and also provided refreshments afterward in the Narthex that encouraged fellowship and deeper relationships.

If you are not familiar with Evening Prayer, it is the opportunity after a full day to let go and reach out to God. It begins with a quiet Confession, in which we can let go of the day's frustrations, any mistakes or misgivings, or any missed opportunities to extend kindness. This matches the spirit of Lent which encourages us to self-examine our thoughts and actions, humbling ourselves before God. There are always Psalms, Canticles and Scripture readings included in the service. These readings offer all the opportunity to participate in the service.

Evening Prayer concludes with Intercessions and prayers, including a well-known and beloved prayer to "*Keep watch dear Lord with those who work, or watch, or weep this night.*" This speaks to our Lenten heart where we move from our inward focus to extend our prayers to those in our community and beyond. What better way to conclude the day?

The Vestry has continued to sponsor Evening prayer in Lent and in Advent in both 2024 and 2025. But to deepen the experience for the Parish and offer opportunities for everyone in this ministry, all interested parishioners are invited to celebrate Evening Prayer this year, in the hope that a recurring rhythm of worship with new leaders can grow over time. If you are available at 7:00 pm on a Thursday during Lent, starting right after Ash Wednesday, you are invited to join worship in the Transept Chapel to confess your sins and offer intercessory prayers. This can become a focus of your Lenten experience.

So, from the BCP "*O God, the life of all who live, the light of the faithful, the strength of those who labor, and the repose of the dead: We thank you for the blessings of the day that is past and humbly ask for your protection through the coming night. Bring us in safety to the morning hours; through him who died and rose again for us, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*"

- Chuck Matheson



Tuesday, February 24, 2026

Isaiah 41:10

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous hand.

When I was younger, I felt that things happening in the world were just that...things happening in the world. Whether good or bad, they really did not impact me. As I have aged, I have taken on a different perspective or at least it feels like I have. Illnesses, death, change of any kind: it all seems to take a toll on me. I seem to worry more now about anything than ever before. But at the same time, I feel so blessed about my life in every way.

This scripture brings peace to me on a daily basis and helps me to focus on having a deeper relationship with God, with hopes of not wasting time or energy on what I cannot control, placing it all in God's hands. I am not even close to accomplishing this goal, but hoping with every day, I am making small amounts of progress.

Your Present is your Presence!

- Kathryn Fant



Matthew 20:28

The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve...

Each Lent I read a book called "Pauses for Lent" by Trevor Hudson. It's a little book that has a "word" for the day to focus on as well as a Daily Practice. I love this passage:

SERVE

Jesus calls his followers to be servants. When we open our lives to him, his Spirit will always lead us into the position and posture of service. Serving others is the badge of genuine discipleship.

Jesus himself models service when he washes the dirty feet of his disciples. Through this act, Jesus gives the disciples a pattern to follow. He says to them, "I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15). We find nothing optional about Jesus' words. They are clear, direct and invite our response.

Serving others the way Jesus would have us do can take many differing forms: offering a ride, taking time to listen to a friend or coworker, babysitting for a single parent, taking out the trash, washing the dishes, and so on. These acts may seem small, but believe me, they can make a big impression on the people we serve!

Daily Practice: Experiment throughout the day with this prayer: Lord, please bring someone across my path today whom I can serve.

- Eileen Mittleider



Wednesday, February 25, 2026

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

This excerpt from Corinthians really stood out to me, especially in today’s day and age. Let’s be honest, life is chaotic and messy. It’s easy to feel like you don’t have it all together. Like you’re not smart enough, spiritual enough, or important enough... let alone think that through your busy schedule, God can use you. But there’s good news because guess what? God doesn’t want your resume, he wants your heart.

Our modern culture worships success. Tangible items like degrees, followers, money, and the list goes on. But God’s Kingdom doesn’t run on clout. It runs on grace. What seems weak, foolish, or low-ranking by the world’s standards is often exactly what God uses to show His power. He chooses the underdogs. He works through the quiet ones, the over-thinkers, the outsiders, and the ones still trying to figure things out. Why? So, we don’t miss the point. So, no one can say, “I made this happen all by myself.” Because they didn’t, it was all because of God.

So, to my fellow friends who are in the depths of college right now trying to find your purpose, to those working a job that feels “small,” to those feeling spiritually lost or not good enough, I’m talking to you when I say that God didn’t choose you because you have it all together, he chose you because you’re you. Your so called “weakness” doesn’t disqualify you. It’s often the very place where His strength shows up the most.

Prayer: God, thank You for choosing me, not because I have it all together, but because You love me. Help me stop measuring myself by the world’s standards and start seeing myself through Your eyes. Use all aspects of my life, including the messy parts, to show Your power and love.
Amen.

- Katherine Mittleider





Thursday, February 26, 2026

Matthew 10:29-31

Two sparrows cost only a penny, but not even one of them can fall to the ground without your Father's knowing it. God even knows the number of hairs on your head. So don't be afraid you are worth much more than many sparrows.

As I have grown older and stronger in my faith, I am amazed how much God actually communicates with us. Have you ever read a morning devotional and found that it seems to be speaking directly to you? What about that sermon that happens to address exactly what you have been praying about? Or, that song that comes on the radio while driving to work, and the lyrics seem to be speaking to a problem that you have been wrestling with for some time. This has happened to me so many times throughout my life that I have a journal dating back many years. Whether these situations are answers to prayers or God's direction for your life, I feel that it is Jesus showing how much he cares for us, truly loves us and wants to help us. We just have to be open to seeing, trusting and believing this. His grace (undeserved, unearned, and unmerited favor, kindness and love shown "just because") makes it all possible.

My mother was 92 years old and living in an assisted living facility outside of Buffalo New York. My youngest sister lived nearby and cared for her during her last few years. I would call every Sunday and Mom and I would chat about all kinds of things as she was still quite informed about everything that was going on in the world.

During this particular week, I called on a Saturday. I am not exactly sure why, but that still small voice told me that I should do so. During our conversation, I ask, "Mom, when you pass on, will you send a bird to come and tap on my window? Then I will know that you are okay." She said, "When did that ever happen?" I responded with, "That is the whole point." Mom gave me a little laugh and said that she would do it. That night my mother had a massive stroke and could not speak or do much else. By Wednesday I was at the hospital in Buffalo, holding her hand as she squeezed mine in recognition.

The following day, my mother's brother came. However, mom had become nonresponsive. That afternoon I brought him a book with a story I wanted him to read. When I picked up the book it randomly opened to a page and I read the following quote, "If it is in God's will, our loved ones can send us messages of Hope from the other side."

At the time, I thought "how peculiar." Later that evening we all went to dinner together. At the restaurant we were seated next to a huge bank of windows that ran up the entire wall that actually made up part of the roof. My sister sat next to me as we discussed the events of the day and the future of our mother. A few moments later we looked up just as a bird flew up, perched on a windowsill, looked in, tapped three times on the window and then flew off into the night.

My sister remarked, "Wow! That was a little crazy." I said, "Wait until I tell you the rest of the story." In full disclosure, my mother did not pass on for three more days but remained completely non responsive for the entire time. I truly believe that Jesus took her home the night the bird came to the window. In the end, I never shed a tear. I knew then, what my heart still tells me now, Jesus took her home that night and he loved me enough to make sure I knew that "All Was Well".

How has Jesus spoken to you? How has he shown you his grace and Love?

- Terry Sheehan



Last fall, I attended a meeting in which the Book of Psalms was discussed. The question was asked, “What is/are your favorite psalm(s)? Not knowing much about Psalms, I have no answer, but everyone in the group seemed to have several they liked. I thought, “Maybe I’m missing something here.”

About that time, Brandon approached John Patton about starting a Sunday school class. John called me to gauge my interest in helping him. Neither of us were looking to lead a Sunday school class, but we thought it over and said, “Why not?”

Brandon didn’t mandate a topic, and since I needed to learn more about Psalms, and since John was one of the men who has several favorite psalms, we ran with the Book of Psalms.

If you ever think God doesn’t work in mysterious ways:

1. Psalms is discussed at a meeting, at which I find.
2. Lots of folks are fans of the Book of Psalms, and
3. Now I need to know why they like Psalms, and
4. A person who likes Psalms is asked to lead a Sunday school class, and
5. Asks me to participate so.....
6. SPSP has a new Sunday school class, and I get to learn more about Psalms.
7. Do you think God is leading me where he wants me to go?

Just a few things we’ve learned:

Psalm 46 was Martin Luther’s favorite Psalm, and it got him through his trials with the Reformation. It also inspired the hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.”

Psalm 30:2, David declares, "O LORD my God, I cried to You for help, and You healed me." He is always there to help us if we only ask.

Psalm 30:5 reminds us, "For His anger is fleeting, but His favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay the night, but joy comes in the morning." Think about that when you have a problem. Things are always better in the morning.

Psalm 37: 9-11 reminds us, “*For evildoers shall be cut off;*

But those who wait on the Lord,

They shall inherit the earth.

For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more.”

The wicked will be cut off. The meek shall inherit the earth. That’s worth remembering.

And last but not least:

Psalm 46:10: “*Be still and know that I am God....*”

- Keith Purser



Friday, February 27, 2026

Matthew 26:36-39

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place call Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” Going a little further, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.

I think this is one of the hardest things Jesus had to suffer, the knowledge of things to come. This is not to dismiss the betrayal, this whipping, the flogging, the crown of thorns, and most of all the crucifixion. What is known as the Passion of Christ refers to the suffering, crucifixion, and death of Jesus. God allowed Jesus to suffer the cup because it was essential for humanity’s redemption from sin.

We all suffer. It is a portion of the human condition. Is there a seminal event that defines a traumatic experience in your life? For me, it was March 18, 1968, in Vietnam, when I was wounded from a grenade, causing hearing loss, a concussion, dizziness, and vertigo, along with PTSD. I postponed getting any help from anyone else. I suffered alone.

But I share this to tell you that you do not have to suffer alone. We are blessed at St Peter and St Paul to have clergy, Stephen Ministers, Community of Hope, Brotherhood of St Andrew, Daughters of the King, and others that walk beside someone that is hurting.

AS we travel this Lenten Journey, be gentle because we do not know what others may be suffering.

