

WESTMINSTER

Lenten Reflections

2022

ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



WRITTEN BY THE
CONGREGANTS OF
WESTMINSTER UNITED
CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

Lent is an important time when we look deeply inside ourselves. We acknowledge that we do not always live the way that God wants us to and we commit ourselves to changes and to new beginnings. We open ourselves up to being renewed through Jesus Christ.

Lent is 40 days (not including Sundays.) We are journeying with Jesus as he heads toward Jerusalem and the cross. After that comes Easter, so part of Lent for us is waiting for Easter. While we wait, we prepare, by making time, making space and making room.

This devotional booklet is your invitation to do just that. Carve out some time each day to read scripture and the corresponding reflection written by members of our faith community, from kids to youth to adults. These reflections are a rich sharing of questions, challenges and affirmations, experiences, and theological perspectives.

Grab your favourite bible and this devotional.

Light a candle. Breathe.

Pray: *God help me notice what you'd have me notice today.*

Read. Wonder. Share.

Together we are traveling toward Easter morning.

Make time. Make space. Make room.*

We don't want to miss the joy of God's spring when it arrives.



**Blessings on the journey,
Rev. Michelle Robinson**

* There is a wonderful book by Laura Alary called, "Make Room: A Child's Guide to Lent and Easter" in which she develops this invitation.

A decorative border of brown line art flowers and leaves surrounds the central text area.

DAY 1

Wednesday March 2, 2022 ASH WEDNESDAY

Scripture: John 1:1-5 In the Beginning was the Word

This passage seems to talk of the part of Jesus that has always existed and is inseparable from God. Jesus is logos (the Word made flesh) who reveals God to us. While the bible speaks of the earthly existence of Jesus (he had both a birth and a death, and was fully human) we are also told he was with God prior to this existence and returned to God following.

This leads me to ponder about what lies before and after our own fleeting time upon this earth.

Gods' own existence on this earth (through Jesus) was cut short by the failings of humanity, but there should, I suppose, be solace in believing Jesus returned to God.

Christians believe in bodily resurrection. This is a mystery, a source of comfort. But I can't help but think of those souls born to bodies too frail for this planet, and I am left to wonder and pray about what resurrection means for them. Will we meet again with those whose presence on this earth were indelibly linked to our own?

My soul aches for that reunion.

~ Jake Robinson

DAY 2

Thursday March 3, 2022

Scripture: John 1:14-18 The Word became flesh

When I reflect on this passage the feeling I am most left with is comfort. Here we are reminded that Jesus was divine as well as human. It is such a reassuring thing, that Jesus experienced and knows all the struggles and challenges we face as human beings. The gospels teach us how Jesus spent his time on earth, who he associated with, what he did, and how he treated people. It gives us an example to emulate.

When I think about a passage like this I ask myself, how can I better follow Jesus' example in my own life? The passage also describes the gifts we receive through Jesus. God's unfailing love, faithfulness, grace. We do not deserve these blessings, but they are provided, nonetheless. Through Jesus we are given a glimpse at God's loving nature. When life brings difficulties, or I face anxiety or sadness, there is so much comfort that comes from knowing that God knows, He understands, and He is there.

~ Michael Molnar






DAY 3

Friday March 4, 2022

Scripture: John 1:19-23 The Witness of John the Baptist



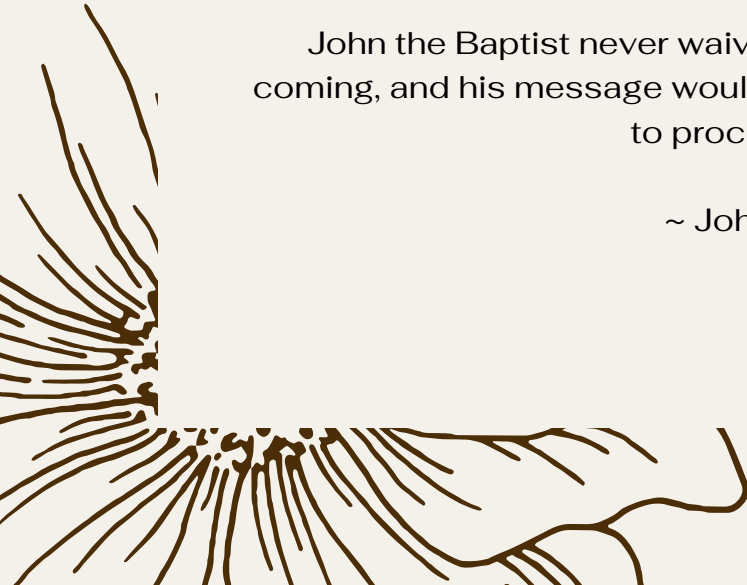
When I read this passage, I try to place myself in John the Baptist's shoes. Here he has been baptizing people who come to hear him and want to join his group of followers. He has been proclaiming to anyone who will listen that they should heed his words and prepare for changes that were coming. John stated that a greater man was coming to show them the way. Now he is suddenly confronted by priests asking him to explain who he was and by what authority he was preaching these words.

I see this happening today. We go about our jobs and participate in church and community affairs. We use our spare time to support charities that we feel emulate our personal beliefs. We dedicate ourselves to church activities and participate where possible, at all times demonstrating our Christian teachings. Imagine we are suddenly confronted by people in authority who ask "who we are" and "what gives us the right" to tell others what we believe. What would be our response?

I have watched many people who proclaim to be strong supporters of an ideology. When confronted and asked why they believe what they are proclaiming, often they water down, try to divert or fail explain their stance or belief. I wonder how many times, when we are in situations that would allow us to proclaim our Christian faith, would we try to avoid declaring our beliefs?

John the Baptist never waivered. He believed that Jesus was coming, and his message would change the world. John was willing to proclaim. Are we?

~ John Bowman



DAY 4

Saturday March 5, 2022

Scripture: John 1:35-50 Jesus Calls the Disciples

Jesus knew the kind of men He wanted and needed to be His disciples, to carry on His work. Just as He knows us, our strengths and talents and what we are capable of in our own lives. He has faith in us and will always be with us on our journey. It makes me wonder: how strong is my own faith? Would I be a believer and answer His call immediately, like Andrew or Philip, or would I have to ask questions first, like Nathanael? Nathanael was convinced by Jesus's answer to the question, "how do You know me?" A small detail leading to a big belief. Do I miss the small details in daily life that show me how to follow Him?

I feel Jesus's powerful presence as He invites the followers to "come and see." What a beautiful invitation! There is so much to see and to understand of God's work and Jesus's influence on our lives. Can we let go of our earthly concerns and live as Jesus lived? We need to trust and have faith to walk with confidence in the future, just as the disciples did.

