

Lent 2013



Meditations

Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church - Dallas Texas

**ADULT FORMATION**



Daily Lessons are from Year 1  
Sundays are from Revised Common Lectionary Year C

Dear People of Saint Michael and All Angels and Friends,

Lent, modeled after Jesus' forty days in the wilderness, is a time in which we are invited to make a more direct approach to God. By confession, study, worship, service and giving, we make our approach more resolute, honest and transformative.

The black smudge cross on Ash Wednesday begins the journey. Self-examination, reflection and prayer are intended to be the tools along the way toward Calvary and beyond to resurrection. I think it is safe to say that Christians need never fear the commercialization of Lent. Hallmark will never issue greeting cards with the word "REPENTANCE" emblazoned across the top. Shopkeepers will not dress their windows in sackcloth and ashes. There is no apparent danger that sacrifice will ever catch on with the culture at large, especially since it doesn't even sell very well in the church.

In my last year of seminary, at the start of a final exam on the Gospels with famous Professor Reginald Fuller, one young man in my class set out on his desk a devotional card. It simply read, "Travel Light, Prepare Well, Think Deeply, Love Broadly, and Rely on Grace." Dr. Fuller read it, liked it, and, with permission of the student, set it on the front lectern for all to see.

I invite you to see these sacred notes in the same way -- to publicly and privately alter our regular pattern, enabling us to live the Christian life and not merely observe it.

Have a sacred journey to Easter.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bob Dannals". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Robert S. Dannals  
Rector

February 13, Ash Wednesday

By: **Bob Dannals**

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 Psalm 103:8-14 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10 Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

"Oh Lord, make me humble in every way."

There's a classic country song that begins, "Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble, when you're perfect in every way." It is hard to be humble! Even those of us who constantly run ourselves down are guilty of the pride that says, "I, more than God and my neighbors, know what I'm really worth."

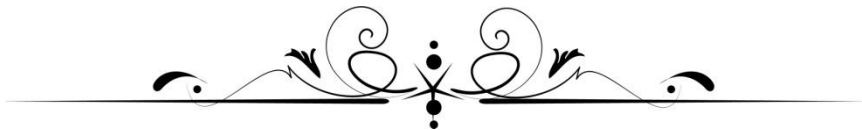
How often our pride gets the best of us, without our even realizing it. We are prideful every time we judge another person, every time we think our way is the only way, every time we puff ourselves up and proclaim the gospel according to Bob or Mary or Dave or Betty -- or anyone else. When we kneel and receive ashes, we're saying we want to try and give all that up.

But how? The prophet Joel said it this way: "Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing." In other words, make your humility more than skin deep.

Jesus said, "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them." In other words, make your humility more than just a photo op.

The Christian martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer summed up our war against pride like this: "It is necessary to hide our own righteousness, even from ourselves."

Today, we gather as a community around the altar of ashes, reminding us of our own mortal nature and how we desperately need God. We pray that the ashes mark, right between our eyes, will enable us to see our own pridefulness in a new way. To see that we all will be humbled in the end, and that by God's self-giving love we may have new visions of serving God and God's world.



February 14, Thursday After Ash Wednesday

By: **Kalita Blessing**

Deuteronomy 7:6-11 [Psalm 37:1-18](#) Titus 1:1-16 John 1:29-34

In Psalm 37, the psalmist addresses the problem of good and evil. Why do bad things happen to good people? We witness “evil” everyday in our world.

Just before Christmas, a dear long-time colleague of mine suddenly learned on a Friday that she had a large tumor on her brain. She underwent surgery the following Tuesday. The tumor was determined to be cancerous. Her life has been forever changed in a matter of days. Through it all, she continues to smile that beautiful smile and appears to be upbeat about her future. Her faith is strong.

I, on the other hand, want to “fix” the situation. I want to find the best medical doctor team for her situation. I want to be sure that the medical team has uncovered everything they can, etc. Why can I not let it be and trust that she is in God’s hands? She has!

“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him.”

How very easy to say these words, and so very hard, to live them out, indeed!! It is all about trust, is it not? It is all about trusting that with grace, God will prevail and transcend the evil we perceive.

In this world of sound bites, short video clips and endless interruptions, it becomes increasingly harder to be still and to be patient. However, I would say that it is now ever more imperative to find that time to be still and to live into God’s grace.

Perhaps this will be the discipline I focus on this Lent.