Your brother in Christ,

- Mike Blalock





2 Corinthians 4:5-6:

It is not ourselves that we proclaim; we proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants, for Jesus' sake. For the same God who said, "Out of darkness let light shine," has caused his light to shine within us, to give the light of revelation—the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

This year, I'm approaching my traditional Lenten sacrifice a little bit differently than my usual giving up something I enjoy—like coffee, sweets, or social media.

Instead, I am thinking: What am I bringing to God?

This means bringing the best of myself to God throughout the days and weeks ahead by putting Jesus first. Can I give my best ten minutes of focus in the day and spend it studying scripture? Can I find the discipline to worship and pray throughout the day?

I also hope to find patience, love, and grace—with myself and others.

I aim to seek Jesus first by searching for hope and love instead of ruminating on dark times, even when a morning news headline threatens to start my day on the wrong foot. Despite slowdowns or traffic jams, I hope to put Jesus first in my heart by letting go of the resentment and finding the blessing of arriving at my destination safely.

It's not just a matter of responding to life's daily grievances with excessive positivity. I'm looking for deliberate ways to approach my relationship with God and fill my heart and mind with love for Him and those around me. Lent reminds me that God has a plan much greater than myself—ininitely greater. His commitment to our salvation stands as a healthy reminder that I am not the main character. But, as a follower of his son, I can certainly be a supporting character in the story. And I can be that supporting character by devoting myself to Jesus, and devoting myself to others, in heart, mind, and effort so that God's glory can truly shine brightly for others to see and proclaim his son as the true revelation.

- Mark Allen Wilson





Saturday, February 28, 2026

Zephaniah 3:17:

The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you by His love; He will exult over you with loud singing.

Think for a moment on this verse above. Picture a loving Father holding a crying baby. He's singing loudly(!) over us, drowning out the piercing wails. We are that crying baby. Why the crying? Something is not right with us. Our needs aren't being fulfilled.

For some, it's about anger - anger with God. That's such an explosive statement. It's full of fire, of torment. Let's examine it. When we're experiencing something we perceive as unfair, we might be tempted to direct our anger at the wrong target. At God. The Creator. The Righteous One. The Great Avenger. Yet He is also the One who loves us.

He is the One who orchestrates the best possible set of circumstances for us if we love him (Romans 8:28). This verse happens to be my own personal stumbling block. I simply do not want to accept the fact that He allows hard happenings in my life.

Then why does He allow something unfair, heinous, so despicable to happen to us?

It is perplexing that the Great I Am allows metaphorical and literal body blows. In the face of our living in a fallen world full of sin, He wants us to turn to Him in our despair. He wants us to have a close, loving relationship with Him. In His eyes, we are to be loved, and He will allow whatever it takes to grow our faith. And our faith is not the same as works, even though works are a testament of our devotion.

Although we will be rewarded, He's not counting brownie points for worship attendance or good deeds as a qualifier for entry into Heaven. That would discount the importance of Christ's payment for our sins, through faith in Him as our Savior.

So, knowing this, shouldn't we reciprocate His great love for us, instead of spewing hatred for the unfairness of life in general? We should remind ourselves that we live in a world that was NOT God's ideal for us - quite the contrary. He created a perfect environment full of all the wonderful things that we expect in Heaven. We forget this is the way it was in the Garden of Eden before the occasion of Original Sin.

So, the next time something unfair happens, shouldn't we repeat the mantra, "God loves me. This fallen world wasn't His desire for us, but He provided a way for me to fellowship with Him through Jesus' ultimate sacrifice for my sins. He loves me, He loves me, He loves me."

- Linda Kepler



Sunday, March 1, 2026
The Final Hour: A Story of Resilience and Intervention

Isaiah 40:31:

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Psalms 27:14:

Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

Psalms 40:1:

I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry.

In December 2010, my wife and I closed on what we believed was our "forever home." After years of my grueling commute between Beaufort, South Carolina, and faculty positions in Atlanta, we finally felt settled. But the timing was treacherous.

The tremors of the 2008 housing market crash had finally reached the Georgia state budget, and the university system began a "Last In, First Out" (LIFO) reduction in force. Suddenly, I was the one out.

I moved into the job market with the confidence of a seasoned professional with high-tier credentials. I expected a short transition; instead, I entered a four-year desert. We watched as our savings evaporated, followed by my wife's retirement funds. We lived on her two part-time jobs and my Navy retirement, clinging to our home through the Home Affordable Refinance Program (HARP). We were living at the poverty level—housed, but hovering on the edge of the abyss.

The Deadline

By the autumn of the fifth year, we reached the end of the line. Our HARP term limits were expiring. To secure a one-year extension and save our home from foreclosure, I had to prove gainful employment.

The clock didn't just start ticking; it was screaming. **I had 24 hours.**

The Miracle

What happened next can only be described as Divine intervention. After four years and ten months of "nibbles" that never materialized and a national search that yielded nothing but silence, a door opened at the eleventh hour.

A newly created position at the **U.S. Naval War College** resulted in a contract offer. With the deadline looming and the sun setting on our dream of keeping our home, I signed the document. We rushed to the fax machine, feeding the signed contract through to the HARP office with less than sixty minutes to spare.

We didn't just find a job that day; we reclaimed our lives. After 1,760 days of uncertainty, the "Final Hour Miracle" brought us back from the brink.

- Tom Creely



Monday, March 2, 2026

Matthew 28:19

Go therefore and make Disciples of all nations.

Known as the Great Commission, this calls us to actively engage in outreach and service and share the Gospel everywhere. **I.** How do we do this at Saint Peter and Saint Paul (SPSP)? and **II.** what is the value in our Christian walk of participating in outreach and service?

I. Our Church practice - attendance, Bible study, prayer life, small groups, etc., helps us know this Commission and how Jesus lived and how Jesus wants us to live – to have *head* knowledge of this area. SPSP outreach and service helps apply that *head* knowledge, so it becomes *personal* knowledge and God begins to move from our *head* into our *heart* – a requirement for one to live out the SPSP Mission of growing Disciples, both ourselves and others. Discipleship is creating an environment for others to know and engage with Jesus Christ.

We are called to this Commission through the prayer of Christian Discipleship that we say at the end of each service – “send us out in the world to love and serve the Lord” (pages 365 or 366 Book of Common Prayer).

Here is recap of the 2025 SPSP Service and Outreach activities, column headings indicate specific Ministry, deliverable outreach type is on the left, and the numbers indicate the deliverables:

SPSP Service and Outreach Ministries 2025 Summary Data of Deliverables																			
deliverable outreach type	MUST				Extension			Family Promise (h)	Hope For The Hungry (i)	Salva- tion Army (j)	Meal Ministry (k)	Holy Com- forter (l)	Totals (m)	MUST Giving Tree (n)	Holy Com- forter (o)	St Judes (p)	Consign- ment Sale (q)	Cool Girls ®	
	Friday (a)	3rd Tues 4th Thu (b)	5th Wed Months (c)	Summer Lunch (d)	Fri (e)	Wed (f)	NY Day (g)												
meals	5,710	2,640	440	3,000	2,600	2,600	44	336	2,194	400	288	96	20,348						
gifts													500	66					
clothing items														875	60				
lbs beans/rice															1,200				
repurposed items																	5,300		
backpacks																		175	

A recap of 2025 key points on this chart

- 20,348 meals delivered in 2025 through our various hunger ministries (col m)
- 5,300 items repurposed through our Consignment Sale (col q)
- 1,200 lbs. beans & rice delivered to St Jude’s Episcopal Church (col p)

To accomplish this, SPSP volunteered 3,400 hours in 2025, equivalent of 1 & ½ full time people. Participating in these activities engages one with those away from SPSP, to “love thy neighbor” as we are called to do.

II. How does participating in these areas help our Christian walk? You can learn *head* knowledge of how to do something – chess, piano, golf, swimming – by reading and watching videos. Your *personal* knowledge happens when you apply that *head* knowledge – you play chess, you play the piano, you go golfing, and you swim in the pool. This model says you cannot learn how to swim in a library.

The same is true for words, thoughts, and ideas Jesus wants in our heads – we learn that through sermons, Bible reading and study, small groups etc. We need to apply that *head* knowledge so that our interactions with others – our Discipleship – leads to God moving from our *head* into our *heart*. One who leaves knowledge of God in their *head* is like a tourist, one who applies it is a Disciple, moves God to their *heart*.

Romans 10:9-10 "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with your *heart*, you believe and are justified, and with your mouth you confess and are saved." This highlights the *heart's* role in faith justification, and salvation - genuine belief originates from the heart. All comes from our *heart* – our will, our beliefs, our thoughts, our words, and actions. The *heart* is key to the course of one’s life, it is the center of moral and spiritual thought and activity.

Reach out to the SPSP Outreach and Service Ministries group so you can serve, to move God from your *head* into your *heart*.

Prayer – let us make no peace with oppression, help us remember the poor, help us feed the hungry, have us go where you might want us, have us be as you have shown us, and help us love and serve others as you have loved and served us.

Amen.

- Tom Martin



Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you... plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

I love this verse! It reminds me that God's got this! Whatever "this is." God's will is for us to prosper. He doesn't say that everything will always be smooth sailing, but He does promise to be with us—to guide us—to support us—to comfort us. He loves us and we are His children. He wants us to remember His love for us and to trust and obey Him.

We have a wonderful dog—Molly. She is a rescue yellow lab, and we have had her for 12 years. She did not know us when she came to live with us. She was about a year old and scared of everything, including us! We showed her love and care and now as I watch her settling on one of her dog beds by the fire, I see that she is resting in the knowledge of the security that we provide. I want to have that trust and assurance that I can rest in the knowledge that God has a plan for me—a plan to prosper—not to harm me.

- Marilyn Mueller





Tuesday, March 3, 2026

Psalm 46

- ¹ *God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.*
- ² *Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,*
- ³ *though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.*
- ⁴ *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.*
- ⁵ *God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.*
- ⁶ *Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.*
- ⁷ *The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*
- ⁸ *Come and see what the Lord has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.*
- ⁹ *He makes wars cease
to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.*
- ¹⁰ *He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."*
- ¹¹ *The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

Today is Wednesday, January 28, 2026, and I listened to the above reading from my Morning Prayer app. Afterwards, I would normally check the news to see if the world had blown itself up and after a few articles I would click the app off because I would become irritated by the various events. But today I didn't because Psalm 46 reminded me who is ultimately in charge of the world – God. So, this reading blessed me in two ways: It reminded me that God is in charge.