As a child, I often sang the hymn "O Jesus I Have Promised" with my sister. This came to mind as I read the passage of the call to the disciples. The words spoke to me then, and more so today. Jesus has promised to all who follow Him, that where He is in glory, His servants shall be too.

And Jesus, I have promised to serve You to the end,
O give me grace to follow, my Master and my friend.

~ Joan Ward



Jesus Calling His Disciples

SARAH A. - AGE 7





DAY 5

Monday March 7, 2022

Scripture: John 2:1-12 Wedding at Cana

I immediately focused on a mother's role and see a mother subtly directing her adult child when clearly he is quite capable of seeing a situation and responding appropriately (just as a parent hopes their parenting will have instilled in their children.)

And, I see the son replying, "What would you have me do, I am not ready" – resistance from the adult child.

The mother does not push but does facilitate action by telling the servants to do whatever he tells them, to be on standby for him (if her son chooses to act.) She continues to support him. He directs the servants to fill the stone jars with water and to present the jars to the master of the banquet.

Jesus saw that this was a time to look beyond, to look to the well-being of the community of the wedding hosts and their guests, to be of service.

We may be reluctant, fearful, shy, ignorant about being in service to another. Maybe it seems too much for us to commit to lending a helping hand of any kind "my time has not yet come." Such a move to service can be made easier and our eyes opened to its value, by a simple question or statement – without judgement – letting us know that we can be of service, and how. Not only do we help others, but our service – short or extended – enriches our own lives.

~ Beverley McClain

Wedding at Cana Turning Water to Wine

NOVA A. - AGE 5



A decorative border surrounds the text, featuring stylized brown line drawings of leaves and clusters of berries. The berries are round with small stems and leaves, while the leaves are elongated with prominent veins.

DAY 6

Tuesday March 8, 2022

Scripture: John 2:13-22 Cleansing the Temple

This happened at an important time of the year as Passover was quickly approaching. Jesus was going to the temple to worship and his plans were impeded by merchants who were selling animals for sacrifice with large profits. The temple was most likely quite a mess with an overpowering smell. The feeling of sacred space would have been badly compromised.

I found it interesting to read this passage again at this time in history. We have been experiencing two years of various obstacles. Some have been able to adapt to quickly and easily. We all worked together to do our part to get through a troubling pandemic that took hold of the world. The initial uncertainty caused shortages of bathroom tissue, cleansers, and baking supplies, which some had purchased in bulk to sell at inflated costs. As the months went by supplies were restored but frustrations and tensions were escalating.

We are not to take advantage of each other at any time, but especially in a sacred space such as a temple, synagogue or church. Jesus didn't hesitate to clearly demonstrate his reaction to greed and where his authority came from. Toward the end of this text Jesus orders the temple destroyed and he would rebuild it in 3 days. It wasn't until Jesus' resurrection that the disciples understood this message. I often find myself in situations where there is a lot I just don't understand until much later with the benefit of hindsight.

This passage reminds me that faith, trusted leadership and kind fairness carry us and allow us to lead our lives the way God intended us to.

~ Teena Morrow

DAY 7

Wednesday March 9, 2022

Scripture: John 3:1-8 Jesus and Nicodemus

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a member of the Jewish ruling council (the Sanhedrin), who came to Jesus at night with a question. He is mentioned in three places in the Gospel of John: his visit to discuss Jesus' teachings (today's Chapter 3 passage), his conversation with Sanhedrin colleagues (Chapter 7) and arranging the embalming with Joseph of Arimathea after the Crucifixion of Jesus (Chapter 19).

In John 3, Jesus is talking to Nicodemus about rebirth, a new birth, a regeneration of the human spirit. "Born again" ("born anew" in the Revised Standard Version translation) has lots of other synonyms, including converted and redeemed (i.e., bought back).

For me, Jesus is talking about embracing the core reason for living, for being, for a life focused on God and our fellow earthly citizens, whether near or far. Loving God and loving one another. The well-known words in verse 3 ("unless you are born again") is so much more than a religious mantra, billboard slogan or overused religious answer. It was not meant to be a dividing line, whether you are or are not saved.

For me, it is a ongoing process of mindfulness that centres on our very inward being, not a one-time experience. First, acknowledging the absolute need for our own personal relationship with God and Mother Earth --- and deepening that relationship in all we think and do. Then, sharing that higher state of intention and spiritual perspective in all our interactions with others, including ongoing acts of kindness, reaching out to our fellow human beings whatever their points of view or status. That has its challenges, particularly the last 2-plus COVID pandemic years.

Spiritual rebirth for me is a purposeful state of mind that we must constantly renew and revisit. Being born again, it is fresh and new – reframing our lives on a regular basis and allowing God to speak to us in all we see and do. Being open and receptive to those possibilities, whatever our surroundings and circumstances; continually asking for that higher spiritual intent and guidance that we all so desperately need in our oftentimes unpredictable lives and journeys.

~ Paul Kneebone





DAY 8

Thursday March 10, 2022

Scripture: John 4:5-30 The Samaritan Woman at the Well

Who knew that a simple ask for a drink of water from a weary traveler could change a woman's life?

The Samaritan woman knew her place and recognized when a societal boundary was being crossed. She found herself challenged by this stranger who spoke of living water, not Jacob's well water, eternal sustenance not temporary gratification. She is confused by what she's understood worship to be, atop a mountain, not anchored in spirit and truth. She is honest when confronted with the inherent shame of her past and present, but rewarded with validation for speaking her truth. She seeks this different form of water the stranger offers, not realizing the Messiah is before her, even when he proclaims his identity. She abandons her water jar and sets off in what we can imagine to be breathless astonishment to tell others about this man who saw directly into her humanity, eager to have others confirm what she's still not quite sure is true.

I don't know if this happens to you, too, but this passage always stops me in my tracks. How often have I been motoring along with daily life, the to-do list, thinking about solutions, quick fixes for the next problem? If I'm honest with myself, I can be found head down, carrying my tasks and my worries and some unworthiness inside, more often than I'd like to admit. As a person of faith, I can still be jarred awake, in somewhat disbelief, when confronted with grace. I guess having faith doesn't stop me from being the woman at the well sometimes, in need of being confronted and sustained by God's love. Maybe that's a bit of a reminder for all of us this season of Lent?

We've been carrying our own jars of water, out of necessity, for many months now, through a unique and challenging time. We've had to be resilient and dependent on our ability to navigate through uncharted territory in all aspects of our lives. We're likely carrying some shame and erected some boundaries. It's hard to be open to mystery when we're tired and just want a quick fix. We tend to lean into what we think is safe and familiar.

Perhaps it's at times like these that God wants to remind us we are fully known; that we are made for more than the transient and can be sustained by what's true and holy. That we can lay down what's heavy and travel lighter, for ourselves and for those we encounter. And that being astonished is life-giving, again and again.

