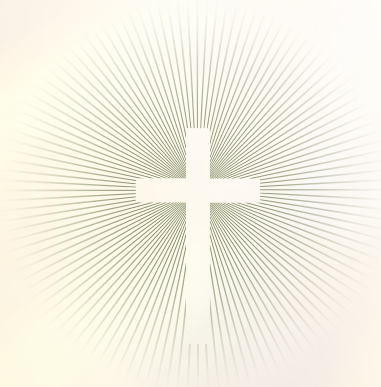


LENTEN  
DAILY DEVOTIONAL  
GUIDE  
—2026—



Baylor University

GEORGE W. TRUETT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



## WELCOME *and* INTRODUCTION

Good stories bear repeating. The Christian story is not only good. It is true.

The Gospel of Luke is concerned with the truth. In his telling of the Christian story, Luke assembles an “orderly account” for his addressee, “most excellent Theophilus” (Luke 1:3). Luke has investigated “the events that have been fulfilled among us,” collecting stories of eyewitnesses and “servants of the word.” He wants Theophilus to “know the truth concerning the things” he’d been taught (Luke 1:4). Luke’s message is for Theophilus. It is also for us.

Theophilus is a name of Greek origin, translating to “lover of God.” This name could refer to a historical person. It may be a code name, protecting the identity of a person who would be persecuted if discovered to be a disciple of Jesus. Or it may be a stand-in for the general reader, any seeker engaged in the relational, loving pursuit of God. In other words, it could be you.

This Lent we direct our attention to the good, true story told by Luke. In it, we encounter a good God announcing good news and doing good works pointing to the arrival of a good, lasting kingdom, revealed among us in and through a person: Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21). In this account, Jesus compares God to a good parent who knows how to give good gifts to his children, the greatest of which is the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). In his teachings, Jesus audaciously claims his Father is pleased to give us the kingdom (Luke 12:32), which sounds like a good gift to me.

After humanity did their worst to Jesus on Good Friday, there was good news on Easter Sunday: God had raised Jesus from the dead (Luke 24:5). Following his resurrection, Jesus had a good news mission for his disciples, instructing them that “repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in [the Messiah’s] name to all the nations” (Luke 24:47). You may have read Luke’s story in the past. But good stories bear repeating, and even more so when they are true.

These Lenten writings will walk us through Luke’s story. This is a devotional guide, and when reading literature, the genre makes a difference. Devotional writing directs the reader’s attention towards God. At its best, it reminds us of what is true, inspires us for faithful living, and exhorts us toward righteous action. It informs the mind, shapes the heart, and strengthens the hands for service unto the Lord. It invites us to worship, pray, and grow. It provides rest for the weary, bread for the hungry, and living water to the thirsty, enough to renew us for the next leg of our journey and the challenges before us that day.

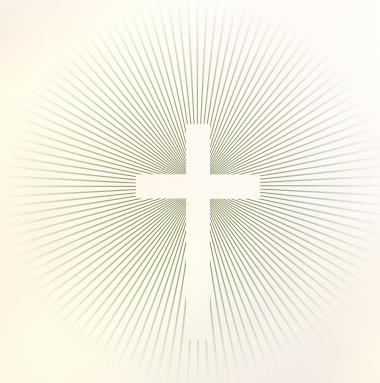
In this devotional guide, you are invited to seek God alongside the students, staff, and faculty of Baylor University’s George W. Truett Theological Seminary. Each day’s devotional entry links to a Scripture passage, includes an excerpt from that passage, contains a short meditation, and leads the reader in a brief prayer. Our goal each day is to read God’s Word, seek God’s will, and do God’s work. Our prayer is that God, by grace, would lead his people to increase in faith, hope, and love that we might proclaim, demonstrate, and embody the Gospel.

This guide has been composed and compiled by those Christ has gathered as part of the Seminary community. We offer these meditations to the world, inviting all people into relationship with God through Jesus Christ, especially those who may be considering Jesus for the first time. It is also our prayerful desire that those walking with Christ would be encouraged in their faith in the days ahead.

We serve a risen Savior. In this season, may we follow him.

### **REV. BEN SIMPSON**

*Associate Director of Spiritual Formation  
Truett Seminary*



FEBRUARY 18 | ASH WEDNESDAY | READING: LUKE 1:1-4

## — DEATH BENEFITS —

*“I, too, decided, as one having a grasp of everything from the start, to write a well-ordered account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may have a firm grasp of the words in which you have been instructed.”*

One day, you will die.

This is the opening message of Lent: *“From dust you came; to dust you will return.”*

The knowledge of our impending death could be cause for great anxiety. Approached with Christian vision, however, the knowledge of our death becomes more than sobering—it can become clarifying. Knowing we have a limited time can lead us to consider how to live wisely.

One of the wisest decisions we can make is to consider what story we will claim as our own as we journey through life. We all select a story by which to live, be it the story of fame-seeking, the story of unlimited choice, or the story of unbridled pleasure, to name a few.

Luke tells us that he has decided to write down an account of the story of Jesus, “so that you may have a firm grasp of the words in which you have been instructed.” Over against other stories of his day, Luke decided to write down the story of Jesus. Luke found this story more compelling than any other story and has invited countless readers over the years to join him not only to consider it, but to live in response to it.

In her poem “The Summer Day,” Mary Oliver asks:

“Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
with your one wild and precious life?”<sup>1</sup>

On this Ash Wednesday, confronted with our mortality, it would do us well to ask a similar question: “Tell me, what is it you plan to do with this wild and precious story of Jesus?”

We have one life to live and one story to choose.

Let us choose the story of life.

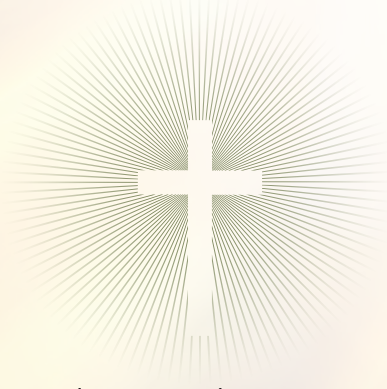
*God, grant me a heart of wisdom that I might number my days, consider your story,  
and live faithfully to the story of Jesus. Amen.*

**STEVE BEZNER, PHD**

*Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology and Ministry  
Truett Seminary*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.poetry.com/poem/173568/the-summer-day>



FEBRUARY 19 | THURSDAY | READING: LUKE 1:5-25

— AN OPPORTUNITY *for* FAITH —

*“With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before them... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

On this second day of the Lenten season, we awoke and, perhaps, still had ashes on our foreheads. These ashes remind us that though we will return to dust, we are not dust yet. What a reason for hope!

Some of us may relate to Zechariah and Elizabeth, who experienced barrenness and were now “getting on in years.” God saw them. It was not in extraordinary circumstances, but in the middle of Zechariah’s regular workday, that God sent a word of comfort. Luke records that Gabriel, an angel, brought the message. God was aware that the couple had prayed about their infertility, the Lord heard their petitions, and the Lord was responding. The witness of Zechariah and Elizabeth invites us to stop and remember that even the righteous and blameless face challenges—but the Lord does not forget us.

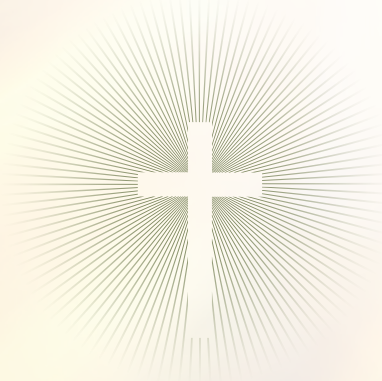
As with modern pregnancy announcements, this was meant to be a moment of joy. Indeed, it was good news! John would be the forerunner to the Son of God!

But Zechariah, a priest, is astonished that his prayers would really be answered. The early church responded similarly after praying for Peter’s release from prison (Acts 12:12-16). We still respond like this today. In Zechariah’s case, the man who did not believe the Lord’s word loses the power to speak words. Zechariah is rendered silent. In silence, he is given the opportunity to begin a time of reflection and listening prayer. Though none of us hope to undergo an ordeal like Zechariah, we would do well to bring ourselves into our own moments of voluntary listening, inviting God to do the talking.

Like the hearers of John’s message, we desire to be “a people prepared for the Lord” (v.17). The Lenten path leads us to Easter. The kind of transformation we seek happens by faith. May we become the kind of person who is not only faithful to pray, but who is also full of faith.

*Lord, we believe. Help our unbelief. Amen.*

**PRESTON HEARNE**  
*Master of Divinity Student*  
*Fate, Texas*



FEBRUARY 20 | FRIDAY | READING: LUKE 1:26-38

— LET IT BE *with* ME —

*“Let it be with me according to your word.”*

In our reading today we continue setting the stage for the birth of Christ. In these verses, Gabriel visits Mary and tells her that she will conceive and give birth to a son. Not just that, but this son is going to be the Savior of the world.

What a wild thing to hear! Mary was a young girl, engaged to be married but still a virgin. I'm sure she had thought about her future, when she would be married to Joseph, and when they would have their own family. But a child right now? And not just any child, but the Son of God? That's a lot to take in!

What I find so admirable about Mary in this story is that she does not let her confusion or her questions keep her from saying yes. She asks Gabriel how this could possibly work, and his explanation raises more questions than it provides answers. Despite the uncertainties that lie in front of her and the monumental task she is faced with, Mary humbly submits herself to God's will.

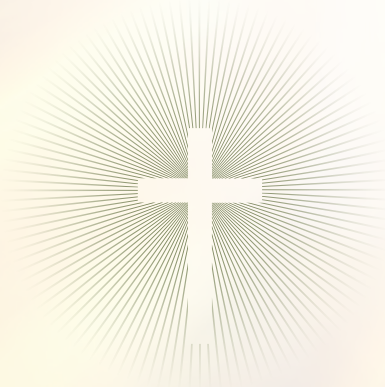
“Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Although she was unsure what all was ahead of her, Mary was willing to humble herself and submit to whatever God's plan entailed.

How might we adopt a posture like Mary? As we journey through this Lenten season, what word does God have for us? How can we be like Mary, humbly submitting to the Lord even if we are not sure what, exactly, we are saying yes to?

May we humbly posture our hearts in the coming days, being open to what God has to show us. Through the questions, uncertainties, and unknowns that lie ahead, may we have enough confidence in God to submit to whatever he has in store for us.

*Almighty God, as we meditate on your word during the days leading to Easter, may the words of our heart echo those of Mary: “Let it be with me according to Your word.” Amen.*

**JENNA PATTESON**  
*Master of Divinity Student*  
*Pasadena, Texas*



FEBRUARY 21 | SATURDAY | READING: LUKE 1:39-56

— A LOOK BACK *to* LOOK FORWARD —

*“And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”*

In today’s reading we encounter two speeches, one spoken by Elizabeth and one spoken by Mary, that highlight two important titles for Jesus. Elizabeth, full of the Holy Spirit, refers to Jesus as “my Lord” (v. 43). Through the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth recognizes the lordship of Jesus even while he is still in the womb. In Mary’s Song, recorded subsequently, she identifies the Lord as her “Savior” (v.46).

These two titles, “Lord” and “Savior,” are not just any old words. They are titles used to honor, praise, and revere important people. By identifying Jesus with these titles, Elizabeth and Mary express belief in the fulfillment of what is yet to come. For that they are blessed.

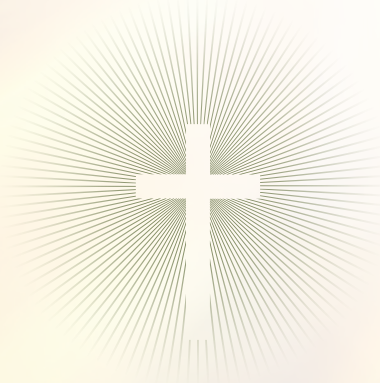
Elizabeth and Mary believe in what they cannot yet see because they recognize God’s faithfulness throughout their history. Mary’s Song praises God for his mighty deeds. God’s mighty deeds throughout history include scattering the proud, bringing down the powerful, lifting the lowly, filling the hungry, sending the rich away empty, and showing mercy toward His people.

Mary can look back and see that God has always been faithful to fulfill what he has spoken to his people. God has always been able to keep his people. Isn’t that a reason to praise God today?

I invite you to do so now. Like Mary, take a moment to remember and name the mighty deeds of God in your life. Thank him for those times he has been faithful toward you. Go in peace today knowing that the God you have history with is still with you.

*Father God, help me to see today that You will keep me, because You have always kept me. Amen.*

**DAVID MARTINEZ**  
*Master of Divinity Student*  
*East Bernard, Texas*



FEBRUARY 22 | SUNDAY | READING: LUKE 2:1-7

## — DOWNHILL JOURNEYS —

*“And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.”*

Wednesday was my fortieth birthday. I began that infamous downhill journey on the very day Christians are reminded of our mortality. As an Anglican priest, it felt strangely fitting. And yet, even I begin to recoil at the collision of Ash Wednesday with celebratory events. The Church herself has traditionally avoided baptisms and weddings during Lent.

So, why read this Lukan birth narrative on the first Sunday of the season when the lectionary psalm, Psalm 51, reminds us that we were brought forth in wickedness and that our mothers conceived us in sin?

First, we importantly acknowledge that Jesus’s origins have no part with sin or wickedness. His entry into this world involved great feats of utter faithfulness—beautiful, godly obedience—most strikingly in Mary and also clearly present in Joseph’s story.

But even more than this, we must recognize that God’s goodness is always surprising, not arising from the palaces of power named in this passage. It appears in the hinterlands, to parents whose circumstances invite suspicion, and whose means were meager. This story stretches our imaginations to recognize the radical activity of God—revealed best in hidden places, like the punchline to a perfect joke.