Secondly, it told me to "Be still and know that I am God;" therefore, I did not bother to listen to the noise from today's news. I feel great!

A prayer from *Morning Prayer* following the reading of Psalm 46:

*God of Jacob, when the earth shakes and the nations are in uproar, speak, and let the storm be still,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen!*

- Larry Kelley



Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Philippians 4:9

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

I like traditions – whether it’s the holidays or in everyday life. And Lent is no different. I love my little tradition I started years ago of taking your words from last year’s devotional and sharing the snippets that really resonated with me. Thoughtful questions and inspiring words for difficult times as I try my best to keep focused on what I am learning. Always praying for God’s peace in my life.

- All things come from God.
- Savor the journey ahead of you.
- Loving God, please grant me peace of mind and calm my troubled heart.
- We experience the full joy of Christ when we are together.
- Focusing on the bigger picture seems like a good place to start.
- Spread joy and smile at strangers.
- Realign your priorities.
- Will the good news of God in Christ be shared by our word and example?
- Show His love and mercy to those I meet.
- Find ways to offer love in a world that is often in need of healing.
- Focus on only what I can control and leave the rest to him.
- Jesus has given us a new way to live.
- “Heaven on Earth” is real.
- Love God and Love your neighbor – all else is merely added commentary.
- Find God in each day.
- Be aware of what is discipling you – protect your mind and heart.
- Explore the Bible.
- Become more courageous in sharing my faith with others.
- He doesn’t expect us to be perfect.
- We talk with our friends and family to stay close & connected – we need to do the same with God.
- GOD always has my back and HE’S a much better driver.
- The Gospels do not explain the Resurrection. The Resurrection explains the Gospels.

- Eileen Mittleider



Thursday, March 5, 2026

So much turmoil in the world today.

Let me walk with God.

When things don't go my way,

Let me talk with God.

Such strife and hate and grief.

At times like this my head I nod,

As once again I realize,

I need only listen to God.

When the world seems upside down,

I'll find the way with God.

For nothing else will ever work,

Unless I trust in God.

Just like David in the valley of the shadow,

I find comfort in Your staff and rod.

Through the darkness and the fear

I'll find the way with God.

Through the darkness and all my fears,

I'll find my way with God.

- John W. Patton





Friday, March 6, 2026
The Word of The Lord

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 17:17

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Psalms 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

1 Peter 1:23

Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

Deuteronomy 8:3

And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

Hebrews 1-3

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty.

Isaiah 40:8

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Isaiah 55:11

So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

James 1:22

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Psalms 33:4

For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness.

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” There are 1640 references to the word in scripture. When looking at these in the light of Jesus Christ being the Word, we see Jesus at work with God throughout the Bible. Jesus was, is, and will be present with us always. The Word of the Lord. The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God!

- Pamela Robinson



Saturday, March 7, 2026

Isaiah 53: 10-11(Amplified and LK, ed.)

Yet God the Father was willing to crush Jesus, His only Begotten Son, causing Him to suffer; If He would give Himself as a guilt offering [an atonement for sin], He shall see His spiritual offspring, He shall prolong His days, And the will (good pleasure) of God shall succeed and prosper in His hand.

As a result of the anguish of His soul, God shall see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge [of what He has accomplished] the Righteous One, My Servant, Jesus, shall justify the many sinners [making them righteous-upright before God, in right standing with Him], For Jesus shall bear [the responsibility for] their sins.

Imagine a courtroom scene: The righteous Chief Justice of the Supreme Court presides instead of a local judge; The defendant is clearly guilty, after being shown mounds of evidence of a lifetime of crime by the prosecution; the jury agrees with the prosecution, but there's a hitch; The defendant believes in the righteousness of the judge.

While being held in jail, the defendant reads the philosophy of the judge and imitates the life of him. The judge overrules the jury and declares the defendant innocent, sets the defendant free, walks down from his perch, presents himself to the bailiff, offers his wrists to be handcuffed and is escorted to the gallows, taking on the defendant's death penalty.

How crazy is that? Well, that is what Christ did. He declared all believing sinners "innocent" even though we clearly are not.

His suffering was so much worse than our swift, "humane" death sentences. Jesus was whipped within an inch of his life. His flesh was ripped thirty-nine times by a whip with bone spikes attached, so much so that he was unrecognizable.

The most cruel death penalty known to man was heinous, horrific, and excruciatingly painful, every single second, sometimes lasting for days ("All my bones are out of joint" Ps. 22:14b).

To take a breath, Jesus had to press his body upward via spike driven feet. Between breaths, he hung by spikes driven through his wrists ("My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me" Ps. 22:14C).

Eventually, our Savior died by suffocation. He strangled to death over a six-hour period, at the exact moment the Pharisees sliced the neck of a sacrificial lamb - only this time, Jesus was the true sacrifice, fulfilling the Jewish law of slaughtering animals for the forgiveness of sins.

God the Son's death was the final satisfaction of God the Father for the redemption for all sins, past, present and future, forever.

In our limited, mystified view, His unjust death was necessary for Him to declare that we are just in His sight. In His undying love, He took our place in death.

During Holy Communion, remember Jesus' emphatic original words: "This IS my Body.... This IS my Blood..." The gift of the real Presence of Christ in real time is true Life within us (John 6:53).

- Linda Kepler



Sunday, March 8, 2026

John 20: 19-23

On the evening of the first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again, Jesus said, Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." and with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Disciples mentioned in this scripture, as I understand, weren't necessarily the "Iconic" twelve. They were possibly those who had received Christ's "Peace," those who were called and sent by Jesus.

Jesus was able to show that he was the "One Risen, identical to the "One Crucified." He breathes on them and says to "receive the Holy Spirit," just as God breathed the breath of life into humanity. (Gen. 2:7) Just as God called and sent Jesus, Jesus is calling and sending his disciples.

He is calling all believers to have Peace within, and to take the Peace out into the world. We are to love others, and to forgive, in order to experience the "Eternal" in this life. If we can't forgive, then the sins are not forgiven, and they remain a burden and strain on our inner peace.

I reflect on this scripture as marking the beginning of the Christian church. Christ "called and appeared" to his disciples. The mission of St. Peter and St. Paul is "Growing Disciples of Jesus Christ." As Christ breathed the Holy Spirit upon his disciples, so we are "empowered by the Holy Spirit" to go forth into the world in faith, love, and joy to serve Christ in this world, and share in the "eternal" of this life.

Blessings and Peace to each of you,

- Merrilee Allen





Monday, March 9, 2026

Joshua 1:9 (NIV)

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

Lent is a season of honest reckoning. It calls us into the wilderness—away from comfort, certainty, and self-reliance—so that we might learn again what it means to trust God fully. Like Joshua standing on the edge of the Promised Land, we often enter Lent knowing that God is leading us forward, but unsure of what lies ahead.

Joshua inherited leadership at a moment of deep uncertainty. Moses was gone. The journey ahead was daunting. God's promise remained, but so did fear. Into that tension, God does not offer Joshua a detailed plan or an easy path. Instead, He gives a command: "Be strong and courageous." Not because Joshua is capable on his own, but because "the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

During Lent, we confront our own fears—fear of change, fear of loss, fear of facing our sin honestly. Strength and courage do not come from denying these fears, but from remembering who walks with us through them. Lent strips away false securities so we can rediscover the steady presence of God, who does not abandon us in hard places.

Joshua 1:9 reminds us that courage is not the absence of fear; it is obedience in the presence of fear. God does not tell Joshua to feel brave—He tells him to act faithfully. Likewise, Lent invites us to step forward in faith: to repent, to forgive, to pray more deeply, to trust more completely.

As we move toward the cross, we see the ultimate fulfillment of this promise. In Jesus, God does not merely walk beside us—He enters our suffering, bears our sin, and overcomes death itself. The courage we are called to in Lent is grounded in this truth: we are never alone.

May this season shape us into people who trust God's presence more than our own strength, and who walk forward—humbly, honestly, and courageously—wherever He leads.

Prayer:

Lord, as we journey through Lent, remind us that You are with us in every step. When we are afraid or discouraged, give us the strength to trust You and the courage to obey. Lead us closer to You and shape our hearts to reflect Your faithfulness.

Amen.

- Mike Pearson



Tuesday, March 10, 2026

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

We have been studying John Stott's classic book *The Cross Of Christ* in our Sunday School class. It has been utterly fascinating and has given me new perspectives when I look at the Cross, and the crucifixion that took place

One thing that has concerned me about the Cross has been this: How could a loving God send his son to die in such a humiliating and horribly painful manner on the Cross? I cannot imagine any earthly father doing that to his son. This has always haunted me.

But Stott argues that God was on the cross – He came down to bear our sins in the person of Jesus Christ. Stott wrote that God was not punishing a third party but was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. God used Himself as a substitute for the sins of the whole world. This self-sacrifice is the ultimate love that our Father has for us.

What a revelation!

We were also asked to consider, "What does the Cross instruct us to do?" To me, it means to love others more fully. It also instructs me to forgive – to let go of petty concerns. That is the example that Jesus set for us

Finally, I have a new perspective when I receive communion. When I eat the bread, I thank God for the Body of Jesus Christ. When I drink the wine, I thank God for the Grace and Forgiveness I receive through Jesus Christ.

May God bless you all this Lenten season. And may God open our eyes to realize the awesome love he demonstrated to us at this time. And finally, may we show a portion of that love back to others in our everyday lives

Peace be with you,

- Stuart Wright



Wednesday, March 11, 2026

One of My Favorite Hymns

“Breathe on Me Breath of God”

Words: Edwin Hatch (1835-1889), alt.

Music *Nova Vita*, Lister R. (1885-1969)

1. Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do.
2. Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will,
To do and to endure.
3. Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Till I am wholly Thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glows with Thy fire divine.
4. Breathe on me, Breath of God,
So shall I never die,
But live with Thee the perfect life
Of Thine eternity.

Genesis 2:7

Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Job 33:4

The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Psalms 33:6

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

John 20:22

And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Psalms 150:6

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

We need oxygen to live. We bring oxygen into our bodies by breathing. Anyone who has taken a CPR class knows that we can save a life by breathing oxygen into their bodies. God created us by giving us His breath. By His breath all of creation came into being. God can save or destroy by His breath. I love the scripture that states “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” Indeed, please breathe on me breath of God. Infuse me with your Holy Spirit and let me forever praise your Holy Name. This Lent may we remember that while Jesus breathed His last on the cross, He was given new life by the Father, and we can have new life in Jesus.