~ Cathy Cherwinka



A decorative border of brown line art flowers and leaves surrounds the central text area.

DAY 9

Friday March 11, 2022

Scripture: John 4:46-54 Second Miraculous sign in Galilee

In this passage, a man of high authority comes to Jesus. The man asks Jesus if he will heal his boy who is very sick and on his deathbed. Jesus tells the man, "Go, your son will live." So the man believes Jesus' word and turns around to head home.

This stranger, of high authority, immediately believes what Jesus says, mainly I think, because his son is dying. By believing in what Jesus said, he lets go of his doubt so that he might see his son live.

If I were in this man's shoes, with all the power and authority he had, I would not have gone to Jesus. I would not have wanted to go to some man who claimed he was God and asked him to heal my son. As a royal official, I would have had doctors, servants, medicine, etc, at my disposal. I don't think that I would actually have journeyed for 3 days to some man who may or may not be able to save my son.

As you go on in this journey through Lent, don't forget that we all have doubts and that God can help you with those doubts, no matter how big or small they might be.

~ Erik Veenstra

DAY 10

Saturday March 12, 2022

Scripture: John 5:1-9 Sabbath Healing

I have struggled with this reading and what it means for us. As I go through my own journey of Bible study, I am learning that there can be many ways to interpret the stories.

In this reflection, Jesus is healing a man that has suffered for 38 years. What I struggle with as many people do is this: why just heal the one man when there are many there with afflictions? Isn't it like that for us now--why does someone "beat" a disease and someone else succumbs to it? If there's a God, why isn't everyone cured? Why do terrible things happen?

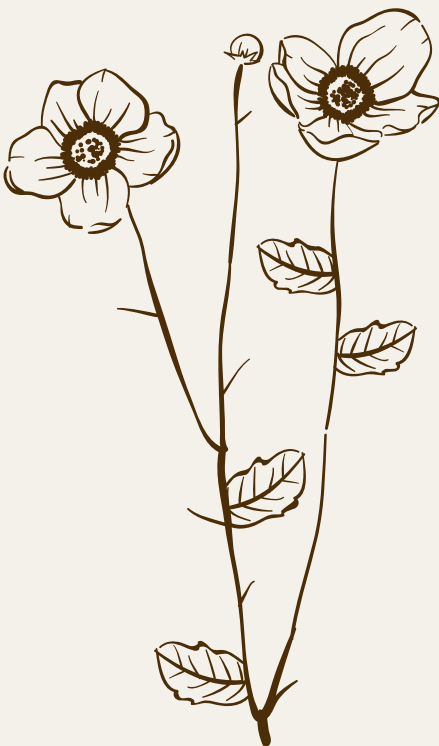
I certainly don't know, but I know from the story that the man was willing to change and be open to God. It still leaves the question for me, "why not everyone?"

But also suffering is a part of everyone's journey.

The second part of this passage deals with Jesus doing this healing on the Sabbath and he is chastised for it. Yes, the commandment says to rest on the Sabbath. Are they following the letter of the commandment, or the spirit of the commandment to rest and restore and be kind?

Showing empathy has no day of rest.

~ Joanne MacPherson



Blind Man Washing The Mud Off Of His Face

EMMERSON K. - AGE 6





DAY 11

Monday March 14, 2022

Scripture: John 6:1-14 Feeding of the 5000

It is hard to be hungry. Some people don't have enough food. If we don't have food then we can't survive and we get really tired if we don't eat food. We need food to help us grow and get strong.

A big crowd came and followed Jesus because they saw what he could do to help other people. They got hungry.

Another boy came along and offered to give his lunch. Only 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread was able to feed 5000 people! It was a miracle that day that the boy and Jesus did together.

When we are hungry, God helps us and we can help one another.

Be kind to other people and offer what you have for them. If you ever meet a person that doesn't have any food to eat, make sure you help them in all the ways you can.

~ Opaline Robinson



John 6:1-14

OPALINE R. - AGE 5





DAY 12

Tuesday March 15, 2022

Scripture: John 6:16-21 Jesus Walks on Water

Reading this passage, I can relate to the disciples and how they were scared in the dark and rough lake. I have been through hard times. I think of the boat as life.

Some of my rough times are dealing with Covid, friends' drama and seeing my dad sick and losing my father. I think the disciples were scared the most when they were without Jesus. When I am not around people that care for me, or think I am alone, that is when I feel most sadness and fear. I noticed that Jesus will always approach you rather than run away from you. When he approaches, things get a lot more peaceful. God teaches us to always look forward to good things that could happen in the future after the bad times.

In conclusion, I think that the passage means that anything is possible, like walking on water, and to always look up when things are scary and tough. When I feel like Jesus is with me, I feel like everything is calm and collected. That's why I let Jesus in my life.

Just like when Jesus got in the boat.

~ Jordyn Lesser



Jesus Walking On Water

NIGEL A. - AGE 5



DAY 13

Wednesday March 16, 2022

Scripture: John 6:27-35 Bread of Life

When I read this bible passage, I put myself in the story and I imagine myself in very natural surroundings by the side of a lake. It is a beautiful day, and the sun is shining. I am hungry and I've heard the story of a man who fed a large crowd a wonderful meal the day before. I am wondering where he might be and if he will be able to feed me as well. I feel as if I'm never full, I'm always hungering for more.

I meet the man and I'm part of the group who asks him "What must we do to do the works God requires?" When the man, who I now call Jesus, finally gives his answer he says "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." This is confusing to me – as someone who feels that I never have enough to eat or drink. I am like the disciples and I want to see a sign – something that I can see, hear, touch and most importantly taste – something concrete. I am thinking only of the physical need for nourishment, just as my ancestors did.

I realize that while my physical self needs sustenance, my heart and mind are yearning for more and that I must believe in Jesus and his teachings to find peace and the Kingdom of God. I feel that we are all searching – looking for evidence of God in this world. It is sometimes so difficult for us to simply put our faith in God – to wait, to abide, to be patient, and to trust that God is always with us.

I believe that Jesus is telling us that we will always be full if we can give ourselves over to God and his love for us.

~ Ava Tomlinson



DAY 14

Thursday March 17, 2022

Scripture: John 7:1-13

When I read this passage about how Jesus responded, with faith, purpose, and strength, to an environment that was doubting and sometimes hostile toward him, a few questions come to my mind:

1. How do I respond when I am challenged, by people who know me well, about my faith? Why do I belong to a church community? Do these comments cause me pause while I look for ways to justify/prove my faith in such a way that conforms to popular opinion? Or because of my faith, am I not deterred by these challenges and take the time to calmly share my experiences with others?
2. When people express discriminatory opinions of others, do I quietly grumble my disagreement for fear of what others might think? Or do I openly, respectfully, challenge the opinion?
3. How committed am I to live my life by the teachings of Jesus and not be drawn in by the “worldly ideology?”