This is a biblical pattern. God’s people, and even outsiders, constantly encounter blessing in unlikely places. In Jonah, a fish-vomited prophet announces doom to Nineveh, and the hearers cover themselves in ashes, repent, and come to know a God of mercy they could have met no other way.

We, like Jonah, often resist the joke rather than risk the radical belief. We abhor lowliness. Perhaps the leviathan’s belly wasn’t low enough for Jonah. Scandalously, the Bethlehem stable, low as it is, will not be low enough for Jesus!

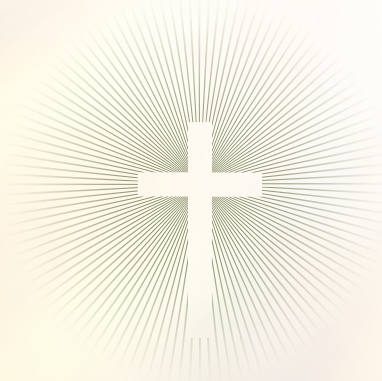
Christmas hymns which celebrate Jesus’s birth cannot be discarded, but ultimately Christians are an Easter people, and Alleluia is our song. Let us therefore continue this Lenten journey and risk the belief that nothing not born in the ash will last.

Seek out surprises, especially on your life’s downhill journeys to the lowly places. For truly that is where Emmanuel dwells.

*Lord, remind us today that you are often at work in surprising places. Give us eyes to see you and the courage to join you in your work. Amen.*

**FR. MATTHEW AUGHTRY**

*Acting Director of the Anglican Episcopal House of Studies  
Truett Seminary*



FEBRUARY 23 | MONDAY | READING: LUKE 2:8-20

— DEFINING MOMENTS —

*“But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.’”*

After reading about the events leading up to the birth of Jesus, Luke pivots to an unexpected place. A group of shepherds, clocking in for another late shift, are brought to center stage. What started as a normal day for ordinary people working a thankless job turned into a defining moment for their faith.

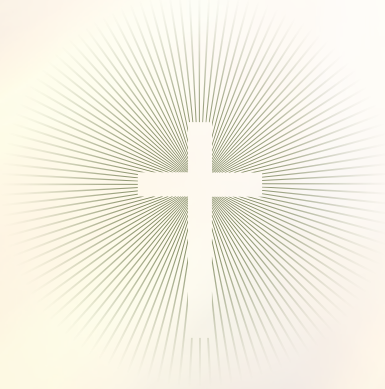
On this not-so-silent night, shepherds received the gospel, the message of “good news of great joy for all the people.” They joined in worship with the Heavenly Host. After the song was over, the angels left. This amazing heavenly encounter ended, and the shepherds responded in faith. They didn’t rush right back to work, counting sheep. And they didn’t just sit back down, letting the message end with that moment. The shepherds went to see what they had heard about. This defining moment changed their lives.

As if the shock of the heavenly encounter, the awe of receiving the gospel message, and the wonder of seeing the baby lying in the manger were not enough excitement, the shepherds shared this great joy with everyone who would listen. Another defining moment. They had encountered the Messiah and responded in faith by hearing, receiving, and sharing the gospel.

As we look towards Easter Sunday, I invite you to consider the defining moments in your own faith journey. Where have you been met by God? When have you received good news? How have you responded in faith? Like the shepherds who returned to their fields “glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen,” does the message of Christ change the way you live? The gospel requires a faithful response. May you receive it with great joy and share it with all people!

*Thank you Jesus for the good news and great joy of the gospel! May we respond in faith, giving you glory and praise. Amen.*

**EMILY HILL**  
Master of Divinity Student  
Lynchburg, Virginia



FEBRUARY 24 | TUESDAY | READING: LUKE 2:21-38

## — RECOGNIZING *the* LIGHT —

*“For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”*

In Luke 2:21-38, we meet Simeon and Anna, two faithful witnesses who recognized God's light in the quiet arrival of the infant Jesus. Their lives remind us that God's work often comes in unexpected ways, and seeing it requires attentive hearts and patient faith.

Simeon is described as righteous and devout, “looking forward to the consolation of Israel.” His hope is not distant; it is rooted in God's promise, cultivated over years of waiting. When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple, Simeon immediately recognizes God's salvation. Holding the child, he praises God, declaring that his eyes have seen the light of revelation for all people. Simeon's discernment reminds us that God's presence may appear in humble forms, but it carries the fullness of salvation.

Anna's witness complements Simeon's. A widow devoted to prayer and worship for many years, she embodies steadfast faith. She does more than see the child, she speaks about him to all who are waiting for redemption. Anna shows us that faithful attention and consistent devotion become a living testimony, pointing others to the light God brings into the world.

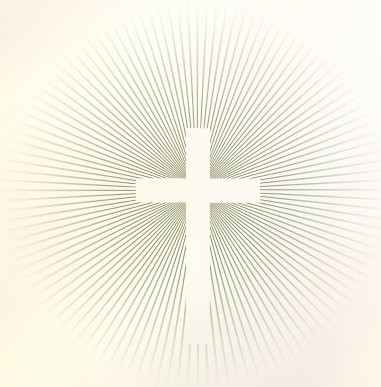
This Lenten season invites us to notice the quiet work of God around us. Like Simeon, we are called to watch for signs of God's saving presence. Like Anna, we are encouraged to let our lives reflect that light to others. Even in ordinary or challenging moments, God is near, and recognizing that nearness transforms our hope, our actions, and our relationships.

As we journey toward Easter, may we learn to see the light God offers and share it with others, letting our faith illuminate the world in small but meaningful ways.

*Lord Jesus, open my eyes to see your light in every moment and guide me to share it with others. Amen.*

**CHENITHUNG JAMI**

*Master of Arts in Christian Ministry Student  
Nagaland, India*



FEBRUARY 25 | WEDNESDAY | READING: LUKE 2:41-52

## — OUR FATHER'S HOUSE —

*“Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”*

Luke’s second chapter is well-known for its account of our Savior’s birth. But the end of the chapter gives us a peak into the life of Jesus between the manger and the beginning of his ministry. Twelve-year-old Jesus traveled with his parents to Jerusalem for Passover. When the festival was over, Mary and Joseph left Jerusalem to go home, assuming Jesus was with them. When they became aware of his absence, they made their way back to Jerusalem to search for him. Luke tells us they found him in the temple, “sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.”

Mary asked, “Why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you.” Jesus was confused by their lack of understanding. His answer alludes to a promise given to the people of God: “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

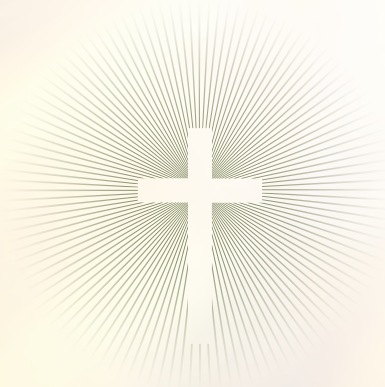
One of the major themes of Scripture is that of Almighty God creating a place in which to dwell with His people. In John 14, Jesus says, “And if I go and prepare a place for you... where I am, there you may be also.” Because of His birth, life, and eventual sacrifice on the cross, we have been made co-heirs with Christ. Our glorious inheritance includes dwelling in our Father’s house for all time. No fear of displacement. No chance of war. No threat of devastation. We will dwell in *our* Father’s house.

May we set our sights on that day with joy and determination. Just as the Christ-child longed to be with His Father, may the longing of our hearts be to dwell with our Father in His house.

*Holy Father, we thank you for the certainty that one day our struggle will end, all wrongs will be made right, and we will get to rest and dwell with you forever. Amen.*

**LAUREN ARMSTRONG**

*Master of Divinity Student  
League City, Texas*



FEBRUARY 26 | THURSDAY | READING: LUKE 3:1-20

— PREPARE *the WAY* —

*“Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”*

Luke introduces John the Baptist’s ministry with a long list of rulers—emperors, governors, kings, and priests. Power is named carefully and publicly. Yet the word of God does not come to any of them. Instead, “the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.” This is already good news.

God’s saving word arrives not in palaces but in the wilderness; not in polished halls of power, but in places of waiting, hunger, and vulnerability. Lent is such a wilderness. It is a season when we step away from noise and excess, when we face our limits honestly, and when we become more aware of our need for God.

John’s message is not complicated: repent and prepare. Repentance here is not shame driven self-rejection. It is a turning—a reorientation of life toward God’s coming salvation. Isaiah’s words, quoted by Luke, imagine valleys lifted up and mountains made low. The work of repentance is not self-improvement; it is the reshaping of a life so that God’s grace can move freely through it.

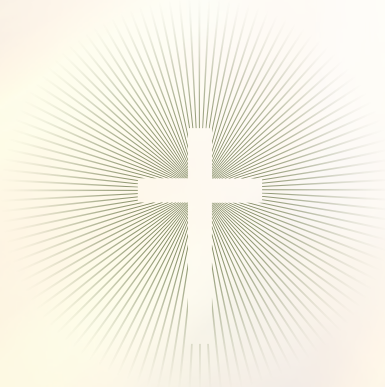
Notice that the promise is expansive: “all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:6). This is not salvation for the powerful alone, nor for the morally impressive. It is salvation for all—especially those who know they are in the wilderness.

During Lent, we are not asked to create salvation. We are asked to make room for it. Today, ask gently: What needs to be cleared away? What crooked path needs straightening? Where is God inviting you to turn again toward life?

*Lord Jesus, meet me in my wilderness and help me prepare my heart  
for your saving work. Amen.*

**MARCUS WAMEYO**

*Master of Divinity Student  
Kisumu, Kenya*



FEBRUARY 27 | FRIDAY | READING: LUKE 3:21-22

— A NEW CREATION —

*“Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened.”*

As Christians, we are baptized because we die to our flesh and are raised with Christ as a new creation. We are born again. We are freed from sin and death, which chained us before we knew Christ. Therefore, it may seem odd to read about Jesus' baptism. He was already perfect. Nonetheless, Luke 3:21 states that while many were baptized in the Jordan River, Jesus was also baptized. In that moment, Christ identified with sinners. He identified with us.

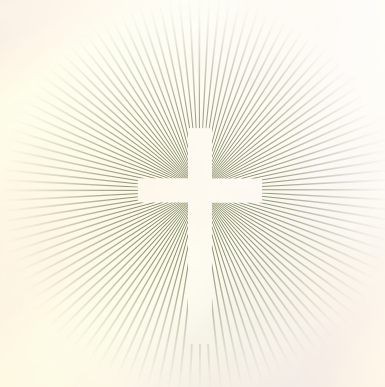
That is the God we serve. Christ humbled himself to dwell with us. He knew pain, he knew sorrow, he laughed, and he cried. Thus, in this season of Lent, as we look toward Christ's redemptive work on the cross, may we be encouraged that Christ took the weight of our sins on himself. He paid the price of death in full and made us a new creation. Therefore, as God's people, having been adopted, we share in this identity: we are God's children whom he loves and with whom he is well pleased (Luke 3:22).

As we go about our daily lives may we see ourselves, and others, as God sees us all. May we fix our eyes on things above, not giving ourselves or others value based on worldly standards. May we see others as they truly are, as God's beloved creation, and may we grant ourselves the same grace. May we live lives worthy of the gospel.

*Lord, please guide us in walking humbly before you and before others, and may our lives reflect the love you have shown to us. Amen.*

**JORYANNE CABALSE**

*Master of Divinity/Master of Business Administration Student  
Hilo, Hawaii*



FEBRUARY 28 | SATURDAY | READING: LUKE 3:23-38

— WHAT NO ONE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT —

*“Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his work. He was the son (as was thought) of Joseph son of Heli, ..., son of Adam, son of God.”*

Here in the midst of Christ’s baptism and wilderness temptation is something a little too ordinary, maybe even boring: a genealogy.

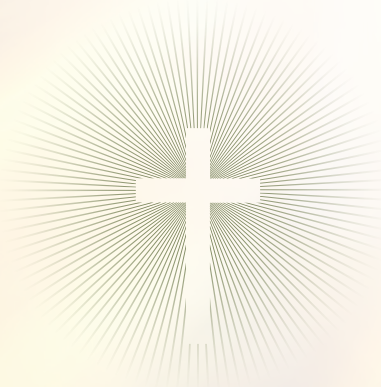
But this genealogy is far from expected; it’s the who’s who of scandalous sinners. There’s David, the man who slept with Uriah’s wife when he should have been at war and set Uriah up to be killed (2 Sam 11:1-27). There’s Judah, who broke his promise to his daughter-in-law, slept with a prostitute in the wake of his wife’s death, and ended up in the bait-and-switch of a lifetime (Gen 38:6-26). There’s Noah, who got drunk and indecent, for all three of his sons to see (Gen 9:21-23). Not exactly the shiniest branches on the family tree.

This genealogy starts by calling Jesus “the son (as was thought) of Joseph” and, by the end, it is clearly *what no one would have thought*: a messy list of sinners (v. 23). Jesus is not only the son of Joseph, David, Judah, and Noah, but also the “son of Adam, the son of God” (v. 23, 31, 33, 36). The passage affirms that He is fully God, yet deeply, fully human.

This Lent, may we see Christ in our messiness and remember how he stepped into a problematic family tree to free us from our own.