Breathe on me breath of God. Make me wholly Thine.

Amen

- Pamela Robinson



*My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I
am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore, I will trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.*

This is one of my favorite passages from the writings of Thomas Merton. It summarizes how I view my journey of faith.

Somedays so confident, and other days wondering if I have taken the right road.
When the doubts creep in, I know He is holding my hand, and He will never leave me.

- Suzy Hayden





Thursday, March 12, 2026

Romans 12:5

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and not all members have the same function, so in Christ we who are many are one body, and each member belongs to one another.

It was time to make a decision. "C'mon, Mike, get dressed. We're going to Urgent Care." A swirl of thoughts, "Mike's the next victim of the stomach virus and covid that doused my extended family days prior as we said our goodbyes to my mother in Albany, GA. This day also brought Mike's son, Bryce, and his wife Hanna from N.C., to extend holiday cheer, during his leave from the USMC.

So much for our lunch plans.

That sound. The slam of Mike's 6'2 body falling to the greet the laminate floor head-on was as if a thousand-pound marble sculpture had fallen and thudded its way down the staircase. "MIKE?! MIKE. MIIIIKE!!! Get up!"

He responded to me with moaning, drool, and no pulse.

Bryce yelled, "Call 911. He's not breathing. He's turning black." Bryce started CPR, calling him "Pops! Pops!"

Hanna was on the phone with 911. I screamed for help from our neighbors, Sam and Laura, who were in their front yard. Sam and Bryce switched off doing CPR.

The paramedics arrived, shocked Mike four times, and carried him away to North Fulton Medical Center.

The shock I experienced was reminiscent of the phone call from my niece Anna to tell me her twin sister's husband, Cole, died in an accident. Her sister, Lydia, was pregnant in her first trimester. I found myself back on the floor, with the background noise of the paddles and their effect on Mike's body, and asked, "How? Now? You can't let this happen! We've been through too much and my *mom* just died!"

Sitting shoulder to shoulder being physically supported in the tiny private room in the Emergency Department, it was evident they put us there for the doctor to enter and say, "He didn't make it."

He made it.

Many call him a miracle. I believe it is so. God put Bryce here. If we had driven to Urgent Care, the heart attack would have happened in the car.

He placed Sam and Laura outside. He carried Mike to North Fulton to be with the surgeon we needed and provided a brilliant and caring team of physicians and clinicians.

Thanks be to God and every one of you who sat with us, fed us, and prayed for us. When I see you, it hits straight to my soul and Mike's new and improved heart. You are now part of us.

- Lori Cassity



Friday, March 13, 2026

Psalm 119:26

*Lord, you pour your radiance on my path; the sun smiles upon me and lightens my footsteps.
Your humble servant marvels in your creation; the trees and hills bow down before you in
Thanksgiving.*

You lead me to a mighty river; I find a great valley carved out of stone.

It formed sandbanks covered in thick grass; sediments fill its channels.

Creatures seek shelter and food on its shore, fishes and mollusks abound in its waters.

You called the great, gray cranes from the north; they heard your voice and flew over the mountains.

*They sought sustenance and you provided plentiful forage; I sought to be in their presence, and you
brought them to me.*

You lifted my soul as on wings; your creatures rise heavenward to greet you joyfully.

*Despite my transgressions, you surround me with beauty; You deserve more from me, yet you forgive
me anyway.*

*I forsake your loving commands, and you do not abandon me; you remain steadfast, lest I stray from
you.*

You watch over me night and day; you give me strength as I labor and toil.

*You keep me on the narrow path that ascends to your court; you send counsel and guidance to your
faithful servant on his pilgrimage to salvation.*

This reflection follows a journey I made this past MLK Day to witness the overwintering sandhill cranes at Hiawasse National Wildlife Refuge just north of Chattanooga on the Tennessee River flyway.

Special thanks to Father Tom and John Sutton for teaching me about Psalms recently.

In Lent, as we reflect on our relationship with God and block out the troubled maelstrom of human strife, perhaps time spent in nature will bring us solace and comfort and inspire us to seek a closer and deeper relationship with God. Being in nature is not solely an escape.

It reminds us we are part of something bigger than ourselves. Something that has no borders, something without a price tag, something we cannot own or dominate. All living things are connected to a complex web. All members of God's creation are precious in his sight and play an integral role.

- Greg Tonian





Saturday, March 14, 2026

John 5:44

How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

My Lenten Devotional is on how I will try to improve my humility, by reducing pride, in order to build faith. In this verse, Jesus spoke this to Jewish leaders who were angry at Him for healing on the Sabbath and claiming equality with God, and the core message is that people find it hard to believe in Jesus because they are more concerned with what others think of them (praise, status) than with God's approval. The verse serves as a warning against pride and encourages prioritizing God's perspective and glory above human opinions.

In Andrew Murray's book, *Humility*, the author discusses humility relative to several human experiences: Daily Life, Holiness, Sin, Faith, Death to Self, Happiness and Exaltation. I picked Faith. Rev. Murray writes, "The promises made to faith are so free and sure, the invitations and encouragements are so strong, and the mighty power of God on which they may depend is so near and free, that only something that hinders faith can hinder the blessings from being ours." The passage from John shows that it is pride that hinders faith. Seeing how pride and faith are incompatible, we discover that faith and humility are as one at their root. Again quoting Rev. Murray, "we can never have more true faith than we have of true humility. We need only to think for a moment what faith is. It is the confession that we have nothing and are helpless, and that it is the surrendering and waiting to let God do His work. It is the most humbling thing there can be – the acceptance of our place as dependents, who cannot claim or do anything, but what grace bestows. Humility is simply the honesty that prepares the soul for living on trust.

Lastly, Rev. Murray states, "Humility and faith are more nearly allied in Scripture than many people realize. See it in the life of Christ. It is humility that brings a soul to be nothing before God that also removes every hindrance to faith. Humility makes the soul fear that it would dishonor Him by not trusting Him wholly."

I was moved by these words and have made humility a watchword to my daily life. However, this change in life just doesn't happen because I've read a book and liked it, it is a conscious and daily challenge against myself and also the world. So, I began looking for ways to combat these anti-humility forces and will use the following to help me. You may have other techniques so please share.

- To cultivate a deeper fellowship with God through periods of solitude and prayer.
- To embrace Humility as the Core of true holiness by routinely reading Philippians 2 in order to allow Christ's humility to transform me in my daily life.
- To yield to the Holy Spirit's power and trust God's promises which will build faith.
- To focus on God's character and see that God's holiness as a consuming fire against sin. I need to recognize each day that God's love and holiness met at the Cross, giving His Son for me so I may be united with Him.

By the grace of God, the transition of my will to His combined with the power of the Holy Spirit and the love of Christ, I have the opportunity to get there. I also need you to support and encourage me. The easiest way is to occasionally ask, "Hey Larry, how's your Lenten devotional doing?" It's a great reminder but be prepared for a possible reply of "Ask me six months from now because I'm still working on it." After all, these devotionals in our Lenten Devotional booklet, both past and present, aren't just for a season but a lifetime.

Let us pray.

Lord, I give thanks and praise to Your great goodness, and that You take from my heart every form of pride, whether it be from evil spirits or my own corrupt nature. I ask that You teach me the truth of humility so that I may see and live in Your light. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!

- Larry Kelley



Sunday, March 15, 2026

John 14:12-17 NIV

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. "If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.

Where to begin on this new recognition of how we are called to be in relationship with the trinitarian God? In Sunday school bible study, I have been fortunate to spend a good amount of time with fellow Christians grappling with the Book by John Stott called the Cross of Christ. Through this study we have been learning more about the Trinity and it has significantly altered my understanding of how the Character of God is revealed to us in the perfect sacrifice made to save those who believe in Jesus Christ and His death Resurrection and Ascension.

Many of us have also been studying the Gospel of John in a Tuesday night zoom Discipleship class that has been a strong companion study of the nature of God's Love and light in the world. I am so grateful to have been able to encounter God's Word in two separate classes where as a community of Christians we are able to grow each of our understanding of God's grace and unlimited love for us. It is now on me to build my own mission statements of how to give over my life and priorities to God in response.

Lent is surely a time for each of us to prepare ourselves to be at the foot of the Cross of Christ on Good Friday. We are called to live some 2000 plus years after the physical crucifixion of Christ in certainty and conviction that He is the completed sacrifice, satisfaction and oblation that for me and my sins. How will I be bold and intentional in prayer (as encouraged in the reading above) in asking for anything that is consistent with the Truth and character of God? How will my priorities reflect this, overcoming my personal wills and wants for myself and living in the word and truth to bring others into a meaningful relationship with the grace and love of God through Jesus.

I pray this lent I am provoked to a deeper sense of how to honor my covenant of faith and gratitude for the grace and completed work of redemption that I have received through Christ Jesus death on the Cross and His Resurrection. May I be prepared each day to grow and become more courageous in praying to God knowing that my life and prayers serve and glorify God. May I fully submit to His ways and be an instrument of His love.

- Peter Williams



Monday, March 16, 2026

Psalm 121

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and for evermore. (KJV)

I learned this psalm from my mother. Indeed, we had it read at her funeral.

I grew up in Atlanta in the 1950's when the roads in north Georgia and western North Carolina were the original ones built in the 1920s. Only my parents thought to travel them to escape Atlanta heat in the summer and view the colorful fall foliage in the fall.

Surely the Lord must be present in a place so beautiful! Hence, we thought of Psalm 121.

The Cherokees who dwelt in these lands (Their capital was New Echota in north Georgia) took the name for their historical drama, *Unto These Hills*, from Psalm 121. It symbolized their deep connection to their homeland in north Georgia and western North Carolina. I can relate to that.

Where we find God, there we will also find our help, our keeper, and our preserver.

- Tom Mimms





Tuesday, March 17, 2026
Patience

Proverbs 14:29

Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick tempered displays folly.

1 Corinthians 13:4-5

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Romans 12:12

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Ephesians 4:2

Be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Romans 8:25

But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Psalms 27:14

Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

Exodus 14:14

The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Isaiah 30:18

Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore, he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!

1 Timothy 1:16

But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.

I pray every day for patience. I ask and ask for something, yet God is silent. But Jesus, you said "Ask and it shall be given you." But God's time is not my time. For God, "a thousand years is a day, and a day a thousand years."