***“Take time each day to gaze. Sit on your porch. Take time to savor what is now in your life, today. Pray and practice today the living and enjoying of your life in every way you can, especially given what you cannot change.”***

***-Br. Curtis Almquist [Society of Saint John the Evangelist](#)***



February 15, Friday After Ash Wednesday

By: **Connie Webb**

Deuteronomy 7:12-16 Psalms 95 & 31 Titus 2:1-15 John 1:35-42

When I was in the third grade, we kept a small flock of sheep on our farm in Arkansas. In my memory are their bleating, kind eyes, constant chewing and the musty smell of their wool, particularly strong after a rain. They were not aggressive creatures, but their solid bodies were so low to the ground that, as a little girl, I had to watch out that they might unintentionally bump up against me and push me over.

My sweet friends greeted me when I came to visit (or, I imagined they did!) and certainly, as a flock, they listened for my father's voice whenever he came to care for them.

One day after school, I went down to the pasture to see my woolly friends. No bleating in the air as I approached - something seemed wrong. And it was. Several large dogs were roaming loose and got into the pasture with the sheep. The dogs' instincts had prevailed and my friends were no more.

The only defensive mechanism sheep have is to move together against a threat. If they were looking for my father to help them - he was away at work. As painful as it all was, there was no fault to be found. That day, I learned an invaluable lesson.

Bad things happen. They just do. How best, then, are we humans to live with no real control over our lives? The same as my sweet flock - stay in community for good or for ill and instinctively know that lives are most abundant when lived intentionally toward the common good.

Today, we are to harken to the voice of our Creator who instructs us in those ways.

***And, always and ever, be grateful for all that is well and good. Shalom.***



February 16, Saturday After Ash Wednesday

By: Michael Dangelo

Deuteronomy 7:17-26 Psalm 30, 32 Titus 3:1-15 John 1:43-51

## Prayer and Work

Prayer takes many forms. We tend to think about prayer as the thing we do in Church every week, or the thing we do when looking for a parking spot at Kroger. Generally, prayer has defined contexts within which it makes sense: church, stress, or joy. But why don't we tend to think of the mundane day-to-day as a place for refreshing prayer? What within us keeps our prayer locked within the walls of expected places?

One of the great traditions of Christian discipleship has been the monastic vocation. Monks leave the world and live in closed communities gathering to dedicate themselves to the work of prayer. From the outside a monastic life spent in prayer may seem either luxurious or even frivolous. But one must look more deeply at the lives of the monastic in order to understand a deeper truth that waits behind monastery walls.

Monks work. The monastic life is not a life of ecstatic prayer removed from the day-to-day concern of regular mortals. Though the monastic life is gathered around the regimented hours of prayer, the monk finds himself about the business of daily living. There are meals to cook, dishes to wash, fields to tend and repairs to be made. In order to keep the community vibrant and alive, monks engage in all sorts of diverse work from care-taking to income creating. Those monks whom I admire most (the brewer monks of the Trappist communities) work hard to sell their beer to area taverns as a way to provide their brothers with income for food and study. Monks (from the least to the greatest) work within the context of their monastic communities to make those communities vibrant and alive.

What monks do with that work, however, is quite remarkable. For the monk, work becomes prayer. In the making, tilling, washing, drying, fixing and even brewing, the monk finds a rhythm that allows him time to consider God. Every action of work becomes service and that service becomes an offering of praise to God. Every detail, no matter how mundane and rote, becomes an offering to the work of God in the world. The monk's work becomes God's work, and God's work brings the Kingdom into being. The monk transforms his world through prayerful work, and the monk is in turn transformed. Work becomes prayer, and prayer brings the monk closer to God's refreshing presence. Their work becomes prayer, and their prayer changes their world.

While few are called into the cloister of monastic life, all Christians are called to pray. We often feel weighed down by the work we do in the world whether it's teaching, selling, planning, building, forecasting or engineering. We come to church on Sunday to leave our work behind and pray for refreshment. Like the monk though, every form of daily work can become a vehicle of refreshing prayer. Every patient you talk to, every student you guide, or every nail you hammer can become a prayerful offering to God that brings the soul into a better and deeper understanding of God. When our work becomes prayer, that prayer transcends our preconceived contexts for it.

As you continue in your Lenten journey and prepare for the coming of Easter, may your work become a prayerful offering to God for the world He loves and for which He died. May your work become prayer, and may your prayer change your world.

February 17, First Sunday of Lent

By: **Celise Stephenson**

Deuteronomy 26:1-11 Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16 Romans 10:8b-13 Luke 4:1-13

I have seen the devil and lived to tell the tale, although it was years before I recognized him. When I met him, I didn't shake or quake or run away. Instead, my heart skipped a beat. He was good-looking. More than that, he was erotic, exotic, hypnotic and seductive. He was mesmerizing. He was everything I ever wanted. I got the vapors. I stopped eating and sleeping and going to church. I lived on his scent, his perfume in my blood. I walked, I talked, I went to school, but my soul blacked out, drunk on the wine of his poison. I was a fly – half alive, half wrapped – in his web, still buzzing now and then. Satisfied, he left me for a while, to return at an opportune time.