*LORD, help us to remember that you chose to die for us in spite of our past and that you often work through the mess and brokenness of our past to bring your Kingdom glory. Amen.*

**KAT COLE**  
*Master of Divinity Student*  
*Houston, Texas*



MARCH 1 | SUNDAY | READING: LUKE 4:1-13

## — THE WILDERNESS JOURNEY —

*“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness.”*

Today’s passage leads us into Jesus’s wilderness journey. This experience came after his baptism and anointing as the Son of God and prior to the start of his ministry. For Jesus, the journey through the wilderness was an opportunity to confirm his identity as the Son of God and to be led by the Holy Spirit, two foundational aspects of his life and ministry on earth.

Where Adam and Eve failed in combating the enemy’s lies and deceptions, Jesus succeeded. Jesus went toe-to-toe with the devil, being tempted three times to go against God’s will. Jesus did not use cunning words and eloquent speech to dispel the enemy’s tests. Jesus relied on time spent in the Temple, learning the Father’s way. Jesus pressed into the truth of God’s Word, and it was through God’s Word that the enemy’s attacks were deflected and rendered useless.

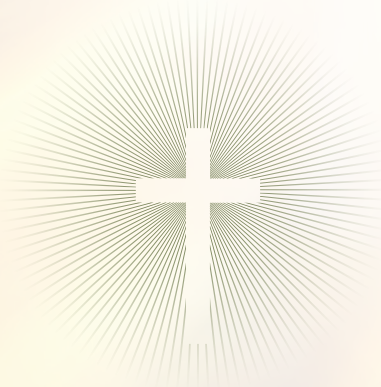
All of us will embark on wilderness experiences where life will be a challenge. Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble.” (John 16:33) You will go through trials. Your faith will be tested. You will experience the temptation to exchange truth for a lie. You will go through hardships that will require you to decide, “my way or Jesus’s way.” If we choose our own way, like Adam and Eve, we will walk the path of death. If we choose Jesus’s way, we will walk the path of life.

As we walk into the wilderness, the Holy Spirit desires to lead us. The Spirit leads us back to God’s Word. The Word of God is implanted in our hearts when we spend time in his presence and in Scripture. In sports, we learn that a good defense is a strong offense. A strong spiritual offense is developed through practice and intentionality. As we prepare for those wilderness experiences, let us spend time with the Father, being affirmed in our identity as his beloved, and let us trust the Spirit’s leading as we walk along the way.

*Jesus, as I walk in the wilderness, lead me by your Spirit. Help me to lean not on my own understanding but help me trust in your ways by submitting to you and your Word. Amen.*

### **ISAAC LEE**

*Continuing Education Program Manager for the Faith & Sports Institute  
Doctor of Ministry Student  
Waco, Texas*



MARCH 2 | MONDAY | READING: LUKE 4:14-30

## — THE FAMILIAR JESUS —

*“When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood to read...”*

After his baptism, Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness and was tempted by the devil. Following more than a month of fasting and the enduring of temptation, he made his way home.

Once in Nazareth, Jesus returns to familiar ways. As was his custom, he reads the scrolls in the synagogue on the Sabbath. But something about the familiar, homegrown Jesus has shifted.

After his baptism, Scripture refers to Jesus as being “full of the Holy Spirit” (Luke 4:1). He returns to Galilee, “filled with the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14). No longer only a reader of prophecies, Jesus declares himself to be the fulfillment of them. In the midst of an ordinary moment of worship, the Spirit-filled God-made-flesh changes everything. Jesus’s sweet-spoken words, full of grace and truth, compel them until they remember one thing: “Isn’t Jesus really just the carpenter’s son?”

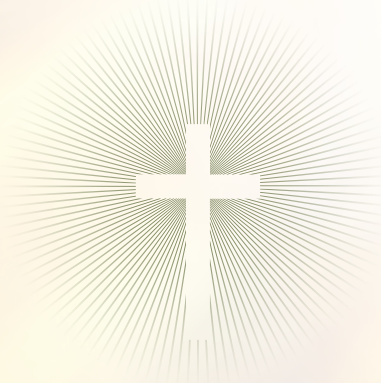
The combined revelation of Jesus’s human and divine identities confound the people who are most familiar with him. Their awe gives way to disbelief. When Jesus challenges their previous understanding of him and their sense of being favored by God, they turn on him. In a moment, they shift from speaking well of him to being full of rage. This is not the Jesus they thought they knew, and they push him out. The people who knew Jesus from birth, those most familiar with him, were the first to try to silence him.

This passage challenges us to consider if our familiarity with Jesus might lead us to question, or even reject, the truth of who he is, too. When the Spirit moves in unpredictable ways, when God teaches us something new or admonishes us, do we push our Lord away? When God opens our eyes to see an uncomfortable truth, especially about ourselves, do we receive or reject his message? Do we receive or reject Jesus?

*Lord, in your grace, please help me to trust you and follow you even when the Spirit challenges my preconceived ideas of who you are and who I am. Amen.*

### **MONICA ODLE**

*Master of Theological Studies Student  
Woodway, Texas*



MARCH 3 | TUESDAY | READING: LUKE 5:1-11

## — LAUNCH INTO THE DEEP —

*“Simon answered, ‘Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.’”*

Life has a way of pushing us toward places we would rather avoid.

Simon Peter knew that feeling well. He labored all night, doing what he was trained to do. He cast the net, again and again. And still...nothing.

Yet Jesus steps into Peter’s boat at a time when their failure to catch fish is fresh, and says, “Put out into the deep water, and let down your nets for a catch.”

If you pause to think about it for a moment, Jesus’s instruction is inconvenient. Peter is exhausted. The timing feels off. But Peter still chose obedience, declaring, “Because you say so, I will let down the nets.”

Like Simon Peter’s surrender during this moment, the Lenten season invites us into the same kind of posture. This season is not about proving our strength. It is about admitting our limits and obeying Jesus even when our logic, history, and experience tell us it won’t work this time, either.

Peter obeys, then here comes the catch. This catch contained so many fish, and so much blessing, that the nets tore from the overflow. There is so much abundance that help is required, and so much grace that Peter *literally* falls to his knees, suddenly aware of how holy this moment truly is.

Isn’t that what happens when God meets us in the deep? We realize it was never about the fish, and all about trust, transformation, and being called beyond what we thought defined us.

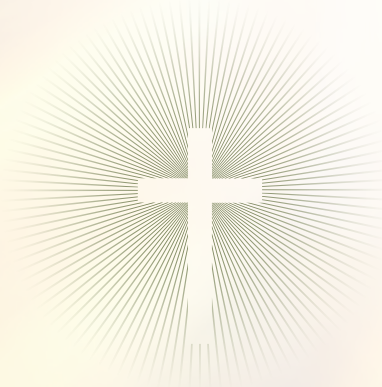
As you journey through this season, hear the gentle but firm invitation of Jesus:

Launch again.  
Go deeper.  
Trust me when you’re tired.

What you thought was an ending may very well be the place where God is beginning something entirely new, but only if you’re willing to launch into the deep.

*Lord, give me the courage to trust your word in the deep places of my life and the grace to follow you when you call me beyond what I’ve known. Amen.*

**ONEIKA J. MCCARTHY**  
Master of Divinity Student  
Pearland, Texas



MARCH 4 | WEDNESDAY | READING: LUKE 5:12-16

## — TOUCH, HEALING, *and* NEARNESS —

*“Then Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, ‘I do choose.’”*

Earlier in this chapter, we see Jesus reveal his authority and invite others into a new way of life. Today, we see that authority draw near. Luke’s account of Jesus healing a man with leprosy reveals authority made personal through touch, healing, and nearness.

This story is brief, yet full of meaning. The man comes before Jesus with humility and trust: *“If you choose…”* He knows restoration is not something he can demand, only something he can receive. Jesus responds with words that are both powerful and personal: *“I do choose.”*

After the healing, Jesus instructs the man to remain quiet and let the work speak for itself. The miracle does not need explanation; it stands as testimony on its own. This invites us to consider our own lives. Where has the gospel brought healing that now shapes the way we go and obey? Perhaps part of our witness is found not in how loudly we speak, but in how faithfully we live as people who have been healed.

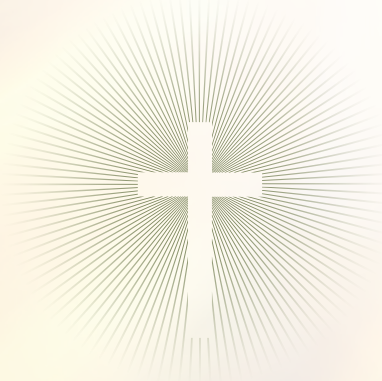
Yet the story does not remain with the man who was healed. Instead, Luke gently draws our eyes back to Jesus. Even as the crowds gather and the needs multiply, Jesus withdraws to deserted places to pray. This is not a pause in the story, but a revelation of his way of life. Though we do not meet Jesus face-to-face as this man did, we are invited to follow him into the same rhythm. During the wilderness season of Lent, we discover that healing is often found in withdrawal, where Jesus meets us in quiet and desolate places.

As you move through this day, consider both the healing you have received and the places where God invites you to be still. May your life reflect the One who chooses to heal you and calls you to follow in faithful witness. And may you find, in quiet and deserted places, the strength to go where he sends you.

*Jesus, teach me to trust you with the work in me that I cannot bring about myself.  
As I withdraw to be with you, shape my heart, my life, and my witness. May your  
quiet work in me reflect your grace to the world. Amen.*

**LIBBY HUTCHINSON**

*Master of Theological Studies Student  
Weatherford, Texas*



MARCH 5 | THURSDAY | READING: LUKE 5:33-39

— THE DYNAMIC REALITY *of* GOD'S GRACE —

*“No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins and will spill out, and the skins will be ruined.”*

The Lenten season for the Christ-follower is a well-practiced tradition that invites us into a deeper and more vibrant dependence on God. Through fasting and repentance, we draw near to our Lord and seek renewal.

This season, pause and consider: Are you simply exercising tradition by following a familiar and seasonal religious practice, or embracing the transformational change Jesus offers? He calls us to step outside of what is comfortable, welcoming the challenge of allowing him to do a new work in our lives.

In Luke 5:33, John the Baptist's disciples question Jesus about fasting. Are we like John's followers, expressing our faith through familiar practices? Our motivation may be sincere. We may desire deeper connection with God. But could we be putting our faith in our practices rather than in God? Could we be missing the much greater truth that Jesus proclaims to us in the parable of new wine placed in old wineskins?

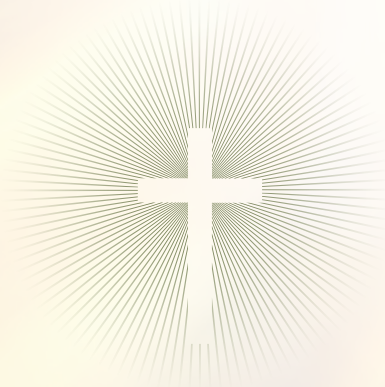
Jesus's work in our lives is not a patch for the worn or tired parts of our spiritual life. It is a new work, dynamic and transformative, like new wine that stretches the wineskin containing it. This new work cannot be confined by legalism, religious tradition, or self-reliant attempts at spiritual transformation.

Jesus compassionately acknowledges our human tendency to prefer what is familiar: "People who have drunk old wine prefer it, saying, 'The old is better.'" Our challenge is clear: embrace Christ's work to make you new!

*Jesus, make me like new wine placed in new wineskins, not constrained by old patterns. May the dynamic reality of your grace overflow in my life. God, let it be so. Amen.*

**TOBY BARNETT**

*Master of Theological Studies Student  
Waco, Texas*



MARCH 6 | FRIDAY | READING: LUKE 6:1-11

— IS NOW *the* RIGHT TIME? —

*“I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?”*

In yesterday's reading, Jesus addressed a question concerning the right time to fast. In today's reading, Luke continues the theme of the "right time" in two episodes. Jesus corrects the Pharisees, who are preoccupied with whether the Sabbath is the right time to work or to heal, according to the Law. While Jesus's disciples are more concerned about their grumbling stomachs than the Law in the first episode, Jesus preemptively attends to the Pharisees' unspoken accusation in the second episode by asking a rhetorical question. Jesus's reply essentially asks, "Is there a right or wrong time to do good?"

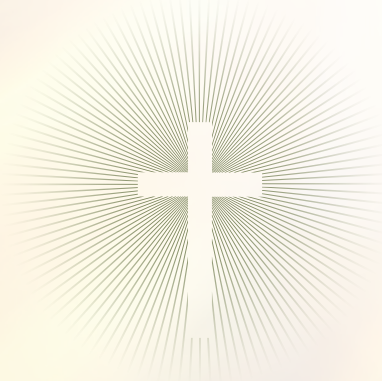
This *should* be a rhetorical question. We think the answer is obvious: "No, there is no wrong time to do good." But our actions often contradict this proclamation. As the Ash Wednesday "Litany of Penitence" in the *Book of Common Prayer* reminds us, we must confess the ways in which we have sinned "in thought, word, and deed; by what we have done, and by what we have left undone." In one of his final instructions to the people of Galatia, Paul admonishes us not to grow weary in doing what is right but to do good at every opportunity (Gal. 6:9-10). Are there good deeds that we leave undone? Whether being weary or blind to someone's need, we can be like the priest or Levite in Jesus's parable about the good Samaritan, passing up the right time to do good for someone.

During this season, may your eyes be open to every opportunity to do good, and may you never tire in doing what is right.

*Father God, help me see every opportunity to do good as the right time to show your love. Amen.*

**KYLE BERRY**

*Master of Divinity/Master of Music student  
Waco, Texas*



MARCH 7 | SATURDAY | READING: LUKE 6:12-19

## — PRAYING THROUGH TOUGH DECISIONS —

*“Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray;  
and he spent the night in prayer to God.”*

Yesterday, we were challenged concerning the true meaning of the Sabbath through both the teachings and demonstrations given by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Today we turn to the calling of the twelve apostles.