I have learned that when I ask for something and do not get it immediately, God is not "dragging his feet." God is waiting for me to grow, to be ready for my request. Sometimes the answer is "no," but I have found that God really has something much better in mind for me.

I will continue to ask for patience, I will continue to wait, for God knows me better than I know myself and will provide for me according to his gracious will and in his perfect time.

- Pamela Robinson



Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Psalm 62:5-6:

Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.

So what does it mean to have hope that comes from Him? When we hope, is it from the spirit or do we simply desire for things to be different from what they are? I think that's an easy trap to fall into.

I utilize several different Facebook support groups for my chronic illnesses. There is no cure (hence the word "chronic"), and there are many posts that intimate utter despair. We grieve our old life, we often live in isolation, we struggle to hold down jobs, and sometimes it's difficult to see the point of it all. I feel their pain so deeply and yet at the same time I wonder, why do I not experience that same despair? I grieve and get sad, but there is a spark inside me that refuses to give in.

In the Buddhist tradition, desire is the root cause of all suffering. To mediate this, they cultivate awareness of the desire as it arises (mindfulness); they learn to experience desire without clinging to it or being controlled by it (non-attachment); then they shift focus from personal gratification to serving the greater good, which paradoxically leads to more profound fulfillment.

Knowing this, I have been focused on accepting my situation. I try not to waste time and energy wishing for things to be other than they are. Practicing this allows me to truly be present with God and focus on the things that are in my control. But that doesn't mean I have given up.

Underneath the surface of that desire/grief cycle there is a deeper hope. Our hope in God is not uncertainty, optimism, or wishful thinking. We can rest in God's promises to us and let the future unfold as it may, knowing our higher power has it all in His hands. And I'm part of that plan, just as I am.

If you're feeling hopeless, I encourage you to mindfully assess your hope versus desires. Is there a level of acceptance that would bring you peace? Then refresh your mind with God's promises for us. Romans 5:3-5 states that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us.

If you or someone you love is suffering from chronic illness, feel free to reach out to me and let's pray together! I leave you with wisdom from Julian of Norwich, who I believe understood this hope profoundly: "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

Amen!

- Lindsay Sexton



Thursday, March 19, 2026

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

I have spent most of my adult life handling difficult situations and resolving sticky problems. When those situations arise, I have always tried to be that dependable guy who will handle it. Make it better. Make it go away. A doer. I don't think this bit of self-disclosure distinguishes me. Most of you likely would say the same thing about yourselves.

With a self-concept like that, it's an understatement to say that I rarely think of myself as a sheep. What problem has a sheep ever resolved? I do not lay around in a pasture watching my wool grow. So, a few years ago, when a friend challenged me to incorporate the 23rd Psalm into a daily prayer, I began that challenge with a very thin understanding of this psalm. I'm so glad that I accepted the challenge though. In repeating this psalm every morning, I have learned more and more about myself as a child of God and as a sheep of Jesus' herd.

Some mornings, when worried about business or finances, I am simply reminded that "I shall not want" because Jesus has already provided all that I need and more. Other times, when angry that I am facing a difficult situation of some sort, I am reminded that at times, Jesus leads me into "righteous paths" for reasons that I may not grasp. But no matter how dark, I'm not alone. Jesus has equipped me with every tool I need to do His will.

And on rare occasions, life itself can just feel overwhelming. That's when I seem to need reminding that Jesus' goodness and mercy will continue to bless me for the rest of this life. And in the next life, I will dwell with him in his house forever.

Daily prayer:

Jesus, my Lord and savior, my redeemer and sustainer, my healer and protector, my strong companion and never-failing friend, please help me to remember with confidence throughout this day that I am a sheep of your pasture. You are my shepherd. I shall not want. You make me lie down in green pastures, lead me beside still waters and restore my soul. You lead me on the path of righteousness for your name's sake. And even if that leads to the valley of the shadow of death, I will go and fear no evil for you are with me. Your rod and staff comfort me, you set a table before me in the presence of my enemies, and you anoint my head with oil. My cup runneth over. Surely, your goodness and mercy will follow me for the rest of this life and in the next, I will dwell with you in your house forever.

Amen.

- Sam Tuttle



Friday, March 20, 2026
The Beauty of the Wilderness

Matthew 4:1

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

Lent is often described as a "bright sadness"—a season where we strip away the noise to rediscover what actually matters. Whether you are fasting from social media, sweets, or a specific habit, the goal isn't just self-discipline; it's room-making.

The Reflection

We usually think of the "wilderness" as a place of punishment or being lost. But in the biblical tradition, the wilderness is the place of undivided attention. In our daily lives, we are tethered to our notifications, our to-do lists, and the constant pressure to produce. We use these things to drown out the quiet questions of the soul.

When we enter Lent, we voluntarily step into a "mini wilderness."

By giving something up (fasting) or taking something up (prayer/service), we are telling our hearts that we are no longer satisfied with "fine." We are looking for the "sacred." The hunger pangs or the itch to check your phone are not distractions from the devotion—they are the devotion. They serve as physical reminders that we are small, we are needy, and we are being sustained by something much deeper than our comforts.

The Practice: "The Sacred Pause"

Today, don't just rush into your next task. Choose one transition point—perhaps your commute, your lunch break, or while the coffee is brewing—and practice intentional silence:

1. Acknowledge the Empty: Notice the space created by what you've given up for Lent.
2. Offer the Silence: Don't fill it with a podcast or a scroll. Just sit in it for two minutes.
3. Receive the Grace: Remind yourself that you are loved for who you are, not for what you do or what you consume.

A Closing Prayer

Lord, help me to embrace this season of thinning out. As I strip away the excess, let me find the essentials. May my hunger lead me to your table, and my silence lead me to your voice.

Amen.

- Robert E. Sorrell



Saturday, March 21, 2026

Luke 9:28

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.

In this account of the Transfiguration, we read that Jesus' face and appearance were changed. In the centuries that have followed, various artists have put their ideas of what Jesus looks like on canvas or in sculptures. Some of us have smaller versions of these as bookmarks or pictures according to our own preferences.

For many years, Hollywood only showed Jesus with his back to us or at a distance. Dramatic music often was an accompaniment in particular scenes, and you only saw the person or crowd Jesus was facing. Movie studios feared backlash from the public, "Jesus doesn't look like that! Who dreamed up that idea?"

That all changed when "King of Kings" starring Jeffrey Hunter as Jesus was released in 1961. Max von Sydow followed in "The Greatest Story Ever Told" in 1965, and Robert Powell in "Jesus of Nazareth" in 1977. Other productions have followed since then.

Some questions for all of us to consider should be, "Do I want to see Jesus?" and if so, "How will I respond? Will I be happy to see Him?," and most important of all, "Will He be happy to see me?"

Lent is a time when we examine our lives, repent of our sins, and become closer to Jesus through prayer and penance. There are many forms of penance, i.e., fasting, abstaining from meat on Fridays, giving up a favorite TV show, etc. We can use this time to concentrate on how Jesus looks at us and pray for His wisdom and guidance to amend our lives. May we all faithfully journey on this road, and when our lives end, may Jesus welcome us into His kingdom.

- Alison Mimms





Sunday, March 22, 2026

Isaiah 41:10 NIV

So do not fear, for I am with you: do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:13 NIV

For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.

Joshua 1:9

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

While I was training to be a Stephen Minister, our class was asked to find Bible verses that meant something to each of us. I scrolled through my Bible app (from YouVersion - highly recommended). I had saved so many verses that addressed fear or being afraid. Some of my favorites are above.

So, what am I afraid of? Well, to be honest, lots of things in this difficult and unsettling climate of recent times. However, being a Christian in the United States is not one of them. So why am I afraid to speak to others outside of church about the good news of Jesus? I know I have received so many gifts from God - His love, His patience, His forgiveness, His mercy, His peace, His comfort - all through Christ Jesus. Not to mention, all the blessings - my family, our church, the women's Sunday School class, my co-workers are just a few. Why am I hesitant to invite others into this life with Christ?

The women's Sunday school class is studying evangelism. Most of us agree we don't do a good job of evangelizing. The lessons in our study guide have been helpful in providing small steps to help me grow on this journey. Ultimately, I know that it will be God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit who open someone's heart, but I should plant seeds to help them on the journey. So, this Lenten season, I'm making the effort to come out of my comfort zone, share my story more often, not be afraid, and know that God is with me and will help me. Thanks be to God!

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, You tell us again and again not to be afraid, not because life is easy, but because You are with us. Please open my heart to the opportunities to share about You, don't let hesitation or fear hold me back, and remind me that You promise to take my hand and help me. Forgive me for the times when comfort feels safer than obedience. Please give me strength and courage to share my story with humility and love, trusting that You are the one who actually opens and changes hearts. I place my fear in Your care and my steps in Your hands, confident that You are with me and will help me. In Jesus' name, I pray.

Amen.

- Kristi Story



Monday, March 23, 2026

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, “Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.” So, Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

Matthew 18:21-22

...Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven.”

These two scripture passages speak powerfully to me about repentance and forgiveness, two of the most important themes of Lent.

The verses from Jonah tell me that we must repent of our sin because it is heinous and unacceptable to God, and that if we will repent with sincere hearts, God is faithful to forgive and “cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

The verses from Matthew touch my often-fearful heart with the “blessed assurance,” to quote a beloved old hymn, that the same Lord who taught Peter to forgive “seventy times seven” will surely do no less toward me when I return to him in sincere faith.

Lent calls us to repentance. Lent calls us to return home to God. Lent calls us to prayer. Lent calls us to a spring housecleaning of the mind, heart, and soul. There can be no better time to do as the people of Nineveh did of old and “turn from our evil ways.” Perhaps we will not literally put on sackcloth, but we can fast and engage in other spiritual disciplines which will help us in drawing closer to Yeshua-the-Christ.

Most of all, we can know that God will receive our repentance with love and mercy. We can return to God in the knowledge that, in Christ, we have a powerful advocate pleading for us before the Throne of Grace. We can rest in the knowledge that, like the Prodigal Son, we will be eagerly and lovingly welcomed home.

Thanks be to God!

- George Chesnut



Tuesday, March 24, 2026

Jonah 1:3

But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So, he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

What Might God Call Me to Do?

That question brings anxiety to our hearts and minds.

We have idealized concepts of serving Christ. We often frame our service to him through our lens of what we think he deserves from us. Making it conditional to our terms and preconceptions gives us a sense of control and comfort. We would not want things to get out of hand, would we? Yet, letting go and trusting God's will and purpose are what he desires from us.