I don't mean to liken myself to Christ the Savior, but rather to mine my darkest heart for nuggets of insight, for meaning, for hope.

When Jesus began his journey into the wilderness to face his temptation, he was full of the Holy Spirit, having just come from the Jordan River where he was baptized. When I began my journey away from home, I was anxious to be free of parental constraints, free to step outside the faithful churchgoing regimen of my old foggy parents. I was full of my desire to be grown, to run my own life, to avoid being perceived as naïve, gullible, or innocent, and to hide from my small town background. I was full of fear.

Jesus ate nothing at all during those days and he was famished. He was tempted to turn stone into bread. I fattened on earthly delights, but ate little or none of the bread of life, and my soul hollowed and starved.

Jesus was tempted to reign in power over earthly kingdoms, not just one, but all of them. He declined. I rocked and rolled with the in crowd, stayed up all night. I was famous. To myself.

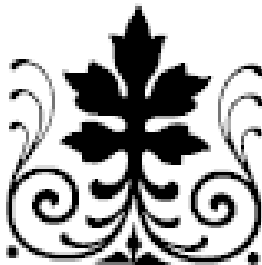
For reasons I cannot understand, Jesus was tempted to throw himself from the top of the temple to show that angels would protect him from certain death. I became over time so sad, so lost, so alone and so tired, that I no longer wished to live. Was Jesus this tired at his last temptation? Was this another appeal to vanity, or a sly soft-spoken acknowledgement of his exhaustion? Did the devil say to him, "There is no room for you here. Come to the other side. Cross over. There is room eternal over here." What a relief to let go. However it happened, Jesus turned his back on the offer. However it happened, I ended up alone in the local Wendy's eating salad at 2:00 am. It was a terrible salad, but it was a life thing, wilted, pedestrian, and so un-famous, so Nazarene.

Jesus was detached. He was in this world, but not of this world. He had freedom from self-interest. I, on the other hand, awaken each day with a multitude of self-interests. I am heavily attached to any number of things. Caroline Myss describes our attachments as substitutes for a relationship with God.

My television is seductive with its jumping pixels of mesmerizing light, while God sits abandoned in a pile of dirty laundry. My cocktail is comforting, while God slaves over a hot stove using my husband's hands to stir the pot. My computer is entertaining, while God waits patiently in my young son's mind ready to tell the story of his day's events.

You have seen the same devil. You recognize him. He is the thing that you did not then, or cannot now, or will not later resist. He comes in many forms, whichever is most seductive at the moment. We resist today, despite knowing that he will come again at an opportune time. We may fall, but we do not cower, because we know that through God's grace these encounters serve to enlighten us, to deepen our compassion, to broaden our shoulders, so that we return home stronger and wiser and more humble than when we left.

*As I finished this writing, I was pleased with how it turned out, smug even, and relieved to be done with it. I plopped into my comfy chair, propped up my feet, and clicked on the news. My self-satisfaction vanished in an instant. Twenty little children were murdered today in their classrooms in Newtown, Connecticut, by a man who was barely past childhood himself. I am numb. When one of us falls, we all fall. I cannot understand this horrific loss, this senseless sweeping away of innocence. My words, which I chose so carefully, have now drawn shallow, contrived, cartoonish. I know nothing of pain. I know nothing of anguish. I know nothing of the depths of the chasm of terror. I only know that today, this very day, for any one of us – and thus for all of us – is always an opportune time. Amen.*



February 18, Lent I - Monday

By: **Bennett Cullum**

Deuteronomy 8:11-20 Psalms 41, 52 Hebrews 2:11-18 John 2:1-12

- Q. What, then, is our assurance as Christians?
- A. Our assurance as Christians is that nothing, not even death, shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.
- Book of Common Prayer, Catechism, Page 862.

I love the wit and wisdom of Father Henry Coke. For many years Henry taught a Sunday school class at Saint Michael where Henry gave his commentary on the teachings of "Chairman Jesus." In the midst of his dry humor and scholarly learning was nestled an occasional great theological zinger. On one memorable Sunday Henry asked the class: "What is the worst thing that can happen to you?" Henry's answer was direct: The worst thing that can happen to you is to be separated from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. That is real death. Henry further reminded us that God had promised never to forsake us; it is we that would be forsaking God.