In verse twelve, Luke records that Jesus went to the mountain to be alone and pray before calling his close circle of followers. There are many times in Scripture that we find Jesus in solitude on the mountain in prayer, but Luke is the only Gospel writer to mention that Jesus prayed before calling the twelve. Not only did Jesus pray, but he also remained on the mountain all night.

Maybe there is a big decision you are facing this Lenten season. Maybe this decision has you feeling weighed down and you are not sure what to do. It is wonderful to know that we can escape and be alone with Jesus. It may not be on an actual mountaintop, but we serve a God that can help us find a secluded space wherever we are, and he will meet us there. He not only can sympathize with us but is praying on our behalf to the Father, guiding us towards the right path.

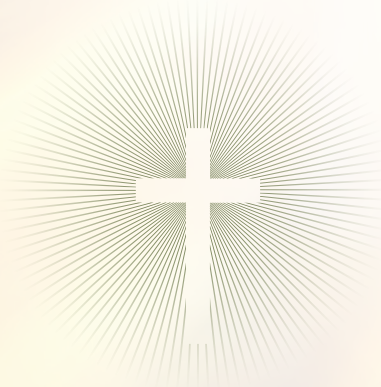
Jesus, the Son of Man, both fully human and fully divine, was committed to a life of prayer. In John 5:30, Jesus says, “I can do nothing on my own.” Every decision Jesus made was prayerful and intentional, seeking to remain in alignment with the will of the Father.

The twelve men Jesus was calling forth would be taken from among a crowd of many disciples. They would be known as apostles. In Greek, “*apostolos*” means one who is sent. The twelve would be sent out to announce the kingdom. They were given power to heal and cast out demons (Matthew 10:1). Jesus reminds us we do not have to make decisions on our own. We can invite him into all of the things we are praying through as decisions need to be made.

*Lord Jesus, help me today to make the correct choice in accordance with your will.  
Amen.*

**CAMICE WATSON**

*Master of Christian Ministry Student  
Waco, Texas*



MARCH 8 | SUNDAY | READING: LUKE 6:20-36

## — THE UPSIDE-DOWN KINGDOM *as a* BLESSED PARADOX —

*“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”*

The Bible is full of paradoxes that challenge conventional wisdom. One of these paradoxes is related to wealth and poverty. At the beginning of the Gospel, Luke recorded Mary’s song, where she praises God for God’s mercy in electing her as the mother of the Savior. In her exaltation of God, there was also condemnation of a group of people who thought they had achieved economic success, or as she puts it, “He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty” (Luke 1:53).

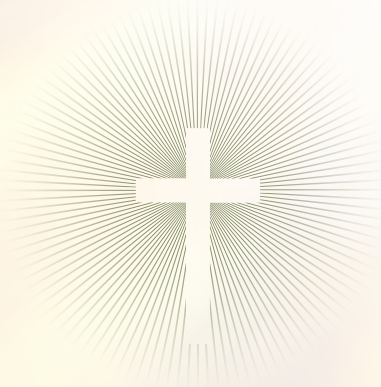
Of course, this paradox does not reflect the worldview of a capitalist society, which blames the poor for their poverty and exalts the rich for their entrepreneurship. The biggest problem is not that we live in such a society, but that the Church follows the same logic of the empire. It is not surprising that throughout the years, after presenting God’s “preferential option for the poor” in classes, students always ask me if such an option is “biblical.”

Jesus identified blessing not with comfort and wealth but with poverty—a recognition of our dependence on God instead of worldly possessions. The “woes” pronounce judgment on those who mistake earthly abundance for ultimate security. Wealth becomes dangerous when it insulates us from recognizing our need for God and others.

The ethics that follow are equally countercultural: love your enemies, bless those who curse you, turn the other cheek, give without expecting return. This is not naive passivity but active, costly love that mirrors God’s own character. Jesus is calling his Church to live into a radical generosity that goes against the values of our society. In our society, the rich are the powerful ones who dictate the rules of the economic game, and even churches follow their lead. One may wonder how many Christians and churches God will send away empty-handed on that glorious day when we will see God face to face.

**DR. ANGEL D. SANTIAGO-VENDRELL**

*Associate Professor of World Christianity and Witness  
Truett Seminary*



MARCH 9 | MONDAY | READING: LUKE 6:37-40

— OF PLANKS *and* SPECKS —

*“First take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”*

Judging others often feels natural, perhaps even fun, whether it be subtle remarks, attitudes, or opinions, or literally “giving someone a piece of my mind.” Yet, this passage confronts this habit and calls us to deeper reflection.

How can believers correct one another without risking disobedience to Christ’s command, “Do not judge”?

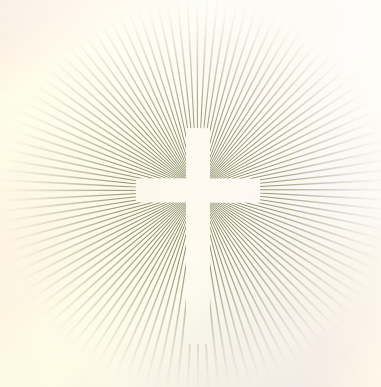
Scripture calls us to correct and restore one another in love. In doing so, we ought to realize that the struggle is not about what others are doing, but the posture of our hearts. Christ forewarns us against hypocrisy, shifting the burden of proof onto those who judge. It is self-righteousness that Christ warns us about.

To follow Christ is to embody both justice and mercy. Just like Christ exemplified the values of integrity, social justice, and faithfulness, we too are called to this greater life. The call to reflect Christ’s character is not biased toward embodying the “good” while being “blind” to the entanglements of sin. Yet, in holding each other accountable, there is always the risk of appearing “holier than thou,” forgetting that all of us are sinners saved by grace. Prior to measuring someone else’s faults, the question we must ask is, “Would I be willing for the same measure to be applied to me?”

This passage offers an opportunity for self-examination and calls us to reflect on our inner heart posture, being cognizant that all of us stand under mercy. Before we correct or confront in love, let us carefully consider taking the “plank” out of our eyes, recognizing that we, too, are sinners in need of God’s grace. Only then can this humility aid us in chastening one another in a way that feels less like a personal attack and more like an act of love.

*“Lord, just as you have not dealt with us according to our sins as we deserve, teach us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly, knowing all is by your grace. Amen.*

**BROOKE ABUYA**  
*Master of Divinity Student*  
*Nairobi, Kenya*



MARCH 10 | TUESDAY | READING: LUKE 6:43-49

— LIVE *in* OBEDIENCE —

*“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I tell you?”*

Our passage today begins with a sobering principle: our hearts are revealed by our lives. In verses 43-45, Jesus presents only two sorts: a good heart producing good fruit, and an evil heart producing evil fruit. We will all find ourselves in one of these groups.

As believers, we might assume that we belong to the first group. We may attend church, read our Bibles, and talk eloquently about spiritual matters. Yet, is this all it means to bear good fruit from a good heart? Jesus’s rhetorical question in verse 46 makes it clear: profession alone is not proof of a heart devoted to God. Rather, Jesus seeks obedience. Those with a truly faithful heart will *practice what he teaches*.

Jesus develops this with a parable comparing two builders. One builder begins by laying a strong foundation. This foundation is likened to *practicing* the words of Jesus. The other builder does not lay such a foundation. Again, there are just two options: to build with a foundation or without, or more plainly, to practice Christ’s teachings or not.<sup>2</sup> Those who build their lives on obedience to Christ are stable amid the floods of life, which prove devastating to those who do not. The question then lingers: which are we?

Today, and throughout this season of Lent, may you hear Christ’s call to live in obedience. May we remember, follow, and rejoice in Jesus Christ, who was himself obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross (Philippians 2:8).

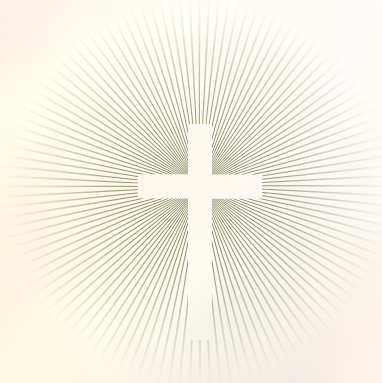
*Lord Jesus, help me today to not simply hear your words but to put them into practice, for your glory. Amen.*

**ISLA HENDERSON**

*Master of Theological Studies Student  
Inverness, Scotland*

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<sup>2</sup> James R Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 310.



MARCH 11 | WEDNESDAY | READING: LUKE 7:18-35

— DOUBT, DEEDS, *and* DISBELIEF —

*“ . . . wisdom is vindicated by all her children.”*

John had heard reports about Jesus when he was likely in prison (Luke 3:19-20). His doubts about the expected Messiah surfaced when he had sent out his disciples to the Lord to ask if he was the one who was to come, or if they were to wait for another. Jesus responded not by rebuking John, but by making declarations about God's marvelous deeds seen in healing, restoration, and good news for the poor. Jesus also affirmed John's prophetic role and honored his faith. Amidst the given scenario, the Pharisees exposed their disbelief by rejecting both John's call to repentance and Jesus' offer of grace.

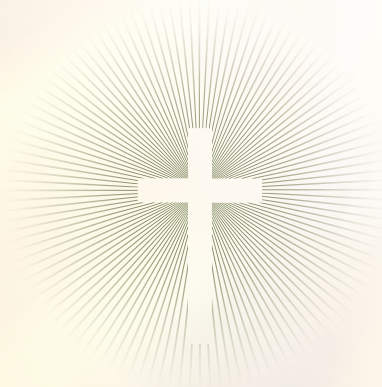
John's uncertainty reminds us that even the faithful can wrestle with doubt. Like him, we can bring our questions honestly to Jesus while trusting in God's plan, knowing that doubt does not disqualify us from his care. We also see the contrast with the Pharisees, whose pride and closed hearts kept them from recognizing God's work. This challenges us as a community to examine where we may resist God's ways and to encourage one another toward openness and faith.

May we always be reminded that Jesus did not answer John with abstract arguments but pointed to the reality of God's kingdom in action: *"Go and tell John what you have seen and heard. . . good news brought to them."* In the face of challenges, we may be tempted to react in fear or disbelief. May we learn instead to be faithful witnesses to this living reality.

John's doubt, Jesus's deeds, and the Pharisees' disbelief reveal the different ways people respond to God's work. Let us be reminded, as Luke 7:35 says, *"wisdom is vindicated by all her children,"* showing that faithful lives and open hearts confirm the truth and power of God's ways.

*Lord, give us a questioning faith that inspires a more intentional pursuit of you and an unwavering realization that the kingdom of God is here and now as much as it is to come. Amen!*

**KWUTSOLO KAPFO**  
*Master of Christian Ministry*  
*Nagaland, India*



MARCH 12 | THURSDAY | READING: LUKE 7:36-50

## — HOW DO WE APPROACH JESUS? —

*“Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven loves little.”*

In Luke 7:36-50, we encounter two characters: Simon the Pharisee and an unnamed, sinful woman. Both had the same access to Jesus, yet their postures toward him were completely different.

Simon invites Jesus into his home for a meal, but he keeps Jesus at a distance. The text tells us that Simon did not offer Jesus water for his feet, a kiss of greeting, nor oil for his head. On the other hand, the sinful woman enters the house uninvited and surrenders to Jesus everything that she has. She washed Jesus’s feet with her tears, dried them with her hair while kissing them, and anointed them with an expensive ointment. She does not say a word, but through her actions we see what the love of Jesus means to her.

Simon stands upright and confident in himself. The woman kneels low and surrenders herself to him. Simon wants to protect his reputation, but the woman risks hers. She does not care what others think about her. She only cares about Jesus.

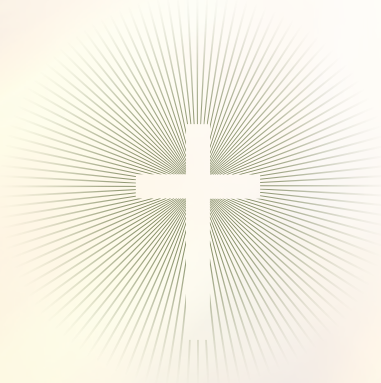
As this was happening, Jesus told a parable of two debtors. One debtor owed little and was forgiven, while the other owed much and was forgiven. Simon was so certain in himself, in his moral standing and reputation, that he did not see his debt and need for forgiveness. The woman understood the weight of her sin and, instead of trusting in herself, chose to trust in her Savior. The biggest contrast between them is the awareness of their need for grace and forgiveness.

How do we approach Jesus? Do we try to guard our hearts and minimize our sins? Or do we run to his feet, being confident that his grace is enough to transform and sustain us? Lent invites us to surrender self-righteousness and practice confession and silence as ways of kneeling before Jesus.

*God, destroy my pride and soften my heart. Help me experience the fullness of your grace. Amen.*

**ROMAN KHRIPUNOV**

*Master of Divinity Student  
Tashkent, Uzbekistan*



MARCH 13 | FRIDAY | READING: LUKE 8:1-3

— JOIN *the* JOURNEY —

*“The twelve were with him, as well as some women [...] who provided for them out of their resources”*

At first glance, this transitional piece of Scripture can seem insignificant among the stories of Jesus’s miraculous work throughout his public ministry. However, when we slow down to consider Luke’s intentionality with the details, something significant about the Christian life is revealed.

The story of the Bible is all about God’s deep love for humanity, revealed through his persistent invitation to humans to join the miraculous work of his Kingdom for the sake of the whole of creation. This means that, yes, God is sovereign and can do it all on his own, yet his invitation to humanity requires action from humanity: *the action to respond faithfully*.