Both fear and desire are impediments to the courage required to abandon one's soul to Christ. He calls us to be men and women of his courage. We have no courage without Christ. Fear of loss of control and the cost of time and resources blind us to ministry opportunities that do not fit our paradigm. There is no obedience to the Lord without considerable loss and costs to the self. A hard sacrifice to make given there is so much competing for our time and resources.

The second point, desire is met with radical priorities that Christ has set forth and seem inconsequential or even rational to us. What we desire for ourselves is limited compared to the unlimited opportunities requiring faith in the unseen. God is full of surprises and exhibitions of his power when called to the adventures of ministry. To overcome fear and desires, the Holy Spirit equips us with new strength, knowledge, and resources designed for a strategic purpose.

Is there suffering? Yes, suffering for Christ is essential to our own spiritual growth and moral development. It brings us to the reality of our true selves revealed in Christ. The Lord's accomplished purpose may or may not be revealed to us. Nevertheless, as abandoned souls, we are the Lord's instrument. It is through trusting and experiencing as I testify to. Albeit a slow learner, I have learned to pay attention to the nudges of deepened spiritual awareness, the presence of others, and the needs of others all of which diminish my own self-centered needs.

We are all too happy to serve the Lord at our convenience and with our resources. God is most inconvenient by interrupting our plans and exposing our lacking resources and pointing out our limited faith. When I find my suddenly interrupted schedule and new unplanned for challenges for which I have no plan, I often, paraphrase the quote by the late Comedian Oliver Hardy, "Lord, here is another fine mess you have gotten us into."

- Tom Creely



Wednesday, March 25, 2026

C.S. Lewis, in his book “Mere Christianity,” describes what sets Christianity apart from other religions in one word – grace! Grace can be defined briefly as unmerited favor from God. It is also defined as “God’s favor toward the unworthy” or “God’s benevolence on the undeserving.” However it is defined, it becomes the essential reason we were redeemed by Christ on the cross.

So, as we prepare for Easter during Lent, we need to remember that we are saved by God’s grace. There are numerous depictions of God’s grace, including C.S. Lewis’ “The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe” as well as the New Testament. Although God’s grace is good, it can seem unfair at times. A prime example would be Matthews Gospel – Chapter 20 (the parable of the laborers in the vineyard). Some of the laborers felt they were treated unfairly with their wages for a day’s work.

The concept of fairness reminds me what I was told as a child by my parents – Life isn’t fair – get over it!

Finally, I would like to discuss an important concept of prayer and faith for me. Many times, in the past, I have prayed to God for things that I wanted for myself and felt my prayers went unanswered. This challenged my faith in God until I realized that God gives us what we need, not necessarily what we want. This is when I began praying for other people rather than myself. This solved two problems for me – I would not be disappointed, and others got the potential benefit from my prayers.

Therefore, I would challenge you during Lent to pray for others and remember that grace is good but not always fair.

- Tom David





Thursday, March 26, 2026

John 21:17

Feed my Sheep...

As I lay in bed thinking about a subject for this devotional, my scattered brain showed me this idea/subject.

I am very hard of hearing (or very nearly deaf according to Mayra). At times I hear a word that sounds like what was spoken, but not necessarily the word that was spoken.

It occurred to me that worship and workshop at times, are interchangeable to my ears! WORSHIP - WORKSHOP - Adoration and reverence to God A place where items are made or repaired Twenty Five years ago I attended a Newcomer's Luncheon at SPSP.

The host reminded us that being a member of SPSP required action...not just sitting in a pew on Sunday (worship) but doing something to help others (workshop). Since I would rather cook than weed gardens, I chose the food workshops. SPSP is involved in many food workshops (ministries). (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)

MUST Ministries The Extension Family Promise Hope for the Hungry Food Ministry Salvation Army - After School Program To let you know how proud you should be of these SPSP food workshops, Tom Martin informed our small group that in 2025 we served over 20,000 meals, which does not include the 1200 pounds of rice and beans for St Jude's!

This requires the efforts of MANY parishioners in our congregation, supplying Physical and Spiritual nourishment and filling that need in our community. So, are you hearing worship or workshop? Since they sound alike to me, together they accomplish what I believe our God is asking of us. Won't you join us? Peace, and see you in the trenches!

- Don Loeber



Friday, March 27, 2026

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Kindness flows from compassion and forgiveness. When we choose to be kind, we mirror the grace God has shown us. A random act of kindness—offering encouragement, paying for a restaurant meal or for groceries at check out for strangers can ease burdens we may never fully see.

Today, pause and ask God to open your eyes to someone who needs kindness. Then act, even in a small way. Through that simple obedience, God's love becomes visible, and hearts—both theirs and yours—are quietly transformed.

- Gene Osborn



Saturday, March 28, 2026

John 14:6 (Aramaic Bible in Plain English)

I am the Living God, The Way, The Truth and The Life; no man comes to my Father but by me alone.

(I always pray) that God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may grant you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation (that gives you a deep and personal and intimate insight) into the true knowledge of Him (for we know the Father through the Son). And (I pray) that the eyes of your heart (the very center and core of your being) may be enlightened (flooded with light by the Holy Spirit), so that you will know and cherish the hope (the divine guarantee, the confident expectation) to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints (God's people), and (so that you will begin to know) what the immeasurable and unlimited and surpassing greatness of His (active spiritual) power is in us who believe.

These are in accordance with the working of His mighty strength which He produced in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion (whether angelic or human), and (far above) every name that is named (above every title that can be conferred), not only in this age and world but also in the one to come. And He put all things (in every realm) in subjection under Christ's feet and appointed Him as (supreme and authoritative) head over all things in the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills and completes all things in all (believers)." ***Ephesians 1: 17-23 Amplified Bible.***

He lived a perfect life for me. Am I living my best life for Him? At the communion rail, I see the Body and Blood of Christ, while I'm distracted and mentally preparing a grocery list.

Christ said, "This IS my body... This IS my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (***Matthew 14:26-28***). According to John's writings, we have no life within us, unless we consume the elements in the Eucharist (***John 6:53***).

While my mind wanders during this pinnacle of weekly worship, I can understand how Jesus' disciples fell asleep while He sank to such an incredible nadir of his intimate prayer life on Holy Thursday (***Matthew 26: 40-45***).

It boils down to this: we as humans have no concept of the enormous price Jesus paid for our sins so that we can live with God in Heaven. We have no concept of God's otherness in His perfection, His grandeur and His sinlessness. We forget in our humanness that God cannot be in fellowship with sinners. It is impossible for us to live in harmony with Him by faith unless(!). Unless Jesus in His infinite love for us, took upon Himself the punishment for our sins.

Think about it. We are hopeless in our sinful nature to be in the presence of God. Hopeless! Fellowship with our Creator will never happen without Jesus, our Savior, our Mediator, our Shepherd, and our Friend. Jesus said, "I AM THE LIVING GOD, The Way, The Truth and The Life; no man comes to my Father but by me alone."

So, the next time we take Communion, let us pause to remember the magnitude of Jesus' fierce and unfathomable saving grace for us all; His gift of now; His gift of intimacy by offering his real presence to be consumed by our bodies, because we don't deserve it.

- Linda Kepler



Sunday, March 29, 2026

Luke 4: 18-19 (NKJV):

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Jesus proclaims that his arrival is the fulfillment of prophecy, the year of God's favor, the jubilee that would bring freedom to the captives. At first, his audience is excited to hear this, but Jesus went on to add that this jubilee wouldn't work out the way they had expected it. Jesus told them that many of them would not benefit from his arrival, but instead it would be the outcasts, the foreigners, the least of these who would experience God's blessing.

Jesus was making it clear that his arrival wasn't meant to give everyone a sense of assurance. He was warning those who assumed they were on the inside that instead they might be on the outside. He was warning those who assumed they were right that they might indeed be wrong. Throughout his whole life, Jesus is showing the great reversal of God's kingdom, where outsiders become insiders and where the first would become last and the last will become first.

Jesus' coming was rejected by most people because he refused to fit neatly into their national and political ambitions. He didn't come to maintain the status quo. He wasn't going to allow people to keep their prejudices and continue their misuse of power.

Jesus was showing a different understanding of the kingdom and a new way of understanding power and politics and a new way of knowing God and treating people. His ways would not include political posturing or violence or hatred. He would show a kingdom built on forgiveness and prayer, service and sacrifice. He would show a kingdom open to all people who were willing to repent and believe. His kingdom would not be built through the politically powerful, but through the meek and the merciful and through those who hunger for justice.

Do we believe this? Will we follow Jesus even if he doesn't fit neatly into our national and political agendas?

Do we really trust that the kingdom comes through humble service and not the powers of this world? Will we follow Jesus even if it means a life of sacrifice, a downward path with the least of these and not sitting at a banquet with the powerful and the popular?

- Dr. Brandon Dasinger





Monday, March 30, 2026
Book of Common Prayer: Pages 491 and 492

I believe that some of the most comforting, beautiful, and peaceful words in our Liturgy are found on pages 491 and 492 in *The Book of Common Prayer*. They just happen to be the opening salvo of the Episcopal Rite Two Burial Service. There we are reminded that this service is an Easter liturgy and finds its meaning in the joy of the Christ's resurrection and the comfort and certainty that we will have, after death, the love of God in Christ Jesus forever.

As I get older and life starts to change, I find myself dealing with increasing health issues and I find I am attending more funerals for friends and family. Thus, I cannot help but be thinking more about death.

Retirement and aging commercials / articles keep asking me: Is my will up to date? Do you have an estate plan? Have you documented how you want your funeral service? What about needing continuing care to deal with your Parkinson's?

All that noise is there to remind me about the end of my life and death.

That is where these beautiful words help comfort me. They serve to remind me of whom and what is awaiting me upon my physical death. When that time comes, these words will have comforted me, and will also help to comfort those who are grieving for me:

I am Resurrection and I am Life, says the Lord.
Whoever has faith in me shall have life,
even though he die.
And everyone who has life,
and has committed himself to me in faith,
shall not die for ever.

As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives
and that at the last he will stand upon the earth.
After my awaking, he will raise me up;
and in my body I shall see God.
I myself shall see, and my eyes behold him
who is my friend and not a stranger.