~ Paul Pierson



A decorative border of brown line art flowers and leaves surrounds the central text area. The border is thicker at the top and bottom, forming a semi-circular arch and base respectively.

DAY 15

Friday March 18, 2022

Scripture: John 7:37-44 Rivers of Living Water

This scripture where Jesus cries out "let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and if you believe, drink of living water" makes me feel like Jesus was realizing his mission on earth was becoming controversial and he desperately wanted those who could hear him to know him, believe him and follow him. Jesus knows that once the Holy Spirit takes over their lives, they will be changed forever.

Just like humans everywhere, the crowd around Jesus began to overthink, scrutinize and judge what Jesus was saying. And just like people today, some believed Jesus and some didn't. Can't you just hear it: "No one that special can come out of Whitby. Surely, they would have to be someone bolder, more charismatic and from some exotic place to satisfy us." Oh, how often what WAS remains the same.

However, today we have the wisdom of centuries behind us to draw on and the example of Westminster people brimming with the Holy Spirit to rely on as we decide where OUR priorities lie. May the Lenten Season bring you the joys of the living Spirit residing in you and pouring out rivers of living waters to those around you.

~ Helen J. Bowman

DAY 16

Saturday March 19, 2022

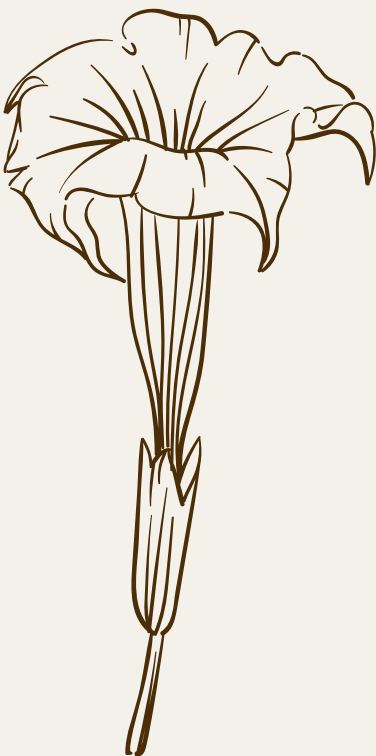
Scripture: John 8:1-11 A Near Stoning

My first reaction to reading this passage about Jesus and the woman who has committed adultery was anger with the men who have approached him. How smug and arrogant they seem. They have placed Jesus in a bind. There is a law against adultery. If Jesus agrees with the law he will become part of the judgement and ultimately the stoning. If Jesus disagrees he will be defying the law and risk losing the respect of the people. However, Jesus is thoughtful in his response. He takes the time to bend down and write in the sand. When he straightens up he asks them to consider their own fallibility. Perhaps the men wonder if he hasn't been contemplating their sins.

Jesus refuses to be baited. He takes his time in responding and when he does, his response is to encourage them to examine their own actions before they judge the actions of others. His response to the woman, who is expecting to be stoned, is instead to acknowledge her sin but also show trust in her ability to live a better life.

Jesus encourages us to examine our own lives. Lent is a time for reflection, a time to think about how we live and how we live with others. Can we do better? Can we live in ways which encourage forgiveness and hope rather than divisiveness and fear?

~ Maureen Dingman





DAY 17

Monday March 21, 2022

Scripture: John 8:12 Jesus, Light of the World

“Again”, meaning Jesus paused after the previous thing he told the people. Jesus might have given the people minutes or maybe even days to let his last words sink in. When Jesus speaks again, he begins with saying, “I am the light of the world.” I can only imagine what everyone was thinking. I know I would be wondering how this man named Jesus is the light of the world. I would be stunned. I would want him to prove to me what he just said. But Jesus doesn’t stop there, he continues, “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

At first it sounds to me like life will never be hard if we follow Jesus, that life will be easy, with no pain or sadness. But I think it means something different than that. I think the darkness Jesus is referring to means loneliness and fear and that those who follow him may feel the darkness. I think Jesus is saying we will always have God, who will be the light when everything feels like darkness. He will be there with us every step of the way.

~ Lora Veenstra



DAY 18

Tuesday March 22, 2022

Scripture: John 9:1-12 Healing of a Man Born Blind

I encourage you to read this passage and imagine it from the perspective of the man born blind. Imagine you are going about your day, and you hear a group of men talking nearby, about you. Then imagine someone spreading warm mud on your eyes and telling you to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash. I wonder what was going through this man's mind. What would you be thinking?


I would be upset that someone put mud on my face.

And then the walk. We don't know in this passage if he needed or had any help in getting to the Pool of Siloam. I wonder, was he hopeful? Cynical? Then upon getting to the pool and washing, being able to see! What a wonder. I imagine him blinking in the sun but trying to take the whole world in at the same time. Experiencing the miracle AND sight for the first time.

This passage has had me thinking about when we are asked to walk in faith. When we cannot see. When we have no idea what will be at the end of the journey. It makes me think about how it can be scary and frustrating, and how we must step out in faith daily.

Sometimes it is a confident stride. Sometimes a tentative foot forward. Sometimes a stumble and picking ourselves up and trying again. But by taking the risk of walking in faith, by putting our trust in our Creator, we are walking towards the miracle of life abundant.

Your fellow traveller along the way,
~ Sara Russell



DAY 19

Wednesday March 23, 2022

Scripture: John 10:11-21 The Model Shepherd

In the scripture just previous, the scene is set for us in imagery around sheep. There is an interesting phrase in verse 4:
“the sheep follow him because they know his voice”.

This describes a connection, what I will call a relationship. Relationships are key to fulfilled, abundant living. For a Christian there are many possible relationships, but the primary relationship must be with Jesus Christ!

Meaningful relationships center on mutual caring and support, even risking self for another. Jesus is in this role. Jesus is the shepherd of God’s flock. Jesus states what He will do, how far He will go in that relationship.

For Jesus, risking His life, laying down His life, is a victorious act of obedience to the Father. This is part of their relationship. Jesus’ act is still voluntary and is in fulfillment of the Father’s loving purpose. God loves us. And, that purpose also includes taking His life up again in the resurrection. This too fulfills Jesus’ relationship with the Father.

Through Jesus’ disciples, including you and me, that relationship continues today and is extended.

So as we are on this Lenten journey, the question all this raises for me is this: What are we willing to risk in our relationship with Jesus, as one of His current disciples? How far are we willing to go in our caring and loving, in the relationship we have with our shepherd?

~ The Rev. Dan Yourkevich



Good Shepherd

EVAN B. - AGE 6



DAY 20

Thursday March 24, 2022

Scripture: John 11:1-44 Raising of Lazarus

I thought I knew the story of the resurrection of Lazarus until I re-read John's narrative. For me, this reading showed a new aspect of Jesus' humanity – his deep bond with Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha. Throughout the scriptures, Jesus is often called Rabbi, Healer, Master, Prophet and even Messiah, but in this story I see him as Friend.