This text shows that the grace of God was at work in the lives of Mary, Joanna, Chuza, Susanna, and many others. Their response was to take part in the journey by giving of their resources to support the work of the Kingdom of God. Luke’s intentionality in sharing this might be to encourage us to do the same. We each have experienced the grace of God through Jesus’s salvific work. Isn’t that enough to respond faithfully and join in on the journey of God?

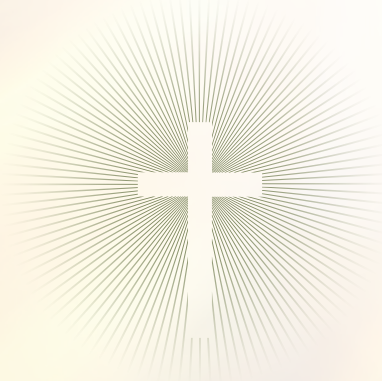
The season of Lent is a time of active reflection on this truth by saying “no” to the things of this world to give a stronger “yes” to God. This can be easy to believe, but the challenge is this: are we truly reflecting our allegiance to Jesus through the way we live, and are we doing so with *all* of ourselves?

The women of this story are prime examples of living out a stronger “yes” to God by giving of their material resources in ways that advanced the Kingdom of God in their time and context. I invite you to reflect on ways you can follow the model these women offer in this snippet of a grand story. What might it look like to be more faithful in giving your resources to advance the Kingdom of God in your time and context? Whatever it is, may it reflect a stronger “yes” to God. Friend, join the journey in accompanying Jesus today! May your work be blessed!

*Lord God, we are thankful for your invitation to join you in such incredible work for our world; may your Spirit reveal within us ways we can more faithfully respond to that invitation. Amen.*

**KATHRYN FLETCHER**

*Master of Divinity and Master of Social Work Student  
Dell Rapids, South Dakota*



MARCH 14 | SATURDAY | READING: LUKE 8:22-25

## — WHERE IS YOUR FAITH? —

*“They went to him and woke him up, shouting, ‘Master, Master, we are perishing!’ And waking up, he rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased, and there was a calm. Then he said to them, ‘Where is your faith?’”*

Yesterday, we read about the people who followed Jesus and showed faith in him. However, this passage quickly reveals unbelief in the hearts of those who are with Jesus.

As you re-read the passage, imagine yourself in this situation. The winds are howling, the waves are crashing into the boat and splashing water over your face, so you can hardly see. Thunder and lightning rage around you. Maybe you are hoisting the sails, rowing the boat, or using buckets of water to keep the boat from sinking. Then, you look over, and Jesus, the one who asked you to get into the boat, is sleeping! You feel like you could lose your life at any moment.

After Jesus saves you from the storm, he asks you a crucial question: “Where is your faith?” Just like the disciples, our faith can be mixed with doubt. The disciples come to Jesus and ask for his help, but show unbelief and doubt through their cry, “We are perishing!” This mixture of faith and doubt is reflected in the prayer found in Mark 9:24: “I believe; help my unbelief!”

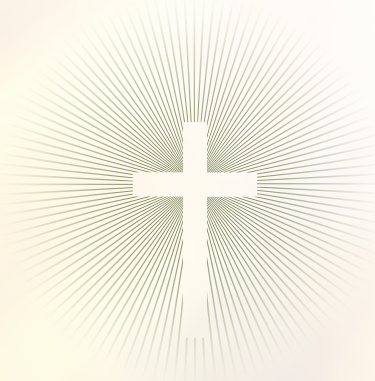
Even if we live in the Bible Belt, go to church, and do all the right things in Jesus’s name, we will face storms and trials that reveal unbelief and doubt. Even if you have faith in Jesus, the weakness of our flesh may lead us to doubt in some circumstances. We have to remember that Jesus models strong faith by resting while the world is raging.

Where do you find doubt in your life that is causing you to strive for more control over a situation? Or do you feel like you are clawing and scratching to stay alive? Today, as anxieties, worries, or storms arise, remember Jesus’s invitation to trust in him. Give yourself permission to pray, “I believe; help my unbelief!”

*Father, show me where I’ve been doubting you and forgive me. I choose today to trust in your protection from the storms that I face. In Jesus’s name, Amen.*

**ISAAC WROBEL**

*Master of Divinity Student  
Honolulu, Hawaii*



MARCH 15 | SUNDAY | READING: LUKE 9:1-6

— SENDING OUT *the* TWELVE —

*“Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”*

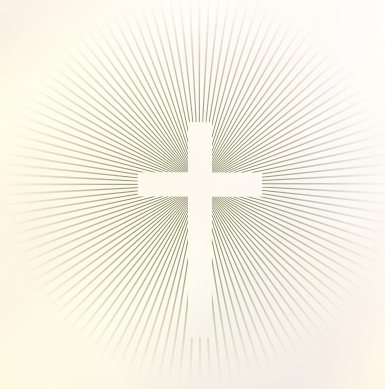
At this point in Jesus' ministry, it is time to spread his message faster and farther. Jesus commissions the twelve disciples to go to different towns while equipping them with power to heal and drive out demons, tools God will use to garner people's attention and authenticate the gospel message that they will preach. Mark 6:7 tells us they were sent in pairs, not alone, but this still had to be intimidating. Up until now, they have accompanied Jesus in a group, learning from him and helping him, but Jesus is telling them to take what they have learned and go do it. This takes faith on their part.

Not only are they going without their teacher, but he tells them not to take anything, to just go as they are. Jesus says, “Take nothing for your journey: no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic.” That would be today's equivalent to no snacks, credit card, clothes, or phone. Can you imagine? Again, Jesus is asking for faith and trust. This keeps his disciples from feeling self-sufficient or thinking that the power to do all they will do is coming from anyone but God. They need to travel light, pick up and move quickly, and involve each town's population by offering them the opportunity to extend hospitality, perhaps making them eager to hear more, or even choosing to spread the message themselves.

Lastly, the disciples were told to stay in only one home and, if not welcomed in a place, “as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” Staying in one home kept them from offending a host by moving to a more prestigious or comfortable place and from staying too long in a town. Shaking the dust from their feet was a cultural practice to show separation, normally done after passing through Gentile cities. But in this case, this action would reflect upon the Jewish towns that rejected the message and show that the disciples were not responsible for how the people responded. Jesus gave specific guidelines to carry out his plan. The twelve needed to obey, trust, and believe. We are called to follow their example.

*Lord Jesus, give me faith and trust that you will provide in all that you ask me to do.  
Amen.*

**NANCY PLOTTS**  
*Assistant to the Dean*  
*Truett Seminary*



MARCH 16 | MONDAY | READING: LUKE 10:17-24

## — THE KINGDOM *of* GOD HAS COME NEAR —

*“All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”*

My husband and I speak different native languages. At first, I could not understand when he spoke to his family. I listened to it as an outsider, so I started to learn his language. Eventually, I could pick up a word or two or get the general topic of the conversation. But even when I could not understand, the conversation always carried meaning. The conversations did not have meaning *to me* until I could understand the language. It had no meaning until it was revealed.

In today's verses, we see Jesus welcoming back the seventy disciples after commissioning them to go out into the harvest. In verse 22, Jesus tells the seventy that no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Jesus revealed himself to the seventy. They believed and preached faithfully that the kingdom of God had come near.

The kingdom of God has come near. *Come near*. As Jesus spoke to his laborers, it was a present reality that the kingdom of God had arrived. Jesus's "activity is not just approaching; it has come 'upon you.'"<sup>3</sup> Jesus is the revelation of God, and there is no other way to know the Father except through the Son. Said another way, there is no way to make sense of who God is without Jesus revealing himself to you through the Holy Spirit.

It is the work of the Spirit that allows us to know and understand Christ in the Word *and* as the Word. What is simply a religious text to some is the revelation of the Triune God to those blessed with the eyes to see what those who believe see. What was once meaningless is now the good news of the present and coming kingdom.

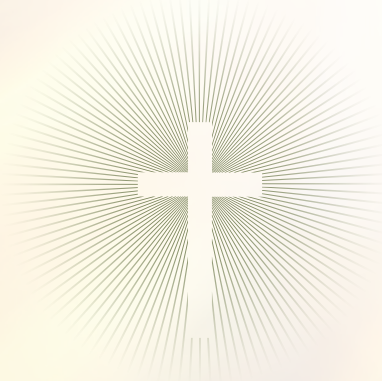
*Jesus, may I know and experience your nearness.  
May I have eyes to see and ears to hear. Amen.*

### **ABBY KEY MONCADA**

*Juris Doctor/Master of Divinity Student  
Irving, Texas*

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<sup>3</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1996), 292.



MARCH 17 | TUESDAY | READING: LUKE 10:25-37

— COMPASSION *for* PAIN —

*“But a Samaritan while traveling came upon him, and when he saw him he was moved with compassion.”*

Pain, whether our own or that of others, creates discomfort and often pushes us away from sitting with the discomfort. In our passage for today, we see this reality through a parable of Jesus. After a man was beaten and robbed, a priest and a Levite came upon this man at separate times, but each passed on by without much more than a glance. It was not until the Good Samaritan passed by that we see an important trait of the Christian life: compassion. The Good Samaritan not only moved toward the suffering man, but he allowed the pain of the other to draw out a compassionate response.

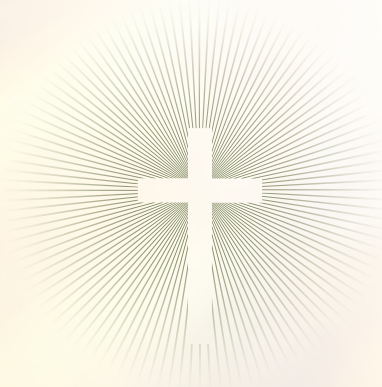
The response of the priest and Levite captures an unfortunate reality of our own experiences with pain and suffering, which is to shield ourselves from the pain by turning from it. We are taught that pain and emotion are a sign of weakness and must be avoided. Contrary to this cultural norm, we find throughout all four Gospels that Jesus’s response to those on the margins who experience discomfort was that *he was moved*. Despite the suffering he experienced during his earthly ministry, Jesus let the pain of others move him toward compassion. His own pain was not a barrier toward compassion. Rather, it moved him toward those in pain.

Jesus and the Good Samaritan’s response to pain captures an important counter-cultural lifestyle for the Christian: to move toward others, meet them, and show compassion in their pain. This progression is important. It reflects growth in ministering to those in pain. We begin with a movement toward the other. We may then embody a ministry of presence. We finally respond to them in their need, reflecting the compassion of Christ.

*Lord Jesus Christ, may the compassion of your heart radiate in and through me all the days of my life. Amen.*

**STEPHEN WEATHERMAN**

*Master of Arts in Theology and Sports Studies Student  
Waco, Texas*



MARCH 18 | WEDNESDAY | READING: LUKE 11:5-13

— SHAMELESS *and* BOLD IN PRAYER —

*“For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.”*

Have you ever felt like your prayer life is too formal and dry? Have you ever held back your words, wondering whether God truly cares or will respond? If so, there is good news!

In today’s passage, Jesus introduces a parable. His disciples have asked him how to pray. In Luke 11:1-4, he teaches them the Lord’s Prayer. Then, he tells a story. People in the Middle East sometimes traveled late at night to avoid the daytime heat, but knocking on someone’s door so late was considered a shameless disturbance.<sup>4</sup> The Greek word in verse eight, *anaideia* (ἀναιδεία), literally means shamelessness, impudence, or boldness.<sup>5</sup> Immediately after in verses nine to thirteen, Jesus continues by teaching us that our prayers should reflect this same kind of boldness. His commands to ask, seek, and knock are all in the present active imperative tense, which shows us that we are to pray boldly and consistently. Jesus concludes with reassurance that God listens, cares, and will never be malicious in answering us when we pray for the things we need which are according to his will.

God promises to hear and respond to our needs. And whatever the answer—yes, no, or wait—it comes to us like bread given to a child by a loving, kind father—not as a scorpion. God wants to be bothered by us! He invites us to ask for more of the Holy Spirit, and he is eager to give it to us this Lenten season. Three years ago, in a season of deep hopelessness, this passage met me at the very bottom. It opened the way to experiencing God’s transforming care in my life. May it do the same for you.

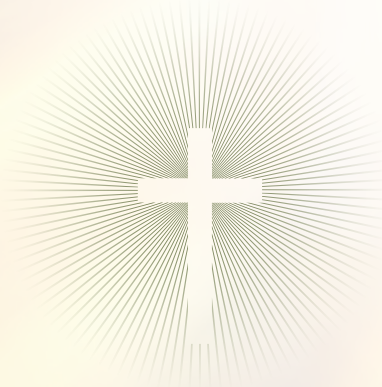
*Lord, help me approach you boldly and honestly in prayer. Fill me with your Spirit, guide me to your cross, and open my eyes to my sin and your glory. Amen.*

**IRENA-MIRIAM NVOTA**

Master of Divinity, Truett Seminary  
Bački Petrovac, Serbia

<sup>4</sup> JAMES R. EDWARDS, *The Gospel According to Luke*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (La Vergne: IVP, 2020), 448–49; Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, 4th ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 55.

<sup>5</sup> Bauer et al., *BDAG - A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 55.



MARCH 19 | THURSDAY | READING: LUKE 11:29-32

## — BECOMING *a* SIGN —

*“For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh,  
so the Son of Man will be to this generation.”*

Given especially to confirm, corroborate, or authenticate, a **sign** (in Greek σημεῖον, transliterated *sémeion*) emphasizes its end purpose, thereby exalting the one who gives it.<sup>6</sup>

In reading today’s passage, I asked myself what those surrounding Jesus were trying to corroborate. How many more signs did they need? If they were truly paying attention, seeing and listening to *him*—the sign, the Messiah, Emmanuel, “God with us,” the one who stood before their very eyes—surely they would have been convinced that no other proof was needed to authenticate the presence of God’s own Son!