I believe this will be the reward for my faith and because of the Grace given unconditionally to me from Christ Jesus, I will begin my second life:

For none of us has life in himself,
and none becomes his own master when he dies.
For if we have life, we are alive in the Lord,
and if we die, we die in the Lord.
So, then, whether we live or die,
we are the Lord's possession.

Happy from now on
are those who die in the Lord!
So it is, says the Spirit,
for they rest from their labors.

Alleluia Christ has risen!

- John Bareham



Genesis 1:31

And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good....

I saw this verse recently and it got me to thinking – “**saw** all that HE had made” – how often do we take the time to really look at this amazing Earth that God created and the people around us? With my constant to-do list, work, home, family, and, and, and – I’m sure we can all relate to the busyness of life. But this Lenten season I’m going to try something new – I’m “giving up” looking at my phone in public and replace it with either smiling at people or enjoying God’s creation.

I know that’s not really “giving up” something to horrible, but I think it will help with my rush-rush cellphone craze. It’s a simple thing, but I’m hopeful that it will help break the constant dependence on electronics and in building a relationship with what’s going on around me.

Will you join me in enjoying what God has made for us?

- Eileen Mittleider





Tuesday, March 31, 2026
Making One's Calling and Election Sure

2 Peter 1

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In these tough times, when layoffs occur daily and in large numbers, when war looms overseas, how comforting it would be to have Jesus walk by our individual Sea of Galilee and beckon us to “Come, follow me,” as he did to Peter and Andrew, then to James and John. If only God would provide each of us with life’s path this clear and certain.

Until this occurs, we are blessed with the opportunity to pursue our personal mission using our own instincts, talents and networks. For some it seems as if their calling is identified early in life. For others it appears as though they will never find their way. Every time I get a call from a friend, or friend of a friend, seeking assistance with a job search I ask them one simple question, “What do you want to do?” I don’t ask them, “What do you do?” It’s a subtle difference but one that hopefully helps them begin to think differently.

Most reply with a description of their most recent position, seeking comfort in the familiar before investing the time to examine their talents to determine if their true calling lies elsewhere. It sounds simplistic to suggest all you have to do is think about the things you enjoy doing then pursue a position that would utilize them. Simplistic? Yes. Simple? No way. God gives us the power to choose our way and become whatever we desire.

Dr. Robert Shuler suggests, “The me I see, is the me I will be.” If you can imagine it, you can achieve it. The only question is what are you willing to do to get there? Are you willing to go back to school for a year or two? Accept a pay cut? Work a second job to supplement your income until money is attracted to you and your idea? Climb down the corporate ladder to change industries? Relocate to an area better suited for your idea?

Discovering the real you will be exciting, terrifying and challenging all at the same time. Finding your true calling will bring out your passion and cause you to excel in your chosen field. When you enjoy what you do, it isn’t a job. Long hours speed by. Creativity is a constant companion. Every day is Saturday. You can’t believe you actually get paid to “work.” Thought consistently turns to solve some problem, expand some horizon and pursue some new wrinkle. Being yourself frees up so much time allowing you to focus on your calling. By investing this additional time in your calling, you will not fall and you will move closer to Jesus Christ.

Sometimes it is tragedy that forces us to focus our efforts and attention. It might be a bout with cancer, the loss of a job or the death of a loved one. Rarely do we voluntarily enter into such an examination of our life’s purpose. Starting today, live your life as if there is no tomorrow. Not with reckless abandon but with clarity of purpose. Force yourself to focus on the important things rather than the trivial. After all, you never know when Jesus will appear on your shore to shepherd you to your true calling or ask for an accounting of your talents like the master and the servants in Matthew 25: 23 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

- Todd Runge



Wednesday, April 1, 2026

Philippians 4:9

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

I like traditions – whether it’s the holidays or in everyday life. And Lent is no different. I love my little tradition I started years ago of taking your words from last year’s devotional and sharing the snippets that really resonated with me. Thoughtful questions and inspiring words for difficult times as I try my best to keep focused on what I am learning. Always praying for God’s peace in my life.

- All things come from God.
- Savor the journey ahead of you.
- Loving God, please grant me peace of mind and calm my troubled heart.
- We experience the full joy of Christ when we are together.
- Focusing on the bigger picture seems like a good place to start.
- Spread joy and smile at strangers.
- Realign your priorities.
- Will the good news of God in Christ be shared by our word and example?
- Show His love and mercy to those I meet.
- Find ways to offer love in a world that is often in need of healing.
- Focus on only what I can control and leave the rest to him.
- Jesus has given us a new way to live.
- “Heaven on Earth” is real.
- Love God and Love your neighbor – all else is merely added commentary.
- Find God in each day.
- Be aware of what is disciplining you – protect your mind and heart.
- Explore the Bible.
- Become more courageous in sharing my faith with others.
- He doesn’t expect us to be perfect.
- We talk with our friends and family to stay close & connected – we need to do the same with God.
- GOD always has my back and HE’S a much better driver.
- The Gospels do not explain the Resurrection. The Resurrection explains the Gospels.

- Eileen Mittleider



Thursday, April 2, 2026
Maundy Thursday

John 13:3-15

Jesus ... rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel ... and began to wash the disciples' feet and wipe them with the towel.... He came to Simon Peter, and Peter said to him, ... 'You shall never wash my feet?' Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me...." After he had washed their feet, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done for you? You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example that you also should do as I have done to you.

Every other year, we have foot-washing at the Maundy Thursday service, and every time I say I'm not going to do that. I don't care that much for my own feet, much less someone else's. At the end of the day, feet are often dirty and smelly – the same bacteria in limburger cheese is the same that makes feet smell, I've read. So why do I want to mess with someone else's feet. But every year, as I watch other people go to the front to encounter someone else's feet – some eagerly, some trudging – I stand up and start my trudge. And as I wash someone else's feet, it seems that I always think about Jesus doing this for his disciples' feet, and a feeling comes over me of rightness, like this is what I'm supposed to be doing.

But then comes that time that someone is supposed to wash my feet – whoa! This could be embarrassing. Somebody is going to be messing with my dirty, smelly feet. And then it seems I remember Simon Peter didn't want Jesus to wash his feet because he felt that was way below Jesus' standing. But Jesus told him that if he didn't allow Jesus to wash his feet, he would have no part in Jesus. And this year it struck me: this is part of us being connected to a Christian community – serving each other and, swallowing our pride, allowing others to serve us.

Jesus said he was washing their feet to give them an example. He acknowledged to them that he was their Teacher and their Lord. It seems obvious, on the surface, that a purpose of his "example" was to show them that, as their Lord, if he could stoop to wash their feet, then they were to do the same for each other, that rank had no privileges in God's kingdom. Humble service to others was to be the basis of being a part of Christ. But I think more important for us, especially as a parish, is the point he made with Peter. When we serve others and allow ourselves to be served, as Jesus tells the disciples - and us - that is what makes us a Christian community, a part of God's kingdom here on earth. That is what makes us Christians, one with another, by means of being a servant ministers to all people and accepting ministry from others in our own need, even in the humblest ways possible, like dealing with feet that are dirty, sweaty, and smelly.

I see this servant spirit at St Peter and St Paul all over the place as together we help and receive help. If a need is found it is filled in abundance. The Brotherhood of St Andrew lives on prayer, study, and **service**. I have found in many instances that if a request is made to Brotherhood, it is fulfilled almost immediately and often over-filled. The church's multiple food ministries are abundant in their service to those in need. The multiple Bible studies offered and being taken (I last counted 12) are abundant blessings to our parish. Our Clergy, Stephen Ministers, Lay Eucharistic Visitors, Community of Hope, and other groups are caring for the spiritual needs of our parish and others. As a community of faith, we seem to be trying to serve others and humbly receive help, ourselves, as Jesus called us to do, when he first washed his disciples feet so long ago.

But I wonder if there are other feet that need washing that we need and need us to be a part of this Christian community?

Please plan to attend the Eucharist this evening with the stripping of the altar and the all-night vigil to follow in the side chapel, at which Brotherhood members will be present throughout the night.

- Billy Harrison



John 14:5-6

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

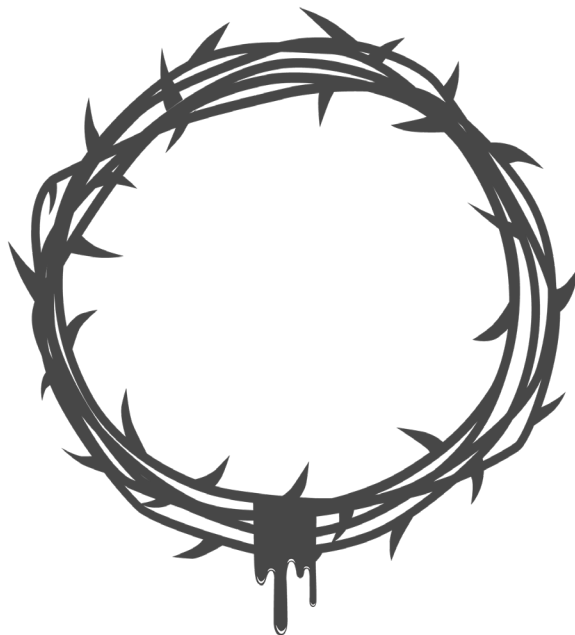
I have a terrible sense of direction. GPS has rescued me from ending up in "parts unknown" to arriving safely at my desired destination. Jesus' disciples also show their confusion with direction as they contemplate living without Jesus, their GPS. They had spent three years following Jesus, their guide, listening to his teaching and preaching, and witnessing his miracles. They still failed to grasp the significance of who he was and how he would transform the world. This was not an intellectual problem; it was a spiritual problem. The solution would arrive on the Day of Pentecost through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The setting is the Upper Room on the night before Jesus is crucified. Those present are Jesus and eleven of his disciples. Judas has left and is on his way to betray Jesus. Jesus knows his death is imminent, and he wants to impart final, important truths to those closest to him. He has just explained their final destination will be with him in Heaven, in his Father's House of many rooms. Further, he has assured them that he will come back and take them there to be with him forever.

In John 14:1-4 Thomas voices the confusion, fear, and uncertainty of all the disciples. Jesus responds by declaring the truth of the gospel.

Thank God that he has not only shown us the way. He himself IS the way in Jesus.

- Cathy Shuman





Friday, April 3, 2026
Good Friday

John 18:1-11 (NIV)

When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.)