However, in spite of his deep love for these three, as evidenced by the fact that "[he] began to weep" when they were heading to Lazarus' tomb, he did not rush to Lazarus upon hearing that he was ill. In fact, he stayed two more days before making the journey to Bethany. Why? Because he knew that the people who would witness the raising of Lazarus from the dead needed to witness his divinity, and know that Jesus is the Son of God.

When he finally arrived in Bethany, each of the sisters greeted Jesus with the same accusation, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." The sisters trusted implicitly in their friend and in his divinity, and knew that God would have empowered Jesus to save Lazarus. And so it is here, before going to the tomb, that Jesus reassured Martha when he declared, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who believes in me will never die."

We, like Martha, are asked to trust; to believe; to have faith in God's plan; to see the glory of God.

~ Bev Crumb





DAY 21

Friday March 25, 2022

Scripture: John 11:47-53 Plot to Kill Jesus

We hold onto what we know, what we've gained, where we sit comfortably, even when we can see that something we have hoped and prayed for is before us. It is hard to make the jump towards something that you want, when you risk leaving the safety of your current situation behind. How often do we choose what we know, rather than what we need, when we risk losing the security we've built around us?

The chief priests and Pharisees have worked hard to hold together their people. They value maintaining safety, faith, and community, as well as their own position of power and influence. As they see it, they stand to lose all this, because of Jesus.

They have been waiting for the Messiah. And yet when they hear of the miracles being performed, their reaction is defensive, and closed off. If they were to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, what would they lose?

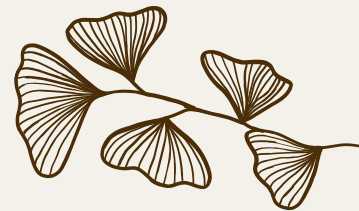
"What are we going to do? This man is doing many miraculous signs! If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him. Then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our people."

Where in our lives do we hold onto things out of comfort or fear, though the reward of letting go would be much greater?

~ Amy Medlock



DAY 22



Saturday March 26, 2022

Scripture: John 12:1-11 Mary Anoints Jesus' Feet

This story of Mary using the very best perfume, the one she had been saving, the one that was the most expensive, always reminds me of wedding china. When I got married, the advice I was given from the generation before was to avoid getting it. It was fragile and expensive and took up too much storage space; we would only use it once a year, if we were lucky.

I registered for and received our wedding china.

I understand what the well-intentioned advice givers were warning me about, but there is something about having a special item (or items, in my case) to pull out for significant events. It helps mark that occasion as unique for myself; it signals to others that they should take notice, too.

So, we pull it out once a year for Christmas. Well, and Thanksgiving and Easter. And birthdays. Or when we have people over for dinner. Or when my 5-year old looks at me as only 5-year olds can and asks, "Pretty-please?" (Kraft dinner on bone china is delicious.)

The plates are special, but I get to decide what is considered a special occasion. And the people who share that meal with me know that I am telling them that they are special, too.

Mary had something that was special; she also recognized that this was a special moment. She brought out her good perfume that she had bought for Jesus' burial, but chose instead to use it to honour Jesus in that moment. The scent filled the home, so that everyone could participate in this occasion; not the occasion for which it was expected, but one that was worthy of being marked nonetheless. Because Jesus was there.

Judas, perhaps less well-intentioned than my advice-givers, crashed the party with his hypocritically righteous criticism of how the perfume could be used better. It would seem like Jesus should agree that anything to help the poor should be done above all else, but he surprises everyone when he takes Mary's side and tells Judas to leave her alone. We have learned through other places in the Bible that it is not just through good works alone that we follow Jesus and honour God; there is faith, and humbling ourselves, and offering gratitude and praise. There is recognizing that Jesus is special, and not just on big event days, but on the days leading up to those celebrations; Jesus is special in the everyday moments, when we choose to honour him and offer up our praise.

In Lent, we are preparing for a big event day, and it is beyond special. Definitely a day for wedding china and expensive perfume. But today spent with Jesus was pretty special, too. I don't need anyone's permission to celebrate it as such. You're invited to join in, too.

~Katie Costa

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

CHARLIE H. - AGE 7





DAY 23

Monday March 28, 2022

Scripture: John 12:12-19 Jesus Enters Jerusalem

Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem coincided with the Passover feast. They heard Jesus was making his way to Jerusalem. The crowd was shouting hosannas and waving palm branches. The palm branches were symbolic and used for victory. Why weren't the palm branches waved when miracles performed? The crowds were walking with great anticipation.

The donkey is very important here. This is what the king of glory rode on into Jerusalem. It was a very important ride. How and why didn't the donkey get mentioned more often? Did he use it to journey for his often miracle performances?

Crowds grew large in numbers as they had heard Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. This was a miracle. We are soon to learn that Jesus goes to the cross and dies and rises again in three days. Another miracle.

This is very exciting news. Hosanna the King is coming! Be not afraid. He is coming for you and me. We must note that these hosannas turn to 'crucify him' (19-15)

There is much emotion here. We have Lazarus in a tomb. He is raised from the dead. We see the King on a donkey going to his death. He too shall rise.

AMEN

~ Debbie Joyce





DAY 24



Tuesday March 29, 2022

Scripture: John 12:20-26 Grain of Wheat

Forgive me as I use some words penned by others, but on my mind, as I read this scripture passage.

Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,
Wheat that in the dark earth many days has lain,
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:
Love is come again, like wheat arising green.

In the grave they laid him, love by hatred slain,
Thinking that he would never wake again,
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen,
Love is come again, like wheat arising green.

Forth he came at Easter, like the rising grain,
He that for three days in the grave had lain,
Raised from the dead, my living Lord is seen,
Love is come again, like wheat arising green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
Your touch can call us back to life again,
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been,
Love has come again, like wheat arising green.

(John Crum, 1928)

In the bulb there is a flower, in the seed, an apple tree,
In cocoons, a hidden promise butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning, in our time, infinity,
In our doubt there is believing, in our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection, at the last, a victory.
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

(Natalie Sleeth, 1986)

Like Jesus' listeners, we struggle with understanding death, resurrection and eternal life.
However, we're familiar with the miracle of seeds, bulbs, growth, new life.

Thank you, Jesus, for the comforting parable, for the promise of new life with you.

~ Margaret Motum

A decorative border of stylized leaves and flowers in a light brown color surrounds the central text area.