From the announcement of his birth to his miraculous conception, from the proclamation of John the Baptist to the wonders Jesus performed, from the authority with which he spoke to the fulfillment of God’s Word through the prophets, everything pointed to a single truth: this was the Son of Man. Yet those around him kept asking for more.

Jesus’s answer was simple: “No sign will be given...except the sign of Jonah.” Another Old Testament example comes to mind: the queen of Sheba witnessed for herself that the reports of King Solomon’s wisdom and prosperity were true. In 1 Kings 10:1-13, King Solomon became a sign of God’s blessing to the queen.

The people of Nineveh were doomed to destruction because their wickedness had come to God’s attention. Jonah 3:4 records God’s message given through Jonah: “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” The people heard that message, believed God, repented, and proclaimed a fast. Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites.

Today’s generation is still asking for signs. Maybe the pressure to lead others towards belief and repentance feels like too much for some to carry. However, we can rest assured that one who is greater than us, Jesus, bears the necessary evidence of victory in his own body. We proclaim Christ. He is our message. God has commissioned his Church to be a sign to the world.

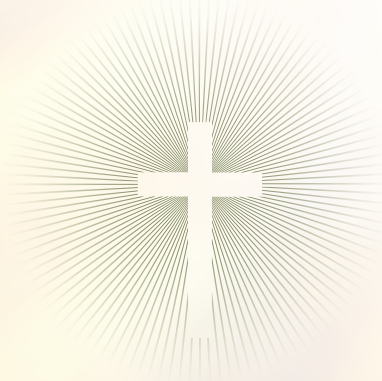
*God, may our prayers, witness, proclamation, and service to others become the sign  
that points others to believe, repent, and declare that Christ is Lord. Amen.*

### **IVÁN SANTIAGO**

*Master of Arts in Theology, Ecology, and Food Justice  
Waco, Texas*

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<sup>6</sup> “Strong’s Greek: 4592. Σημεῖον (Sémeion) -- Sign, Miracle, Token, Indication,” n.d., <https://biblehub.com/greek/4592.htm>.



MARCH 20 | FRIDAY | READING: LUKE 12:22-34

## — THE HUNT *for* TREASURE —

*“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you his kingdom.”*

The first image that comes to mind when I think of the word “treasure” is that of swashbuckling pirates unearthing a chest full of gold coins. While this image is not so much a modern interpretation of treasure, the manifestation of a buried chest provides the same connotation. Treasure is something that we hold dear to us, and we worry about its being taken away.

This hunt for treasure and the security it brings is what Jesus describes in his teaching to the disciples, and to us, in our passage today.

Jesus begins this passage by addressing his disciples and telling them not to worry. He frames this worry as being directed towards what they are to eat and drink. We worry about what we treasure. Jesus is pointing out that his disciples have treasured earthly possessions and status above that which holds eternal significance. When we hold onto earthly treasures too tightly, we begin to question whether God can truly provide for us, even despite our witnessing of God’s care for the ravens and lilies in our midst.

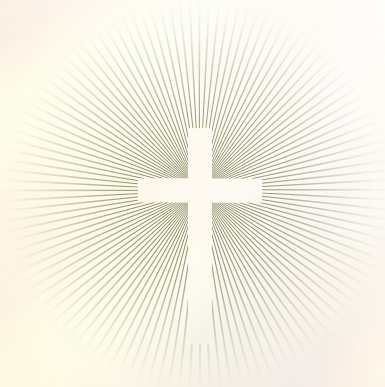
This must have been a contextual issue, right? Is Jesus also speaking to us?

Yes, he is. Jesus calls us, gently and intimately, as the Good Shepherd. He invites us out of worry and into a hunt for a new treasure, found through participation in his kingdom. He gives us this treasure freely and with delight, allowing us, his people, to set our hearts on things that are eternal.

The kingdom Jesus proclaims is characterized by a God who provides all that we need. Jesus also gives us an invitation, and a command, to extend radical provision. In the kingdom, worry about self has been replaced by a desire to provide for others in the same way God has provided for us. May we lean into this kingdom work during this Lenten season, reminded of the true treasure that is Christ.

*Lord, may we consider the ravens and the lilies in our own lives as evidence of your provision and sustenance. Open our eyes to the treasure of your kingdom that is found through love of you and neighbor. Amen.*

**HAYLEIGH SHADLE**  
*Master of Divinity Student  
Puyallup, Washington*



MARCH 21 | SATURDAY | READING: LUKE 13:1-9

## — REPENTANCE *is* URGENT BUSINESS —

*“He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”*

Repentance is regarded as one of the major themes of the Lenten season. If we are honest, we often view it as a distant, seasonal reminder or a posturing of the heart, rather than a very urgent and real response in which we are offered an opportunity to choose life over death.

What does it mean for us to have an imminent perspective on responding to the kindness of God with repentance?

In today’s passage, the parable of the barren fig tree is offered in response to two conversations that Jesus is having with those around him. First, Jesus directs attention to how we easily look at the things of this world and make judgments on what will happen next, yet we do not pay close attention to the action of God around us. Second, Jesus makes very firm statements concerning the need for repentance, no matter the quantity or quality of sinfulness, saying, “but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

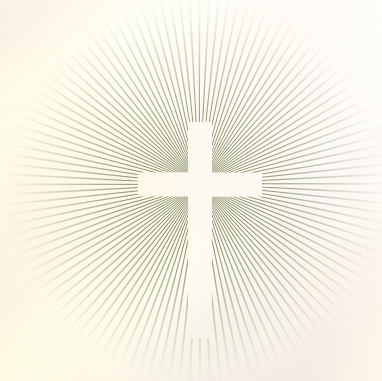
This parable tells us that God is gracious and longs to give us every opportunity to turn our lives towards him. Yet we live in a finite world with finite time. God’s grace does not run out, but our ability to respond does. This is the tension we carry during the season of Lent. As the days pass and we approach the cross of Good Friday and the empty tomb of Easter Sunday, repentance is necessary. Our opportunities are limited. Our passage reminds us that we are called to respond to Christ’s work of salvation. We do not know the time of our own end, and the time of judgment is coming.

This is sobering, and soberness of life is another theme of the Lenten season. We are reminded to take true stock of our life, our heart, and our souls. So accept this invitation: while we are being mindful, remember: “from dust you came, and to dust you shall return. So repent, and believe the Gospel!”

*Lord, stir in me the urgency of repentance, not out of fear but in faithful response to your kindness and grace, again, even today. Amen.*

**EVERETT WILSON**

*Master of Theological Studies Student  
Montgomery, Texas*



MARCH 22 | SUNDAY | READING: LUKE 13:31-35

— LAMENT *and* BLESSING —

*“Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.”*

Today’s passage begins with a stern warning. Some Pharisees tell Jesus to leave, or Herod will have him killed. And yet, Jesus remains steadfastly focused on his mission to cast out demons and perform miracles, bringing God’s restoration to a broken world. That “fox” Herod will not “outfox” Jesus. Nothing will deflect Jesus from his mission, because a prophet must perish in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem has always been the goal, and as Jesus “sets his face” towards Jerusalem, the reality of death is inevitable. Jesus’s suffering, while painful for him, will have even sadder consequences for Jerusalem. The city’s history, regrettably, is marked by the killing and stoning of messengers sent to it (2 Chronicles 24:20-21; Jeremiah 26:20-23).

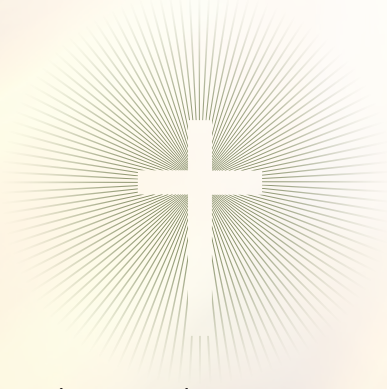
Jesus addresses his emotional lament to this city, which is marred by a bloodied past. Using the first person, he laments that God repeatedly wished to protect Jerusalem by gathering the city under his wings, much like a protective hen. But the city was unwilling. Jesus puts forth the figure of a hen to show God’s desire to care tenderly for Israel, if only they will come.

The lament is felt. Jerusalem is in peril. Its house stands forsaken. Israel will not see the Lord in promised blessing until they acknowledge as a nation, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” The possibility of a future day for Israel not involving judgment is left open, if they will respond. The Lenten season reminds us that without the blessing of knowing “the one who comes in the name of the Lord,” we will find ourselves in the same peril of judgment—like a house forsaken, like Jerusalem. The blessing of Jesus is ours. Choose the blessing over the lament!

*Jesus, I thank you that in our lament we found the blessing of salvation through you, as you gather us and sustain us through your kingdom work. Amen.*

**JOE RANGEL, PHD**

*Director of Truett Seminary in San Antonio  
Truett Seminary*



MARCH 23 | MONDAY | READING: LUKE 14:25-35

— MY CROSS, YOUR CROSS, OUR CROSS —

*“Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”*

Being a Christian and being a disciple of Christ can be totally different. Faithful following is a choice. We are presented with choices each day, always, and everywhere. We choose between good and bad, right and wrong, and do or do not. In the same way, each day, in each moment, and in all places, Jesus asks us with respect to the cross, “Pick up, or don’t pick up.”

In Luke 14, Jesus’s ministry has drawn increased attention. He is gaining fame for his miracles, healing, and teaching. The natural human tendency is to be interested in someone famous, something “viral.” In today’s passage, Jesus looks back and finds many people following him. Jesus has attracted a crowd.

As he looked upon the crowd, Jesus saw each person’s heart. He saw that they were concerned about their life. In the crowd, there were fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters. We tend to worry about our lives, such as what shall we eat, drink, or wear. Sometimes, we try to crack the code and follow Christ according to a different, easy route, one that is better suited to our comfort.

Sometimes we find ourselves going through the motions of being a Christian, going to church every Sunday, and keeping up appearances. At other times, we concern ourselves with other things. We seek ways of following Christ that come without picking up our cross. I tend to fail in this way, choosing against making a sacrifice and taking up my own cross.

Let’s stop pretending that following Jesus is always comfortable. Jesus does not say, “admire me” or “believe in me from a safe distance.” He calls us to die daily to ourselves. He calls us to lose our lives for his sake and for the sake of the gospel.

The call to die is an invitation to live, truly live. Carrying the cross is choosing obedience, even when it costs us reputation, security, relationships, control, and comfort. Christianity without the cross is empty. Discipleship without sacrifice is self-deception.

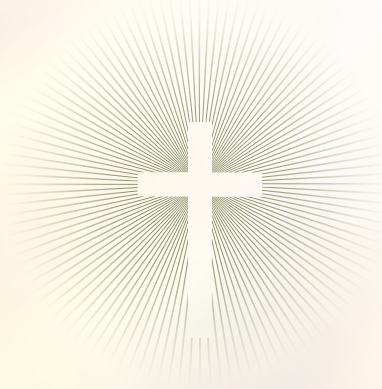
Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ. Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”

The question is not, “Do I believe in Jesus?” Rather, the real question is: “What am I refusing to lay down?”

*Jesus, I have heard you call to take up my cross and follow you. Help me to lay down what is comfortable, and to follow you in costly obedience. I trust that whatever is gained for your sake and for your kingdom will far surpass anything I leave behind. Amen.*

**MONDEKHUU TURMUNKH**

Master of Divinity Student  
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia



MARCH 24 | TUESDAY | READING: LUKE 15:11-32

## — THE COST *of* COMING HOME —

*“This Son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!”*

The Scripture today is not simply a story about moral failure and forgiveness. It is a story about death and resurrection, estrangement and restoration, and the disruptive grace of God.

The younger son’s request is more than impatience; it is a relational rupture. To ask for an inheritance early is to treat the father as though he were already dead. The son leaves home not only geographically but spiritually. When famine comes, his hunger reveals the truth: life apart from the Father is no life at all. His repentance begins not with pride, but with emptiness.

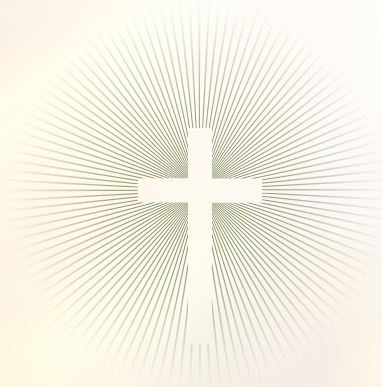
Yet the turning point of the parable does not occur when the son rehearses his confession. It occurs when the Father sees him “while he was still far off” (Luke 15:20). The Father’s running is an act of costly love. He bears public shame so that his son will not. Before the son can explain himself, the father restores him. The father names him “son,” clothes him with honor, and welcomes him back into life.

The older son’s struggle is quieter but just as serious. He has stayed home, but his heart is distant. He believes obedience earns reward, not relationship. His anger reveals a failure to understand grace, not only for his brother but for himself. The father’s words to him are tender and unsettling: “All that is mine is yours” (v. 31). The feast has always been available.

Jesus ends the parable without resolution because disciples must decide how to respond. Will we trust grace enough to receive it? Will we love others enough to rejoice when grace disrupts our sense of fairness?