When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

Again, he asked them, "Who is it you want?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they said.

Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go." This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

Many things about the cross of Christ capture our attention and command our admiration. One of these is the way he faced that incredible experience, John begins with the night of his arrest. He was with his disciples in a garden when the soldiers came for him. It could have been a time of emotional upheaval and physical violence. It was, instead, a time of calm discussion and quiet surrender. The tone of that occasion was set by the one marked for arrest.

The soldiers came with torches and weapons. They obviously anticipated a fight. Jesus went out to meet them and asked, "What is it you want?" They said, "Jesus of Nazareth." He quietly answered, "I am he." The soldiers were so shocked by his composure that they took a backward step and fell to the ground. Those who had weapons were frightened. The unarmed Christ was not. The entire scene is a reflection of his amazing poise. How did he do it? What was the source of such incredible courage?

First, it was the knowledge that he had nothing to hide. His life from the beginning to end was an open book. He had no secret closets, where skeletons waited to be discovered. No one could produce anything of which he would be ashamed. You and I are not quite like that. We have things in our lives somewhat hidden from view,

and we don't want those things revealed. Courage cannot be bought at bargain prices. It required the meeting of some serious conditions. And one of those is a clean and upright life. Jesus had that, and it enabled him to face the cross with unwavering courage.

Another source was his concern for others. He said to the soldiers, "If it is I you want let these men go." Faced with a perilous situation, his first thought was not for himself but for his disciples. What a tremendous source of courage that can be! Occasionally, we read or hear of a Mother who sees her child being attacked by a dog. On ordinary days, she would be terrified of that animal, but not that day. She flies into the fray with reckless abandon. Her concern for that child had driven out all thought of her own personal safety. Maybe that is what the Bible means when it says, "Perfect love casts out fear." Jesus may not have been able to face the cross with such courage had it been only for himself. But he certainly could do it for his friends.

One other source was his faith in God his father. This arrest scene, John tells us, took place in a garden. We know which garden that was. It was Gethsemane, where he prayed in such agony. He had asked to be spared the cross. That request had been denied. But in its stead, he had been given the assurance of divine support. It seemed to him an impossible assignment. Then he heard the voice of his father saying, "You can." To that he answered, "I will," and he went out to carry his cross with a courage that the world has never been able to forget.

- Don Wimberly
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Luke 23:32–43 (KJV):

And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

And they parted his raiment and cast lots. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

Luke gives us the fullest account of the two thieves and their roles in the passion. Yet he never names *any* of the characters herein.

Somewhere over the next four centuries, however, the repentant thief acquired the name “Dismas” or “Dysmas,” often conflated with the servant Demas referred to in **2 Timothy 4:10**. We see him mentioned, for example, in the non-canonical *Gospel of Nicodemus (Acts of Pilate)*. The other thief became Gestas.

In legend, Dismas went on to become the “patron saint of thieves.” I like this. Canonical or not, Dismas, is as good a name as any other.

His story has much to tell us about the depths of God’s grace. He and Gestus, in fact, remind me of the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Both are broken people, sinners rightfully deserving the wrath of God, *just like every one of us*. The difference is that Dismas, like the tax collector, confesses his own sins, rather than those of others.

Ernest Hemingway supposedly said that *we are all broken, that that’s where the light shines in*.

Lord, as we approach this Easter Sunday, the day when you rose from the dead carrying away the burden of our sins, may we all allow your purifying light to shine through the broken places of our lives.

- Lee Woodward





Saturday, April 4, 2026
HOLY SATURDAY

Proverbs 12:25-28

An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up. A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray. The lazy man does not roast his game, but the diligent man prizes his possessions. In the way of righteousness there is life; along that path is immortality.

I'm not certain if there has been a definitive shift in society over the past couple of decades or if the news media now spends more time on it but it sure seems like there are a lot of people in need. In the wake of the Asheville flooding in late 2024, the 2025 fires in LA or any other disaster of scale, tremendous numbers were impacted. Many were impacted or displaced and thankfully, even greater numbers responded with aid. Many were relocated to distant communities until some semblance of calm was restored. Some of these survived on the subsidy of others, some established new lives in their adopted community never to return and others seemed to make no progress at all. Society seems full of increasing numbers in need of some kind of assistance.

There is a fine line between helping someone survive a crisis and enabling them to avoid a return to self-sufficiency. Years ago, I met a couple that fed the homeless once a week in downtown Atlanta. Hearing of their effort I thought it would be rewarding to help one week, and it would also be a profound experience for my kids. We scheduled to help on what turned out to be a particularly cold evening with temperatures reaching into the upper teens. We helped serve hot chocolate and a warm meal to more than a hundred, passed out candy, blankets and jackets our hosts had brought and participated in a prayer session. We heard stories of desperation, of hope and of great need from many in attendance.

On the way home, my wife asked if I thought we had helped anyone that evening. While I think we did help a few survive the bitter cold for another day I could not shake the feeling that I had merely enabled most of them to be a little more comfortable where they were. I did not feel I had done anything to move them beyond their current state. I came to respect and admire our host's dedication to this particular mission but felt more should be done to educate, train or lift them to a better place.

I now realize that each of those encountered in the freezing cold that night is on a path. They might not be making progress at the rate I would pray for them to achieve, nonetheless they each must travel at their own speed. God will provide for them and move them to a higher step when they are ready. Our job is to be there, willing to help, on whichever step we find them.

Suze Orman once made the following comments: Is your only thought when it comes to God and money, "God I wish I had some more?" Count your other blessings too. Are you really only as good as your net worth? What about neighbors, friends and family? True wealth resides in your humanity. True wealth is when your hands are open not just to receive, but to give as well. Give not just at holiday time or in the event of a disaster or for the tax deduction. Give of your time, your heart, your compassion, on a daily basis. Don't just ask for blessings, give them. Commit to a life of kindness and support, toward ourselves and others, and you'll be on a path filled with blessings. True blessings in life come when you make others shine by the brightness of our thoughts, words and actions. Then and only then will you be truly wealthy.

Will you be ready with a kind word, friendship, compassion or aid when encountering those in need?

- Todd Runge



What's happening to the values and beliefs we grew up with?

Mathew 22:37-39

God said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

As I write this it may seem like I am making this all about me. Well, you are right but it's okay. Afterall, we are all children of God, made by God, and God is within us. So, this devotional is about God, not me. It is how God has shaped me over time and what I have learned along the way.

During my very young formative years, I was raised by my dad in a single parent household. I was left alone allot and learned to fend for myself. There wasn't always a lot of food in the house. Fortunately, we lived in Miami and there were plenty of fruit trees. I know that God was watching over me because He supplied plenty of fruit and I never got into trouble for 'borrowing' some. He was also teaching me to be self-reliant. Thanks be to God for providing for me when I needed nourishment.

In 1956, I was six years old and had started first grade when my dad enrolled me in Cub Scouts. Little did I know that I was about to take my first oath and be given fundamental guiding principles that I would be able to use all my life. God also taught me lessons about kindness, caring, and sharing. When I came to the first few meetings, it was apparent my dad did not have the financial resources to buy Cub Scout accessories. At maybe the third or fourth meeting, each Scout in my Den presented me with an article of clothing, a cap, a neckerchief, and a clasp. I was humbled and all I could do was cry. Thanks be to God for inspiring my dad to take me to Cub Scouts.

The Scout Oath

On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight.

The Scout Law

A Scout is: Trustworthy; Loyal; Helpful; Friendly; Courteous; Kind; Obedient; Cheerful; Thrifty; Brave; Clean, and Reverent.

The Cub Scout Motto

Do Your Best!

Another significant event took place in 1956. The official motto of the United States changed from E Pluribus Unum to, "**In God We Trust.**"

I believe the values and beliefs I grew up with will be with me always. Unfortunately, I also believe morality is in a steep decline and God's Commandments are being ignored. Please pray with me for return of morality, civility and reverence for God.

Always **Do Your Best!**

- Bill Grant



EASTER
Sunday, April 5, 2025

Exult, let them exult, the hosts of heaven, exult, let the Angel ministers of God exult, let the trumpet of salvation sound aloud our mighty King's triumph! Be glad, let the earth be glad, as glory floods her, ablaze with light from her eternal King, let all corners of the earth be glad, knowing an end to gloom and darkness.

-The Easter Proclamation

Alleluia! The Lord is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

We have finally made it to Easter. Like the Israelites, we have wandered through the desert and have arrived at the Promised Land. It is tempting to view Easter as the end of Lent (which it is, but it is so much more.)

We are very good about keeping the solemnity of Lent. It is easy to talk about what we've given up (or at least attempted to give up.) However, once Easter Day is in our rearview mirror, it is easy to forget the glorious celebration that is Christ's victory over death and the fulness of life that we are given in and through Jesus.

I encourage you to take full advantage of the Easter season.

Celebrate, rejoice, shout the goodness of the Lord, not just today, not just for the next fifty days, but each and every day. Be glad. Be ablaze with the light from your eternal King. Know that Christ is alive, and alive so that you may live.

- Nathan Webb







Lent, Holy Week, & Easter Worship Services

The First Sunday of Lent – February 22

Palm Sunday Services – March 29th

Maundy Thursday April 2 at 7:30PM

Good Friday, April 3 at 7AM, Noon, and 7:30PM

The Great Vigil of Easter - Saturday, April 4 at 8:30PM

The Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ
Easter Sunday, April 5

8AM Service – Choir with Brass

10:30AM Service – Choir with Brass & with mild incense

Easter Egg Hunt – 9:30am in the Memorial Garden



Lenten Resources

Lenten Devotional – Comprised of devotional writings by our parishioners and clergy. Printed copies available today. Daily writings will also be available beginning February 18 at peterandpaul.org/lentresources and on our social media.

Stations of the Cross – Self-guided in-doors & outdoors. The Way of the Cross booklet will be available on the credenza in the Children’s Ministry area which is located near the first cross, beginning February 18

Labyrinth - Outdoors & self-guided, near the pavilion at the back of the church property

Lectio Divina - Led by Amy Stillwell on Sunday nights from 7-7:30PM via Zoom

Prayer Beads – Several instructional resources are available

Additional details about for many of the Lenten Resources are available at peterandpaul.org/lentresources



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The Rev. Nathan Webb, Associate Rector
The Rev. Brandon Dasinger, Deacon
Camie Schade, Pastoral Associate
George Chesnut, Director of Music