Father Coke's words came to mind in reviewing the lessons assigned for this day. Each lesson, directly or indirectly, admonishes us not to look to ourselves, but to trust in God for our salvation. Contrary to popular opinion, the lesson from Deuteronomy was not addressed only for those living in affluent North Dallas, although it does focus on those who "...have built beautiful houses and dwell in them." We should remember that it is God who provides for us, not we ourselves. The 52<sup>nd</sup> Psalm warns us not to trust in the abundance of our own riches, but to trust in the mercy of our Lord. The selection from the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us that Christ has shared in being partaken of flesh and blood "...that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death." When the wedding party in Cana runs out of wine, Jesus performs His first miracle in turning water in to wine, urging us to trust that God will provide in ways that we human beings will never be able to do.

Can we let go of our worldly concerns? Can we learn to love the Lord and to trust Him completely? God has made his choice; do we have the courage to make ours?

***Lord Jesus Christ, thank You for the clerical and lay leaders whose words lead us to love and trust You with our whole heart, our whole mind, our whole strength, and our whole soul. May we follow that divine inspiration so that we may accept and cherish the love that God offers to us. Amen.***

February 19, Lent I - Tuesday

By: **Dianne Boyd**

Deuteronomy 9:4-12 Psalm 45 Hebrews 3:1-11 John 2:13-22

The wrath of God in the wilderness, the anger of Jesus at the money changers, the rebellious and hardened hearts of the Israelites: it is enough to make me want to run for cover and hide from this God of vengeance. If my biblical ancestors could not please God, how can I ever have any hope of doing so?

So where do I go to answer my question? Perhaps I should start by looking a bit closer at the very same passages that scared me off in the first place.

In Deuteronomy - And the LORD gave me the two stone tablets written with the finger of God: Obey

In John - But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this: Believe

In Hebrews - Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion": Listen

By incorporating these three disciplines of obedience, belief, and listening into my faith practices, I hope to draw closer to Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

***Yet a time is coming and has now come  
when the true worshipers will worship God in spirit and truth,  
for they are the kind of worshipers God seeks.- John 4:23***



February 20, Lent I - Wednesday

By: Bryan Elwood

[Deuteronomy 9:13-21](#) [Psalms 119:49-72](#) [Hebrews 3:12-19](#) [John 2:23--3:15](#)

“Born again” is language I’ve always associated with what Marcus Borg calls a “‘sweaty’ kind of Christianity,” an overly zealous and self-righteous expression of Spirit that I stereotypically ascribe to conservative, fundamentalist Christians—somebody’s in, somebody’s out—not a Christianity that has ever had much room for me as gay man. However, to excoriate born-again language for that reason is seeing through my own narrowly focused lens.

As I read in John’s gospel about Jesus meeting surreptitiously in the night with Nicodemus, arguing that “no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above,” I’m challenged to reconsider the born-again metaphor. Nicodemus asks, “How can anyone be born after growing old?” Scholars suggest that it is unlikely Nicodemus really didn’t understand Jesus’ point, given that Nicodemus was part of the religious aristocracy of the Pharisees. He surely grasped the born-again metaphor and, in toying with the literalism of Jesus’ message, is looking for an out, as any of us might when confronted with truth that calls us into a new way of being and doing, one that’s going to cost us a familiar, materially comfortable way of life. Jesus disrupted the familiar order. No wonder Nicodemus nervously, maybe playfully, challenges the idea of being born again. Jesus is, of course, talking about the birth of Spirit in our lives. Nicodemus knows this. And we know it. Even my fundamentalist brothers and sisters know it. But what does it mean for us?

With the psalmist, we pray, “Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments.” Well, I want to believe, but do I, really? Believing and doing aren’t always synchronized. In my life, I see how fear can crimp my heart: greedily shutting my wallet, pigeon-holing fundamentalists, stridently taking sides in the face of political uncertainty, not doing enough to ease the carbon footprint that suffocates our planet—the list goes on. Jesus exhorts me to love and do justice. From what injustices and oppressions do I avert my eyes? What comforts or familiarities do I hesitate to give up?

We are “indeed a stubborn people,” the Deuteronomist author tells us. Yet, there’s hope in our being born again. Here is where the poet Mary Oliver helps me remember that we are always beginning again. In her poem, “Thirst,” she writes, “Another morning, and I wake with thirst for the goodness I do not have.” Every morning dawns as rebirth, the re-creation of the world, a fresh start to love and do justice. Each week, our liturgy invites us communally into rebirth through our confession when we speak our thirst to God that we may “walk in your ways.” During Lent, we’re called to reflect deeply upon how our words, thoughts, and deeds manifest the judgment and knowledge we profess and for which we yearn. May our journeys this Lent lead us to be “born from above,” again and again, so that we live generously and justly into the creation of God’s kingdom today.