*Merciful Father, raise us from death to life. Free us from earning what you freely give. Teach us to come home and welcome others home with joy. Amen.*

**WARREN CORNELL**  
*Master of Divinity Student*  
*Wauchula, Florida*



MARCH 25 | WEDNESDAY | READING: LUKE 16:19-31

— WHO'S AT MY GATE? —

*“But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things and Lazarus in like manner evil things, but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’”*

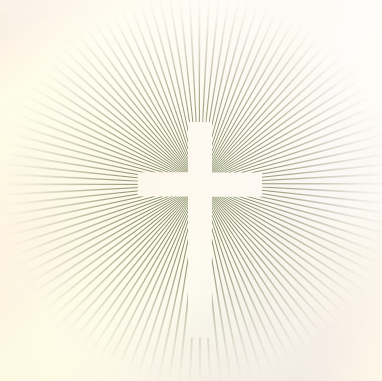
We often talk about justice as if it's mostly a matter of seeing— as if proximity to need, being able to perceive it, or passing it daily count as compassion. The rich man in today's parable doesn't harm Lazarus or commit some spectacular act of cruelty. His fate is set quietly, day after day, by unbothered habits, with no room left for Lazarus in a world already overflowing with material abundance. The line between the two, which later becomes the chasm between Abraham's bosom and Hades, is not a fence, wall, law, or feud. It's routine.

Every day, the rich man steps over Lazarus the same way many of us step over problems we know how to name but have never learned to interrupt. Over time, those who were once neighbors become background; what was once proximity becomes a partition. The chasm, when it appears, is abrupt but earned. It is the logical conclusion of what the rich man's unremarkable days have built.

Lent is a season of noticing what our habits have made of us. It stirs our noticing toward the places where routine shields us from discomfort and leaves us practicing indifference. Right now, the gate is still a gate and not yet a gulf. This parable ends, not with a clear call to charity, but with the ache of unfinished business, and the question now hanging in the air: “Who is waiting at my gate, and how long will I leave them there?”

*Papa Dios, help us retrain our attention so we no longer step over those you've placed near. Interrupt the routines that keep us insulated from what is real. Before the threshold becomes a chasm, grant us the courage to notice, to cross, and to respond as you would. Amen.*

**STEPH DE LA FE**  
*Master of Divinity Student*  
*Miami, Florida*



MARCH 26 | THURSDAY | READING: LUKE 17:11-19

## — THE BEAUTY *of* THE LORD —

*“Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus’s feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan.”*

In today’s reading, nine people who witnessed and experienced a miracle firsthand missed it. They missed the awe that should have come when Jesus miraculously healed them of leprosy. Maybe, they got caught up in living in their new reality—seeking the community they’d been cut off from for so long, doing things and going places they couldn’t previously do and go. Or maybe they just forgot to thank their healer.

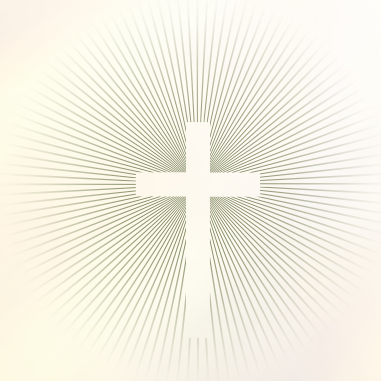
Whatever the case, just one man—a Samaritan—came back, cast himself at the feet of Jesus, and thanked him. Only one man was sufficiently filled with the awe of Jesus’s work that he said, “there is no place I would rather be right now than at the feet of Jesus.”

If you’re like me, perhaps you ashamedly identify with the nine and desperately wish you were more like the one. Many of us began our faith journey with awe and reverence for God, seeing the miraculous hand of God early on in our faith. Maybe that awe continued for a while, and we found ourselves frequently filled with wonder at the fact that an all-powerful God was broken for our good. But somewhere along the way, including (and perhaps especially) for “professional Christians,” that awe subsided in place of long to-do lists in preparation for Sunday services, or making sure the kids were dressed and ready to go for an Easter Sunday dinner. If you’re like me, you’re constantly seeking to return to that early state of awe and reverence. But how?

For the answer to that, we can look to the one who *was* filled with awe. As we seek to respond to the gift of the Lenten season, we can follow in the simple footsteps of the Samaritan, turning back and responding with humble reverence and with gratitude. That simple response is a gift pleasing to God.

*Holy Spirit, fill me with awe for the work of the Son on the cross, and lead me to his feet this Lenten season. Amen.*

**KYLE PERRY**  
*Master of Divinity Student*  
*Eatonville, Washington*



MARCH 27 | FRIDAY | READING: LUKE 18:9-14

## — HUMILITY MAKES ROOM —

*“Jesus concludes... “I tell you; this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”*

In Jesus’s parable, two people enter the temple to pray, but only one of them truly prays. The Pharisee’s words sound faithful: fasting, giving, and obedience; yet the posture beneath the words is pride. The prayer is less an offering to God and more a self-audit spoken aloud. Even gratitude becomes a spotlight: *“Thank you that I am not like other people.”* Pride rarely announces itself as pride; it often dresses as spiritual maturity while quietly feeding on comparison. It can slip in easily, when sacrifice turns into scorekeeping, when a person measures holiness by what they gave up, or by how disciplined they look.

The tax collector’s prayer is filled with humility. He stands at a distance, eyes lowered, and speaks with earnestness: “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” There is no performance or pride. There is simply truth and reverence. Earnest prayer is not polished; it is honest. It does not exaggerate goodness or hide need. It brings the whole self into God’s presence, trusting that God already sees and still receives.

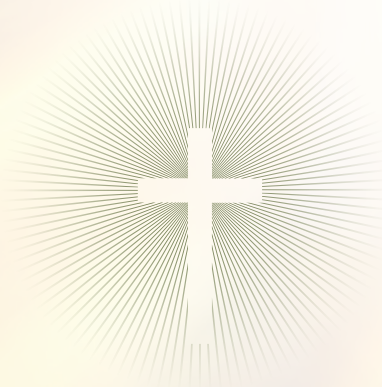
Jesus says the tax collector goes home “justified,” set right with God. Grace meets humility, not because humility earns grace, but because humility makes room for it. Pride grips tightly—control, image, superiority—while humility opens the hands. Pride keeps us curving inward, defending our résumé; humility turns us outward, surrendering our story.

Let this Lenten season offer moments of releasing the need to be impressive, the need to be right, the need to be above someone else. If we listen closely, the “nugget” in the last verse is this: God is not moved by our spiritual accomplishments as much as God is honored by our dependence. We must allow ourselves to be “justified” by Christ, trading comparison for confession. The point is not self-contempt; it is self-truth. And self-truth is where grace begins its work.

*Lord Jesus, form in each heart a humble and earnest spirit that receives your grace and lets go of pride. Amen.*

### **L. MEISCHELLE DILLARD**

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MARCH 28 | SATURDAY | READING: LUKE 19:1-10

— SEEN *and* SAVED —

*“For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”*

Yesterday’s theme of faith and restoration continues today as Jesus meets Zacchaeus while passing through the “City of Palms” (Deut. 34:3). Jericho, the world’s oldest inhabited city, is steeped in Jewish history. By Jesus’s day, Herod had made it a place of luxury for the powerful, while the Jewish people lived under Roman oppression. In this setting of magnificence and hardship, Jesus calls Zacchaeus and offers spiritual restoration.

Luke’s attention to detail draws us into the scene: Jesus and his disciples, a crowd, Zacchaeus– the “chief tax collector,” and a sycamore fig tree. We might imagine ourselves in the crowd, resentful of injustices, or we may identify with Zacchaeus–curious, guilty, and hopeful.

From Genesis to Revelation, God uses trees to reveal truth. In this story, *Ficus sycomorus*–an ancient, domesticated tree known to live for centuries–carried deep meaning in Israel’s tradition. It symbolized God’s provision and national peace (1 Kings 4:25; Micah 4:4) and served as a metaphor for Israel’s spiritual condition (Jeremiah 24). Standing beneath such a tree reminds us that our lives belong to a much larger story. Its fruit was a staple for the poor, making this humble tree a fitting place for Zacchaeus’s undignified act of running and climbing. His humility invites us to ask: *What are we willing to do to see Jesus?*

When Jesus sees Zacchaeus, he calls him by name and invites himself to his home. Zacchaeus responds immediately with action, pledging to give to the poor and restore what he had taken fourfold. *Is our response to Jesus’s call immediate and our repentance evident?*

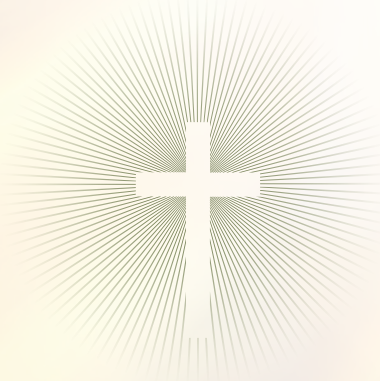
The crowd murmurs with indignation, but Jesus responds with the heart of the Gospel: he came “to seek out and to save the lost.” *Do we believe that God’s love extends to us and to the whole sinful world?*

The story of love and salvation continues tomorrow as Jesus begins his 15-mile uphill journey to Jerusalem, stopping in an olive grove to prepare for his Triumphal Entry.

*Lord Jesus, help me to welcome you today with a heart ready for change and a life that bears the fruit of repentance. Amen.*

**TAMMY ADAIR, PHD**

*Senior Lecturer; Department of Biology  
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Master of Theology, Ecology, and Food Justice Student  
Truett Seminary*



MARCH 29 | PALM SUNDAY | READING: LUKE 19:28-40

— THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY —

*“Blessed is the king  
who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven,  
and glory in the highest heaven!”*

Today is Palm Sunday—the moment Jesus makes his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. Yet, instead of being received as King, Luke emphasizes that Jesus is rejected. Not everyone rejoices at His “Solomon-like” entrance; rather, Jesus is perceived as a threat to both the religious leaders and Rome. Perhaps there are moments in our own lives when we refuse to honor Jesus as King.

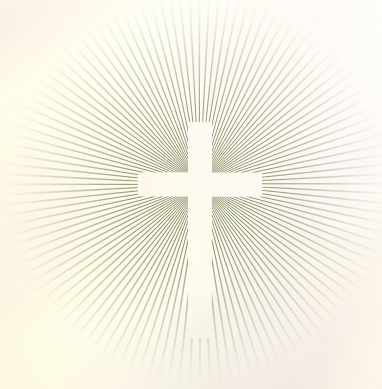
In this passage, Jesus instructs his disciples to go into a village, find an unridden colt tied there, and bring it to him. In that culture, dignitaries—and even rabbis—had the right to use property for personal purposes, so this was not an unusual request. The image of Jesus riding on a colt brings to mind Zechariah 9:9 and evokes the royalty of Solomon. Yet Jesus chooses a humble animal, demonstrating that this Messiah embodies service and humility.

In verse thirty-seven, Luke shifts the focus from Jesus to the people—the “multitude of disciples.” The crowd rejoices and praises God, while the Pharisees are irritated by this public display. On this Palm Sunday, the question remains: **Who are we in this story?** In a polarized world that often vilifies, defames, and maligns those who are different, can we stand with the multitude and proclaim, “*Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!*”?

For Luke, this is a Heaven-and-Earth-shaking event, and Jesus gets the last word: “*If these should keep silent, the stones would cry out.*” Our world desperately needs the light and resurrecting power of Jesus Christ. As we celebrate his triumphal arrival in our lives, let us be among those who shout and rejoice in the King who came—and will come again. May we never allow the stones to cry out in our place.

*Lord, let me receive you, not reject you. May I not only call you King but be found faithful as your servant. Amen.*

**KENNETH MCNEIL, DMIN**  
*Director of Ministry Connections  
Truett Seminary*



MARCH 30 | MONDAY | READING: LUKE 20:27-40

## — THE RESURRECTION RIDDLE —

*“Now he is God not of the dead but of the living, for to him all of them are alive.”*

At long last, the promised King had entered into Jerusalem! But not everyone was eager to join the parade.

Following the Triumphal Entry comes a barrage of challenges to the authority of Jesus by various religious leaders. In one such encounter, a gaggle of Sadducees ('sad, you see,' because they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead) cornered Jesus and posed to him the following theological riddle:

If the law required that a childless widow was to marry her brother-in-law to perpetuate the family name (see Deuteronomy 25:5-6), and if the dead really would be resurrected, what would happen if seven brothers took this duty seriously, each marrying their brother's widow 'til death did them part?

Talk about an awkward family reunion!

The Sadducees thought that they had finally stumped him, but Jesus cut through the Gordian Knot with ease. None of the seven brothers will be the woman's husband, for 'til death do us part would no longer apply.

Had Jesus stopped here, he would have fully answered the question at hand. And yet, as he so often does, Jesus goes on to answer the question-behind-the-question, unpacking why the resurrection of the dead is not an optional idea for believers in the God of Israel.

When you think about resurrection, what comes to mind? Fear? Doubt? Anticipation? Though we might not deny bodily resurrection like the Sadducees, the daily grind can distract us from this resurrection reality. Thus, Lent is the perfect time to contemplate afresh the resurrection.

In Christ, we can have confidence that death is not the end of our story and that we can be “dressed in his righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne!”<sup>7</sup>

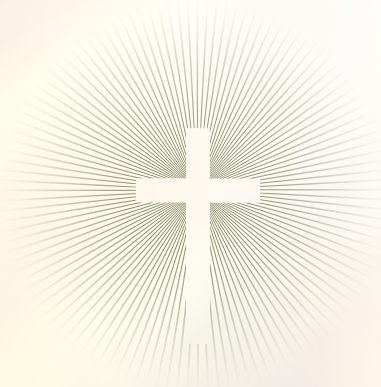
*O God of the living, as we anticipate celebrating your Son's resurrection, remind us of our own impending resurrection and, by your grace, help us to live this day in light of that day. Amen.*

**RYKER LUTJENS**

*Master of Divinity Student  
Colorado Springs, Colorado*

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<sup>7</sup> Edward Mote, “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less.”