DAY 25

Wednesday March 30, 2022

Scripture: John 13:1-15 Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

At that time, bare foot or open shoes were common walking attire, so to wash someone's feet was not easy nor well respected. But Jesus did this for his disciples, even to their objection. Doing this during the last supper, with the wonderful smells and tastes around him, I'm sure was even more difficult for them to understand. While growing up, explanations of this passage were one of demonstrating how Jesus was proving to his disciples that anyone can and should be humble and to respect each other. I still believe this was the message He was passing along.

Although, the humble perspective is quite true and still holds a huge meaning in our lives, I have a slightly different interpretation of the passage. This passage is one of a secondary baptism. To wash a person's feet can represent washing away the sins that have travelled with the person for years. In the passage, Jesus informs his disciples that "Those that have had a bath need only wash their feet; their whole body is clean." So, in my interpretation, if you have already been baptized you do not need to repeat a full baptism, but by cleansing the feet it will help guide you going forward through the journeys your feet will take you on. The feet lead and guide everyone's path, and sometimes that path isn't as straight forward and honest as we see it. To interpret this as a midlife baptism would help to guide not only the disciples and their beliefs but our present-day church community as individuals to be better versions of ourselves to all those around us and the world. This passage teaches us that we must respect everyone because we are all equal under God.

~ Chris Berthelot

Jesus Washing Disciples Feet

MADELYN F. - AGE 12



DAY 26

Thursday March 31, 2022

Scripture: John 13:33-38 Love Commandment

I wonder what it would be like to be there as Jesus informs the apostles of what is about to happen. What did they think and how did they feel? It must have been alarming to hear from Jesus that he won't be with them much longer. What is going through their minds as Jesus tells them that they cannot follow him to where he is about to go? Will they see Jesus again? Although Peter begs to know why he can no longer accompany Jesus, Jesus also reveals that Peter will deny him three times before morning. How can that be as Peter is one of his most loyal followers? But we all know how that ended as Peter later tearfully reflected on this after realizing that he did indeed deny Jesus three times. I can relate to Peter, as we do sometimes hurt the ones we love most in reaction to fear or other strong emotion. What sorrow and regret he must have felt after realizing that Jesus had foretold of his betrayal!

Throughout this passage there is only one instruction – “Love one another, as I have loved you.” To me, this one covenant sums up everything that Jesus represents. Although this instruction is quite clear, everything else that Jesus mentioned must have been very mysterious and possibly confusing to the apostles. Like myself, did the apostles sense God's presence in Jesus's captivating words about the glorification of the Son of Man as well as God himself? Did the apostles have any understanding of what Jesus was telling them of the events about to unfold? I sense that they understood that some big things were going to happen, but how could they have known that this was the prelude to such a significant and historical event?

After Jesus died and was resurrected, I believe the apostles' faith grew tremendously as they specifically reflected about what Jesus had revealed to them during this time. Understanding how the apostles dealt with what Jesus revealed to them throughout this passage has really helped me to better understand Lent.

~ Jim Fielder



DAY 27

Friday April 1, 2022

Scripture: John 14:1-14 The Way, the Truth, the Life

I don't know about you, but I often associate this scripture with funerals. When I read or hear about Jesus going ahead to prepare a room for me or a loved one who has died, I am comforted by the thought that there is a place beyond what I know and maybe even what I can fully understand. Most of all, I am comforted knowing that Jesus will be there.

On the night when Jesus was betrayed and handed over to the authorities, he spoke to his disciples once again, telling them that his time on earth would not be much longer. He knew he was about to die and yet he assured them that he would not leave them to struggle on their own. He would send the Holy Spirit to lead them and guide them on their Earthly journey and then eventually they would join him in the place where he was going.

Upon hearing this, Thomas asks a question that I'm pretty sure I would ask as well: "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" And Jesus responds with the well-known words: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." But what does that mean, to his disciples then and his disciples now?

To me it means that Jesus is the Way, he is my directional arrow, my beacon, my guide. In him, I learn how to live. In him, I find my Truth. In his Life, I see the path that God calls me to follow. In him, I am never alone. In him, I find comfort.

In this Lenten time, when the journey towards the cross has begun, I am reminded of God's love for me in the pending death of Jesus and I am reminded of Jesus' love for me in the preparing of a room in God's house and in sending the Holy Spirit to be my constant companion.

As I walk through this time of mixed emotions, from the sorrow and pain of death to the joy of life renewed, I am going to make room for prayer, reflection, silence and observation, so that I might understand more fully all that Jesus is calling me to, both in my faith and in my life.

~ Cathy Shaw





DAY 28

Saturday April 2, 2022

Scripture: John 15:25-27 Promise of the Holy Spirit

In this passage Jesus says the Holy Spirit will come to us and help us. Jesus also speaks about love and peace. I think that is exactly what we need today and everyday, individually and collectively. Love and peace.

When I think about the pandemic, a loved one's struggle with OCD, the wars and conflicts throughout the world, my strained relationship with a relative, and the devastating consequences of the climate crisis - love and peace are exactly what I / we need. Thank you God, for the gift of your Holy Spirit. Thank you for sending help. May we receive your love and peace and may we be channels of your love and peace, today and always.

~Monica Veenstra

I Am The Vine

MADELINE H. - AGE 5





DAY 29

Monday April 4, 2022

Scripture: John 15:1-8 I am the vine

My initial reaction to this passage was that it seemed rather harsh: either you were committed or you were out – no half measures. However, when the words were first spoken, presumably Judas was present and Jesus must have realised he was wavering. It's a challenge for us today, are we in or out?

Fruits of grapes are produced on branches, not the vine. The message is: we produce the fruit or there isn't any. So what is the fruit? Is it that we produce the best we can be? The letter to Galatians talks of the fruits of the Spirit as: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, fidelity, gentleness and self-control. As a branch each of us produces fruits of a different flavour for our particular situation: love for the people we meet, joy in our personal experience, peace in our relationships and so on.

The branches of cultivated vines are supported by frames, wild vines grow up trees. Without support they fall to the ground. If we think of the church as our framework of support, the past two years have shown that it is still possible to be supported by people who you are never with in person.

We often talk of the Christian life as a journey but vines are rooted in one place. This provokes the thought that we are to produce our fruit right where we are right now. This is not something we aspire to in the future this is for this season and this place.

~ Wilf Bradnock



DAY 30

Tuesday April 5, 2022

Scripture: John 15:12-17 Love Each Other

Some years ago, I had three friends; they were kind, caring, and generous people. One was a friend from school, who I had known a few years, one, a friend from work, who I was just getting to know, and another, a family friend, who had known me my whole life. All three friends were devout Christians. When I got married to my same-sex partner in 2017, all three ghosted me. In other words, they were so horrified by my choice to be a “practicing homosexual” that not only could they not be friends with me, they could no longer even speak to me.