***God in whom we are reborn, again and again, make of our lives vessels for your Spirit come among us, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.***

February 21, Lent I - Thursday

By: **John Harris**

[Deuteronomy 9:23--10:5](#) [Psalm 50](#) [Hebrews 4:1-10](#) [John 3:16-21](#)

The reading from Deuteronomy tells the story of Moses' second trip up the mountain to get a new set of the Ten Commandments. I can only imagine how hard this was after he broke the first set in anger upon finding his people in a state of chaos when he came down the first time.

Psalm 119 celebrates service and the love of God's Law. The law gives the author comfort and is more precious than gold and silver. From this we move to Hebrews, where we are encouraged to keep the day of God's rest not only sacred to him but sacred for us as well.

The gospel passage tells the story of Nicodemus coming to Jesus in the night to learn more about the Son of God. Nicodemus was part of the Jewish ruling council but addressed Jesus as "Rabbi" out of his respect for Him as a teacher "who has come from God". Then comes the famous exchange regarding "being born again" and "being born of the spirit". Nicodemus, just like all of us, has a hard time comprehending being reborn with the Holy Spirit as compared to being born of the flesh, which is the only one we can comprehend.

These passages give us a clear message:

1. If you break the law, God will give it you again. The law is a gift.
2. Love what God wants you to do. It is more precious than anything on earth.
3. God rests and so should you from your labors
4. It is love for God and for what He gives you that will allow you to be born again.

As I reflected on this, I repositioned God's law not so much as a command but as a gift. Then I remembered a diagram that was explained to me by a theologian in college who showed me what being in a joyful relationship with God was all about:

I don't have to AND I don't want to.

I have to BUT I don't want to.

I have to AND I want to.

I don't have to BUT I want to.

The ANDs lead to happiness and the BUTs lead to unhappiness. Sometimes it is the simple things that help us keep things in perspective. The BUTs represent discord with the law and the ANDs represent synthesis with the law. Think about it. I hope it is a helpful meditation.

In closing, I remember a short prayer meditation that Chip Edens left us:

***"Not my will but THY will."***

***Amen.***

February 22, Lent I - Friday

By: Travis Briggs

Deuteronomy 10:12-22 [Psalm 95](#) Hebrews 4:11-16 John 3:22-36

Remember the three R's from your old school days; reading, writing and 'rithmetic? It was slightly off the mark, but it was memorable. In fact, there is a loose principle called the Rule of Three. Information presented in groups of three sticks to our brains better than other clusters of data. You can look around and see the rule of three frequently in storytelling, academics, public speaking and yes, the Bible.

Take this passage from Psalms for example. It is roughly a 200 word call to worship. Within this short passage, we are reminded that WORSHIP is multifaceted, it requires active engagement and commitment. In the first few verses of Psalm 95, worship is described as an opportunity to rejoice with God. Be happy and joyful for he has made eternal life possible. Yahoo!

***Vs. 1: Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our Salvation.***

In the next few verses we feel a shift in the call to worship, which reminds us that we must also revere the Lord. He has made this world, heaven and earth. We are nothing without God. We worship in awe of the greatness of God.

***Vs. 6: Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; 7. for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.***

These first two calls to worship remind me of the lyrics in that popular song by Mercy Me, *I can Only Imagine*: "Surrounded by your glory, what will my heart feel? Will I dance for you Jesus or in awe of you be still?"

In the final third of this call to worship, the gloves come off. God takes over the role as narrator and reminds us that we must also relinquish our will to his or suffer his consequences. Worship is not only done with prayer and promises, but also with our actions. We worship through the way we live our lives. The decisions we make daily are yet another way we worship God.

***Vs. 8: Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness, 9. Where your ancestors tested me; they tried me though they had seen what I did.***

***Dear lord,***

***Thank you for the opportunity to worship you every day. I rejoice in the wonderful gifts you have provided me and my family I worship with reverence the unimaginable grace you have blessed upon us and please help me to relinquish my selfish, petty desires that detract from a stronger relationship with you. Amen.***

February 23, Lent I - Saturday

By: **Eric Conner**

Deuteronomy 11:18-28 Psalm 55 Hebrews 5:1-10 John 4:1-26

It seems so simple.....Today's Old Testament reading in Deuteronomy touts the wisdom of following the first and greatest commandment of "Loving the Lord your God". The benefits are quite clear: "dispossession of nations larger than you", "extended territories", "no one will stand against you".