MARCH 31 | TUESDAY | READING: LUKE 21:1-4

## — THE SMALLEST GREATEST GIFT —

*“He said, ‘Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; ... she, out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.’”*

Often in Scripture Jesus reminds us to focus on heavenly truth. In the verses just prior to today’s reading, our Lord warned people against pride that struts in fancy robes and devours widows’ homes. Self-righteousness oppresses those who appear undeserving.

In Luke 21:1-4, Jesus looked up and saw gifts being placed in the receptacle in the Temple forecourt, where people gave free will offerings. Imagine the contrast between a powerless widow and wealthy people approaching this offering box. In a priceless teaching moment, Jesus drew attention to the two small copper coins given by the widow, probably worth 1/64 of that day’s working wage.

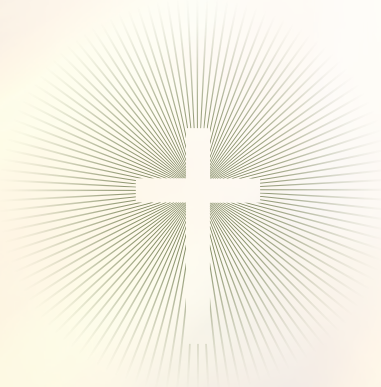
This reminds me of another story of a widow, found in 1 Kings 17. This widow baked her last loaf of bread for the prophet Elijah because he promised the Lord would provide for her. Likewise, the widow in today’s passage gave all she had. The wealthy gave what they would not miss, whereas she gave out of dependence on, and gratitude for, the Lord.

How do I measure my gifts to the Church? Do I carefully calculate *just* a tithe, so I can still make ends meet? Do I cheerfully and joyfully give time, talent, and money, trusting that I cannot out-give God’s provision? Finally, is my trust in myself to meet my needs, or in my Loving Father?

Truly, there have been times I could answer “yes” to each. Chances are, you have been there also. May God transform our minds and deepen our faith during this Holy Week, that we will completely trust him with all that we have. May we realize our abundance of blessings and become generous with our gifts.

*Jesus, lead us to depend on you alone to meet our needs,  
possessing humble hearts to give. Amen.*

**TRACEY THOMAS**  
*Master of Divinity Student*  
*Early, Texas*



APRIL 1 | WEDNESDAY | READING: LUKE 22:1-6

## — WHAT ARE WE WATCHING FOR? —

*“Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve... and [he] began to look for an opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd was present.”*

Jesus taught the people in the Temple to be watchful, to guard their hearts against the dissipation, drunkenness, and worries of this life that lead us astray (Luke 21:34-36), to guard against the corruption of our minds and the division of our attention and desires. Jesus instructs the people to watch their hearts so they may stand before the Lord.

Then, Luke changes the scene. We see the scribes, chief priests, and Judas. These are people who failed to guard against the corruption of their heart and mind. The scribes and Pharisees want to kill Jesus as a political leader, and Judas has been led astray by the promise of money. They were each corrupt in mind and heart.

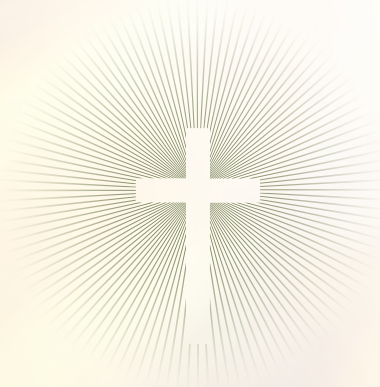
Watchfulness is a tool for the righteous and the wicked. Jesus instructs us to be watchful of our heart and mind, while the enemy is watchful for opportunities to deceive. Deception leads to the corruption of our attention, where we will watch for the wrong things.

Judas did not heed the warning given by Jesus to guard his heart. Because of this, “Satan entered into Judas.” Satan is deceptive and destructive, and because Judas did not listen to Jesus’s instructions, he got caught up in a cosmic, spiritual battle. In his corruption, Judas begins looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus. This too is watchfulness.

This is our instruction: Be watchful over the content of our heart. What in this world entices your attention, takes over your mind, and causes you to worry? We would be wise to learn from the tragic deception of Judas. Judas was not watchful against the corruption of his heart. Proximity to Jesus did not guarantee protection from deception. We guard our hearts through prayer as we align our hearts to Jesus. We must “Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things” (Luke 21:36).

*Lord, we ask that you would form in us a posture of watchfulness so we can guard our hearts against the worries of life. Amen.*

**GRACE SWARTLEY**  
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APRIL 2 | MAUNDY THURSDAY | READING: LUKE 22:7-23

— EAT *and* REMEMBER —

*“He said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.’”*

On his way to the cross and before his resurrection, Jesus eats the Passover meal with his disciples. For the Jew, this meal was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which commemorated God’s deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt. Yet, from this point onward, it would be a celebration of God’s deliverance of humanity from the bondage of sin and death. And it would be more than a remembrance for Israel but for people of every tongue, tribe, and nation.

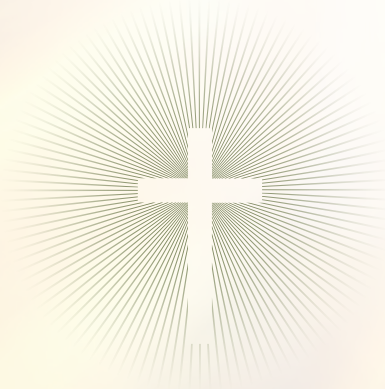
Though Jesus knows his suffering and death are imminent, he eagerly desires to eat this meal, as it shows exactly why he came into the world. It points to the pouring out of his blood and the giving of his body for the salvation of humanity. The Lord’s Supper is a vivid witness of God’s salvation. Jesus also desires that this meal be more than a memorial of the past but also a current and living witness. We join the disciples and those throughout the ages who take this meal as a reminder of Jesus’s sacrifice and as a proclamation of his death to the world (1 Cor 11:26). In our eating and drinking, we bear witness of our own deliverance from Satan and sin.

As modern disciples who live in a world of hype and distraction, we desperately need to eat this meal and remember Jesus’s sacrifice for our sins and our deliverance from Satan. We can so easily forget the power of Jesus’s death and the depth of his love for us.

*Jesus, as we eat this holy meal with you and each other, help us to recall with our eyes, hands, and mouths that you suffered for us and love us completely. Amen.*

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*Professor and Holder of the M. C. Shook Chair in Christian Missions  
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APRIL 3 | GOOD FRIDAY | READING: LUKE 23:26-49

## — FOLLOWING JESUS —

*“A great number of the people followed him.”*

The climax of Luke’s Passion narrative is full of people. Jesus is, of course, the main character—the absolute focus of the story. The only begotten, innocent Son of God is willingly submitting to humiliation, torture, and death for the sake of a sinful world.

Jesus is the focus of the gospel story, but Jesus himself is focused on the people: those weeping for him, those killing him, and those dying with him. It would have been so easy for Jesus to turn inward and direct all of his attention to the effort necessary for each agonizing step toward The Place of the Skull, to the human feelings of fear and suffering he was experiencing, or to the comfort of his own prayerful dialogue with the Father. Instead, Jesus turned outward—to the people around him. He had compassion for his female disciples who mourned him, he forgave the leaders and soldiers who denigrated him, and he extended grace to the criminal who recognized the justice of his own condemnation.

Jesus’s death on that cross—along with his resurrection and exaltation as Lord and God—accomplished something that we could never accomplish for ourselves. Jesus loves us, and that is what saves us.

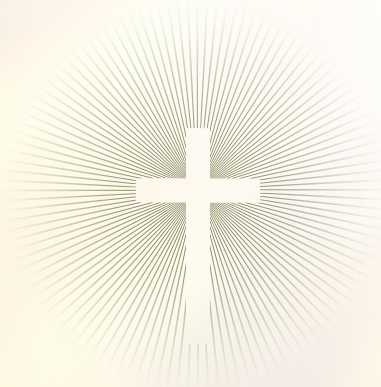
At the same time, Jesus’s Passion sets us an example to follow. Like Simon of Cyrene, we are called to take up our crosses and follow behind Jesus. It would be easy for us to focus on the challenges of our lives with Christ—on our suffering, our losses, our own spiritual health. Following Jesus, however, means focusing on the people around us. How can we love them—the ones who love us *and* the ones who harm us—the way that Jesus loves us?

Jesus’s death on that cross should inspire in us tremendous gratitude, but it should also prompt us to respond. As Jesus has loved us, let us love one another.

*Holy God, may we remember your love for us and may we, through the power of your Holy Spirit, follow you as we seek to love others in the same way.  
In the name of Jesus, Amen.*

**REBECCA POE HAYS, PHD**

*Associate Professor of Christian Scriptures  
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APRIL 4 | HOLY SATURDAY | READING: LUKE 23:50-56

## — CHRIST *is* CRUCIFIED. NOW WHAT? —

*“On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.”*

Holy Saturday is the “odd man out” of Holy Week. Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. Each day has its unique worship service that moves us through the sacred time of redemption.

We have no such worship service on Holy Saturday. The day begins and ends with no call to gather. Holy Saturday leaves us to ourselves to ponder the death of Jesus. We can do little else. Christ is crucified. How shall we respond?

The text has a host of responses. The centurion praises God, declaring Jesus to be a “righteous man.” The crowds beat their breasts in mourning. The faithful women simply stand at a distance and watch. Our Western minds yearn for a completable task like Joseph of Arimathea’s “real job” of taking Jesus off the cross and burying him in his own tomb. We want anything to keep us from being alone with the weight of the crucifixion. The women try to prepare to anoint Jesus’s body appropriately, but the Jewish Sabbath stops them.

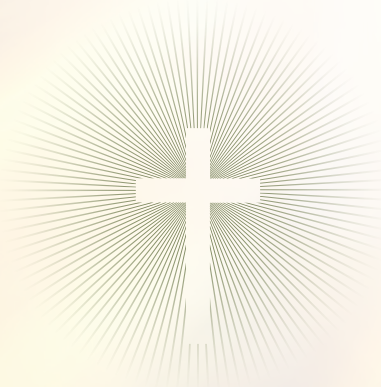
Holy Saturday stops us, too. Christ is crucified. There is nothing to do but ponder. We are torn. Do we praise God for his salvation? Do we beat our breast and mourn? Do we stand and watch, not at all sure what we ought to do—caught between praise and penance?

We are told Joseph is waiting for the Kingdom of God as he buries Jesus on “Preparation Day.” Even in action Joseph waits. He helps us understand our lonely task. As we vacillate between bold thankfulness and languishing lament, we reach the end of our reason and our strength. We are reminded that all we can do is wait with Joseph in hope for the Kingdom as we rightly teeter on the edge of grief and joy in our weakness.

*Lord Jesus, thank you that as Holy Saturday brings us to the end of ourselves, our weakness readies us for your resurrection. Amen.*

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APRIL 5 | EASTER SUNDAY | READING: LUKE 24:1-12

## — FAITHFUL, YET FORGETFUL —

*“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”*

During the Lenten Season, we journeyed together through the third and the longest canonical Gospel, the Gospel according to Luke. Then, on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, we read and reflected upon Luke’s account of Jesus’ crucifixion and burial. Now, today, on Easter Sunday, let us be led by Luke with “the women” to the tomb in which Jesus’ body was laid by Joseph of Arimathea, a tomb “in which no one had previously been laid” (Luke 24:53).

Luke recounts that it was on the first day of the week (i.e., Sunday), very early in the morning, when “the women” carrying spices and perfumes came to the tomb where Jesus had been laid on that harrowing Friday evening, a mere day and a half earlier (v. 1; cf. Luke 23:56). “The women” in view are spoken of more fully in v. 10. Seemingly, these are at least some of the same women who accompanied Jesus over the sweep of his earthly ministry (8:1-3) and who stuck with him to the grisly end, mourning and wailing along the way (23:26-31).

Upon arrival at the tomb, they found that the stone had been rolled away, but they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus (24:2-3). Their perplexity at this discovery gives way to unbridled fear when “two men in dazzling clothes” suddenly appear (24:4-5a). The two men not only appear to the women out of nowhere, but they also speak to the women. They ask them a probing, leading question, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” (24:5b).

On the heels of this question, they declare, “He is not here, but is risen!” (24:6a). Furthermore, these men call upon the women to remember that Jesus had spoken regularly (since the time they were together in Galilee) about that which had recently transpired before their very eyes. If unprecedented, Jesus’ arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection should not have been unanticipated (24:6b-7).

Subsequently, Luke reports that the women went and told the Eleven and “all the others” what they had seen and heard. With the partial exception of Peter, however, their words, which were received and regarded as “an idle tale,” fell on deaf ears and hard hearts (24:9-12).

In concluding this devotional, we will do well to note and to linger upon the five words (in both Greek and English) that comprise 24:8, lest they fall through the textual cracks. Between the two men speaking and the women returning home from the tomb, Luke adds, “Then they remembered his words.” Their recollection of Jesus’ words amid their sorrow and shock gave them both the ability and capacity to continue to follow and to be faithful to the one who was faithful unto death and who was raised—and lives—by the power of God (see 2 Corinthians 13:4). This Easter may we also remember and rejoice in “this Jesus God raised up” (Acts 2:32).

*Our all-loving and all-powerful God, we are so grateful on this Easter Sunday morning that you did not allow your Holy One to undergo decay (Acts 2:27, 31) and that you continue by the power of the Holy Spirit to give us life, both in the here and the hereafter, through the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25), even Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

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