For part of my life, I shied away from being an active member of any organized religion because growing up, I felt that the religions that I knew interpreted that God commands us to “love one another” as having a caveat: “but only love the right kind of people”. When I look at myself and the society we live in, I can see that we so often only love one another if we agree with one another’s lifestyle, or social status, or skin colour, or religion, or many other factors, and love is only sanctioned if it is the right kind of love. I don’t believe that that was Jesus’ message. The Bible is full of stories of Jesus being friends with anyone, no matter who they were or what they did, and this passage makes that love so clear.

There is no caveat.

I am so grateful today for this church with a rainbow bench that has committed to being affirming and that so openly and deliberately states that all are welcome. It has made me feel that my family has a place here. More importantly, it has made me feel that my daughter could grow up in this congregation feeling that she is loved and being taught that God commands us to love another, no matter what we do or how different we are.

~ Kirsten Grant





DAY 31

Wednesday April 6, 2022

Scripture: John 16:12-24

“I have more to say... I will see you again”

What I am most struck by in this passage is the care, comfort, and validation of a wide range of feelings and experiences. There is space given to sorrow, to joy, to questioning, to the unknown, and to fear. This kindness and this space for questions and for an evolution of feelings is being extended to the disciples as it is extended to us all.

There is great comfort in the idea of grief or sorrow turning into joy. There is comfort in an answer to questions, in information leading to understanding, as is seen in the response Jesus gives to the disciples. Jesus is honouring the concerns and questions of the disciples which, to my reading, in turn makes space for all readers of this passage to question and explore what is being said in the passage. There is freedom in the explicit asking and answering on display.

As well, I cannot help but focus on the image of childbirth in this passage, as I sit in the ninth month of my own pregnancy. To focus on the joy that can be present in childbirth, while also recognizing that the pain and sorrow is also present is immensely validating. When your hour has come, when there is pain, sorrow, and anguish, there is great comfort in being reminded that joy can follow.

~Kaelan Caspary

DAY 32

Thursday April 7, 2022

Scripture: John 17:18-26 Jesus Prays

What an amazing example of a true leader - Jesus Christ, a servant leader, a protector, selfless, 'sanctified' and blessed by God. He knows he is on his way to a horrendous (prophesized) death YET he is still praying for all – his disciples and their world back then AND for all of us to come!

Knowing what was prophesized, Jesus could have continued to pray to his father for strength and guidance – instead he prays for the disciples that they too “may be truly sanctified”. What is even more profound to me, is the depth of his prayer, ***“that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us...”***

The pleading and the anguish in those words brought me to tears because I could find no other more intimate or more intense way that anyone could show their Christlike love for me other than by praying to the Lord for me to “know” him more.

I found myself humbled and even more than that, wanting to kneel down because I was totally moved by Jesus' love for his disciples and for ***“those who will believe”***. I italicized this because even as Jesus was loved by God before ‘the creation of the world’, so was I! He already prayed for me so that I too could know true love and glory and be in “complete unity.” Wow!! It is beyond my imagination that I could ever know God as Jesus had known him – but in prayer, ‘I can only imagine’.

And this is our selfless Jesus, still praying for us – for me – even though he was on his way to the cross to, yes, selflessly die for my sins!

~ Margaret Suepaul



A decorative border featuring stylized brown line art of flowers and leaves, framing the central text area.

DAY 33

Friday April 8, 2022

Scripture: John 18:1-12 Jesus is Arrested

As soon as I was finished reading this bible passage, two thoughts came to mind: Betrayal and Forgiveness, and particularly of times I felt betrayed or when I may have betrayed someone.

Sometimes in our lives, the people that are closest to us will betray us and our initial reaction as human beings is to return the favour with "Payback." How do we learn to forgive after betrayal and let go?

I believe it is a difficult thing to forgive but as I get older, read the Bible more and understand life and human beings I am beginning to learn about a more divine way of forgiving and being forgiven.

Jesus forgave Judas and by observing and patterning our lives to Jesus' we forgive the people who do wrong to us.

Even as I regularly pray the Lord's Prayer 'Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil' I find it difficult to internalize this sometimes because I want to be forgiven by Him, but I don't know how to completely forgive.

I believe that learning to forgive is one of the most difficult things we learn to do in life, however if we trust in the Lord, he will teach us through the scriptures.

~ Shane Suepaul

Jesus Arrested

KATIE F. - AGE 10



DAY 34

Saturday April 9, 2022

Scripture: John 18:15-27 Peter Denies Jesus

The passage I read deals with Peter's denial of Jesus after Jesus was arrested and was being questioned by the high priest.

It may not be a typical reaction to the passage, but I find it inspiring. No one is perfect, not even Peter, the disciple of Jesus. We all try to live a perfect life but inevitably, we make mistakes. We feel sick, guilty or depressed when we feel we don't do what we think is the perfect way to live. God has given us forgiveness. Our faith allows us to begin again. We learn from our mistakes and begin again to live in accordance with God's will. Peter denied Jesus but he became the rock that the church was built on. Each new day is a new opportunity. Enjoy the journey.

~ King Whitney



Peter Denies Jesus

ISABELLA H.C. - AGE 8





DAY 35

Monday April 11, 2022

Scripture: John 18:28-38a
Trial Before Pilate "What is Truth?"

In speaking up for justice we often hear phrases like "speak your truth," or "speak truth to power." We know that speaking from personal experience can be empowering and effect change but it begs the question: does "our truth" equate to "the truth"? Those to whom we speak often have a different take on what is truth. However, in reading Jesus's response to Pilate, it seems personal stories may align with the universal truth that is God's Kingdom. For as Jesus said, "the reason I was born and came into the world was to testify to the truth and everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

In our current context with its crazy conspiracy theories, culture wars, and fake news, it can be a challenge to perceive the truth. It was no different two thousand years ago when the truth of Jesus eluded the powers that be. But as we've seen many times in the #MeToo, LGBTQ, Indigenous and Black Lives Matter movements, the more individuals speak honestly about their own truths, the more we're able to see from a larger perspective and piece together the truth of what Jesus told his followers,
"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

~ Clarence MacPherson



Tuesday April 12, 2022

Scripture: John 18:38b-19:7 Jesus is Mocked

“...he was more afraid than ever.” (John 19: 8)

As I have sat (wrestled, pondered, struggled) with this passage, those six words like a reverberating bell echoed in my mind.

Flashes of scenes from a lifetime flitted through my memories: curling up next to a beloved parent during a frightening scene while watching TV/movie, sitting and holding a loved one's hand while waiting for the phone to ring or the doctor's next sentence, and being shocked in bewilderment as I watched and/or listened to the world/national news unfold before my unbelieving eyes. Fearlessly standing up and telling off the older youth who were picking on my younger and smaller brother, protesting in front of the parliament buildings in Ottawa with other young adults and youth one afternoon during an United Church Kairos youth retreat, and asking the questions no one else in the room dared too, and being harassed for asking a stranger on the bus to pull up their mask.