While aimed at a different audience (these benefits sound a bit dramatic to me), I am pretty confident that I prefer the blessing (for following this commandment) over the curse (for not following this commandment) – as outlined in verses 26-28. Why then is it so hard for me to make this a priority? God even gives me the formula.... "Fixing these words as an emblem on my forehead, teaching them to my children, writing them on the gates of my home". These are all very actionable items.

Yet, I have not made this a part of my daily routine. I fall into the earthly trap of trying to solve the problem myself. I think that if I just work harder or smarter, the answer will come to me, or I can will it away. Today's Gospel lesson crystallizes the trap I fall into. Verse 13 talks about how drinking from the earthly well will just make me thirsty again, while drinking the heavenly water quenches my eternal thirst. I find myself feeling like the Samaritan woman who is tired of thirsting but is unable to believe and trust that the answer to her thirst (God through his son Jesus) stands right before her.

These passages have reminded me that until I incorporate this commandment into my daily life and routine, I will continue to be thirsty.

***Dear God, we are all thirsty for you. Help us to understand that loving you fully will make our earthly lives richer and more complete. Help us to eliminate the other gods that are more convenient or more appealing at the time. Help us to learn your commandment and what it means for our eternal lives. Amen.***



February 24, Second Sunday of Lent

By: Emily Given

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18 Psalm 27 Philippians 3:17-4:1 Luke 13:31-35

*Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward. – Genesis 15:1.*

My six year old, Abbey, recently fixed her full attention on a Saturday morning television infomercial making outrageous claims about how a particular product would revolutionize the world as we knew it and life would never be the same again. She was completely convinced that we needed to order this product right away. In a sweet (yet sad) way it made me smile. Abbey had enormous faith in the words of the advertisers. She was convinced their promises were genuine.

This is also true in many of our relationships. We make a lot of promises – some we earnestly intend to keep while others are simply hollow words. I venture to say that promises are quickly losing their value in our relationships. We have grown accustomed to the shiny TV-style promises tossed out into the world.

Now a COVENANT– that is a totally different story. It is rare that we walk around offering to make a covenant with others. Why? A covenant is a promise that has been made holy by God. The *Episcopal Dictionary of the Church* defines covenant as “a relationship initiated by God for salvation”. A covenant points to an intimacy and sincerity that can only be expressed in a connection and promise made with/by God.

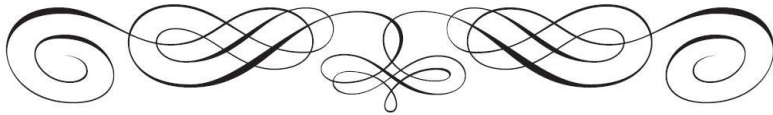
The reading for today from Genesis reminds us of the familiar story of Abram and Sarai being promised a whole new life. God called them to live without fear and to know that God had promised them a family and a land all of their own: their children would number more than the stars in the sky or the grains of sand on the shore. It was a promise so significant that they would be known from that point forward by different names. The promise was that God would be their shield and their reward.

What is the message here? God made a promise that would go on and on forever, and it was a promise so much bigger than any one person. God was going to show up in their lives in a way that endured – a covenant. Just like Abram and Sarai became Abraham and Sarah, God tries to create something new within us. I believe God wants to remind us to this very day the promise to Abraham and Sarah was made for us too. It is a promise that has spanned all of time. We are loved by God. We will have a future and a life blessed beyond measure. Yes, our God is the same one who led Abraham out of Ur and caused Sarah’s womb to be filled with a long awaited child.

What about us? What if this Lent we allowed ourselves to believe that God continues to make promises to us? Promises that really matter. What if we believed that God is the one who holds us in joblessness and family struggles as well as joy and celebration? What if we trusted that God is the one who gives us life and love even if it isn’t the way we hoped or imagined? What if now, more than ever, we knew that God is the one who makes ways out of no way? What if we placed ourselves in the hands of a God who takes our wonderings and our longing and shapes them into something beautiful and life-giving? What if somehow we truly sent our disbelief down to the grave and allowed for a personal resurrection to take place in each of our lives? What if?

Why not try? Today.

*God of all hopefulness,  
create in us a desire to see Your face and trust in Your promise.  
Let this be true in all the places we find ourselves today and evermore. Amen.*



February 25, Lent II - Monday

By: **Michael Horvath**

Jeremiah 1:11-19 Psalm 56, 57, [58] Romans 1:1-15 John 4:27-42

Over and over and over, Jesus broke rules and customs and norms of the day.

He associated with tax collectors and lepers and sinners.

Jesus would neither be confined nor defined by others.

As I read John 4:27-42, I thought Paul Harvey would call this “The Rest of the Story” to the commonly known parable about the Woman at the Well. In that day, respectable travelers would avoid Samaria, they would take the long route around or travel through quickly under the cover of darkness. But not Jesus, he strode in during the middle of the day and spoke to an unaccompanied woman who was drawing water from a well, neither of which would have been included in an ancient Emily Post papyrus. Later that day, and at the bequest of the citizens, He was invited to stay in Samaria and did for an additional two days before traveling onto Galilee.

During his time there, many Samaritans came to believe in him as their Savior.

Jesus taught them “he who reaps receives compensation, and gathers fruit to eternal life, that both he that sows and he who reaps may rejoice together”.

But the heart of the story is not about Jesus; it’s not about his compassion or his conviction or his message. This story is about the woman, who had no husband and five husbands (if you know what I mean) who was not accompanied on her trip to the well. She, in fact, was an outcast in the community. Yet, she was tapped as God’s messenger. And through the strength of her newfound faith, she carried Christ’s light to the world. While she initially traveled to the well alone, she returned to meet Jesus and his disciples with a throng close at her heels.

Jesus often placed great importance on the least likely.

He tapped Peter, a fisherman, to lead his church; His most trusted disciple was Mary Magdalene; and Paul, who in an earlier day persecuted the followers of Jesus, came to be the voice of His church. It was the woman at the well who brought a city to greet Him.

None were particularly qualified for the task Jesus asked them to perform, but they did, and their deeds are celebrated today.

So what about us? Each of us - and all of us.

What does Jesus call us to do?

And what is the answer?

Do we sow? Do we reap? Will we rejoice together?

February 26, Lent II - Tuesday

By: **John Wilson**

[Jeremiah 2:1-13](#) [Psalm 61, 62](#) [Romans 1:16-25](#) [John 4:43-54](#)

In the Old Testament lesson today,

- God appeals to all of Israel, assuring them of His past love and proving their prior desertions of him were without ground or reason.

The Psalmist in today's readings tells us,

- By trusting in God, the heart is fixed.
- We must lay out our wishes and our wants before Him.
- Trust cannot be placed on worldly things.

In the Epistle,

- Paul is not ashamed of the gospel because it is powerful and works.
- God's wrath is on people because they reject truth which God showed them.
- People are without excuse because they reject God and invent their own religion.

The Gospel of John tells us,

- The nobleman pleads for a miracle.
- Jesus provides an answer of peace.
- An experience of the power of one word of Christ can settle the authority of Christ in our soul.
- Being diligent in our comparison of the works of Jesus with his word will confirm our faith.

We must always be reminded of God's love for us because, if we don't, then we allow ourselves to forget. Getting caught up in the busy lives that each of us leads can lend itself to suffocation on "worldly things". Allowing ourselves to put our trust in God is powerful and works. We can confirm our faith by following his word and deeds with diligence.

***Father, help me to remember that I am not in control, and that by placing my faith in You, I will come to a clearer understanding of the love that You have bestowed upon me and be comforted. Amen.***



February 27, Lent I - Wednesday

By: **Ann Ross**

[Jeremiah 3:6-18](#) [Psalm 72](#) [Romans 1:28--2:11](#) [John 5:1-18](#)

In today's reading, the earthly king bows to God for guidance so that he might bring comfort, prosperity and justice to his people. The psalmist portrays the king as having the wisdom to recognize God above all.

Jeremiah portrays God as the merciful master of a faithless, adulterous Israel. God promised Israel not to be angry forever in exchange for Israel wholeheartedly acknowledging guilt. If Israel returns to the master guiltless, future abundance and good are promised.

John's story of the man who had a 38-year-long illness is a familiar one. Jesus instructs the man to take up his bed so he might walk into the healing waters. Jesus shows us the loving face of God in this act. When it comes to healing a broken man or observing Sabbath laws, Jesus chooses healing. Furthermore, Jesus aligns himself with God in the merciful act of healing.

I think Paul's letter to the Romans is the most difficult of these readings. To my mind Paul's associates are the closest to being our contemporaries. Certainly they are closer to being like us than the Psalmist's king or faithless Israel.

Paul's message to the community is about God's judgment. It is also about humankind's liking to choose evil and to judge one another. Paul's list of evil and wrongdoing is long and specific. So are the outcomes.

The difficulty of the passage for me is Paul's admonition about doing good deeds and the heavenly reward versus doing evil deeds and the consequences.