Are there times though when we have reacted and make decisions based on our fears like Pilate, instead of our principles and knowing what the right thing to do? At what point do we say no to our fears and stand up for the right thing?

Yes, there have been times when I have made decisions based on my fears instead of my principles and knowing the right thing. I have not wanted to be harassed or to engage in a loud verbal debate or to look less than in front of family or beloved friends or coworkers.

To make a decision not based on our fears, we need to make space and live in the disorder of our lives and world and to allow God to move, to work and to speak in that commotion.

~ Susan Pleasance

Jan Richarchson - Blessings in the Chaos

To all that is chaotic in you,
Let there come silence.

Let there be a calming of the clamoring,
A stilling of the voices that have laid their claim on you,
That have made their home in you,

That go with you even to the holy places
But will not let you rest,
Will not let you hear your life with wholeness
Or feel the grace that fashioned you.

Let what distracts you cease.
Let what divides you cease.
Let there come an end to what diminishes and demeans,
And let depart all that keeps you in its cage.

Let there be an opening into the quiet
That lies beneath the chaos,
Where you find the peace you did not think possible
And see what shimmers within the storm.



A decorative border of brown line art flowers and leaves surrounds the text. The flowers are stylized with long, thin petals and some have visible stamens. The leaves are simple, elongated shapes.

DAY 37

Wednesday April 13, 2022

Scripture: John 19:16b-24 Jesus is Crucified

A Tough Example

After I listened to Rev. Michelle's recent sermon about judgement, these words kept ringing in my ears: "Jesus gave us a tough example to follow."

Wow! You can say that again! His examples of inclusion, forgiveness and unconditional love set a very high bar for us, his followers.

And yet there is more. As we approach Good Friday, we come face to face with the ultimate challenge of his example - his steadfast faithfulness even while enduring unspeakable pain and death on a cross.

This is unfathomable to me; its meaning far too deep for me to fully grasp. At the very least I contemplate these words: "When I survey the wondrous crossmy richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride" (Isaac Watts)

But I can't leave it there. In this time of reflection, I ask myself:

How do I respond when put to the test?

How do I react to the fear and anger in others?

When have I remained unmoved and fixed in my opinions?

When have I kept silent in the face of injustice?

When have I expressed unconditional love and forgiveness?

Where do I spend my God-given time, talent and resources?

What would I die for?

Jesus gave us a tough example follow, indeed! But it challenges us still today to take a road less travelled, a purpose-driven journey with courage, compassion and caring action at its centre.

My Lenten prayer is this: "Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the living of these days" (Harry Emerson Fosdick).

~ Gail Brimbecom



DAY 38

Thursday April 14, 2022 MAUNDY THURSDAY

Scripture: John 19:25-30 Jesus Dies

This passage is so hard! It doesn't call for reflection as much as raw, elemental feeling. I'm part of a small group of women who have been with Jesus for some time. We are close enough to see and hear but not close enough to touch or comfort him. We are aware already that there is to be no miraculous intervention, that this is really happening. It is mind numbing.

Then Jesus shows he still notices and cares about our future and directs a future for his mother and a favourite follower. It hardly registers as we see he is hurting and weakening. He is still conscious of his calling and fulfills expectations by asking for a drink. When he is given sour wine we see him gather himself and say "It is finished." He allows this horror. And he dies.

And what of us?

Aren't we lucky to know already that the story does not end here? This passage reminds me of just how far God will go to feel the pain of the world. As I feel His pain, it calls me to feel this pain too. It makes me MORE.

~ Mary Shepherd



DAY 39

Friday April 15, 2022 GOOD FRIDAY

Scripture: John 19:38-42

The story of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus is always hard to read. This passage is particularly so. I want to recoil from it. But the Gospel writer wants us to know that Jesus suffered and died. And so, he does not gloss over these terrible events while telling us the story of Jesus. What can we gain from this reading?

There are three things that stand out to me.

1. One is the reminder that human beings can be extremely cruel to one another. We can tolerate, even participate in, a great deal of harm being done to others. It is not lost on me that the primary movers in this terrible treatment of Jesus are religious people, good upstanding people in society.

Sometimes we can be so convinced of our own understanding of what is right and wrong, true and false, good and bad, that we are able to justify in our own minds the rejecting or harming of those who do not see the world as we see it. Sometimes we can be so blind to the evil of our own actions.

2. Another thing that catches my attention is the description of the incident of the soldier piercing the side of Jesus. What is the significance of blood and water pouring from the wound? I am not sure. It does occur to me that for those of us in the Christian community, blood and water are reminders of our sacraments of Communion and Baptism. In this vein I think of the words of the writer of the first letter of John who wrote, "Jesus Christ is the one who came with the water of his baptism and the blood of his death."

1 John 5:6

3. The writer of this reading for today reminds me that what happened to Jesus was the fulfilment of a vision that Israel's prophets had been given long ago concerning a future messenger of God. This reminds me that Jesus' earliest followers understood that he did not just show up out of nowhere, but that he was a part of a long line of God's faithful messengers sent to comfort, encourage, challenge and renew God's people. For Christians he is the one to whom Israel's prophets pointed. He is the Messiah, the Christ; or in the words of the writer of this Gospel of John, he is the Son of God.

~ Bob LePage



A decorative border of brown line-art flowers and leaves surrounds the central text area. The flowers are stylized, with some showing detailed petals and stamens. The leaves are elongated and pointed.

DAY 40

Saturday April 16, 2022 HOLY SATURDAY

Scripture: John 19: 38-42

I imagine Joseph of Arimathea standing looking at the body of Jesus as he dies on the cross. He loves Jesus but through fear kept this quiet. But somehow he gathers his courage and asks Pilot if he may Jesus' body. And Pilot "gives him leave." Was Pilot relieved to have this problem over with? I imagine him thinking that this was the end of a sad affair.

There was an empty tomb in the garden. Did someone have to purchase the right to use that tomb? Did Joseph of Arimathea purchase it? Had he done so previously? Because the tomb was near where Jesus was crucified it seems to me to be unlikely. So if the tomb had to be bought, Joseph must have done so specifically to give it to Jesus? A blessed gift. I wonder.

One hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes—another large gift of love. I can imagine how Nicodemus and Joseph would have lovingly and gently washed Jesus' body. Did others join them for this ritual? Were tears mixed with the lotions? Were prayers said over Jesus' body as they carefully and gently wrapped his body in soft linen? How did they feel as they rolled the stone over the entrance to Jesus' tomb? I imagine the deep sorrow and loss of hope they must have felt. We have the knowledge of what happens three days later, but they didn't. How deep their sorrow must have been. And how amazed they must have been the following week.

~ Eileen Whitney

Jesus' Tomb

CHARLOTTE K. - AGE 8



“Early in the morning of the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away...”

John 20:1