***"...God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance." Romans 2:5***

***"Blessed be the Lord...who alone does wondrous things." Psalm 72***

***Amen.***



February 28, Lent II - Thursday

By: Eric Gambrell

Jeremiah 4:9-10, 19-28 Psalm [70], 71 [Romans 2:12-24](#) John 5:19-29

Paul makes clear we will all be judged – consistently – based on our knowledge of God’s law and our corresponding level of obedience to that understanding. And, he is quick not to let anyone (with capacity) off the hook. He reminds us that embedded within each of us – “*written on our hearts*” – is the natural law. As C.S. Lewis succinctly points out, “human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it, [but] they do not in fact behave in that way. They know the Law of Nature; they break it.” C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 7. Paul tells us we are bound by this natural law and will be judged (distinct from being saved) based on our adherence to it.

Paul also instructs what is patently obvious. It is not sufficient that we know the law – it is fundamental that we abide it (“it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified”). Even more, we are to adhere to God’s law with a *genuine and sincere* heart (“God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all.”).

Romans 2 also lectures, sensibly, that our increasing knowledge of God’s law uniformly requires a corresponding increased responsibility and obedience. The standard is simply compliance with God’s law which we have formally learned as well as that resting in our conscience and heart. This appears facilely and incontrovertibly just. It is nonetheless foreboding. For me, it is an instant evisceration of excuse for noncompliance with God’s law. It is simply not credible to rationalize that I didn’t know God’s law or didn’t have the ability to learn it. In fact, such excuse is really nothing more than a frivolous attempt to “suppress” God’s law and “stifle” truth, which Paul makes clear is even more egregious. As the arguably greatest theologian in the last century, John Stott, vividly stated:

God’s wrath is directed, however, not against ‘godlessness and wickedness’ *in vacuo*, but against the godlessness and wickedness of those people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. It is not just that they do wrong, though they know better. It is that they have made an *a priori* decision to live for themselves, rather than for God and others, and therefore stifle any truth which challenges their self-centeredness.

John Stott, *Romans*, p. 72.

Paul finally, with some force, warns against hypocrisy and righteousness (“You that boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?”). He reminds us of the convenience of ignoring or “suppressing” our own frailties, while at the same time exhibiting a complete unwillingness to excuse others for even the most minor infractions by attempting to rationalize or blur our own shortfalls through the deflective focus on *everyone else’s* alleged misfeasance – seeking a false sense of superiority and righteousness by looking down on others, conveniently failing to acknowledge our (my) own sins. But this, of course, is nothing more than a perverse attempt to draw calm, peace, and satisfaction through *others’* sins. To be sure, it is not that the misconduct of others should be accepted or approved or otherwise condoned, just that others’ misfeasance doesn’t in any way salve or minimize our (my) own shortfalls.

March 1, Lent II - Friday

By: Pamela Theodore

Jeremiah 5:1-9 Psalm 69:1-23(24-30)31-38 Romans 2:25--3:18 [John 5:30-47](#)

The Gospel of John is, as all lovers of Scripture have experienced, very different from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This is primarily because the Gospel of John expresses the mystical side of Christianity. This Gospel is the most interior, psychological, and esoteric Gospel. It can therefore be a wonderful treasure of spiritual insight!

In John's Gospel, we meet a Jesus who is known as the Logos, cosmically pre-existent before creation. The Gospel, in fact begins in a way that could not be more different than the other three:

"In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God,  
and the Logos *was* God."

Immediately, readers sense that this Gospel intends to travel deeply into a realm that we have not entered in the first three Gospels.

In the Gospel of John, this kind of transformation is what Jesus offers, expects, and demands of His true followers. Jesus wants to liberate people in this Gospel from their literal and fossilized way of looking at things in order to walk in the freedom of being truly alive, in its fullest sense.

By the time we read today's passage in the Gospel of John, Jesus has already offered this transformation to Nicodemus, the Pharisee who came to Jesus by night to learn more about him. Jesus spent a great deal of time in conversation with Nicodemus, but the Pharisee was trapped in the literal assumptions of his religion. Because of this entrapment, he was unable to see, understand, or acknowledge the mystery of the powerful new life, this 'being born again', that was being offered to him. Jesus was offering the Divine, and Nicodemus could not imagine life in any other way than he knew it.

The Gospel of John then moved to Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman who came to draw water at a well. Although Jews held the Samaritans in contempt, Jesus began a conversation with her. Jesus was tired and thirsty, and He asked the woman for a drink of water. As the conversation developed, it became clear that the woman was baffled by the way Jesus was talking, especially when He offered *her* 'living water'. Like Nicodemus, the woman was trapped in literal assumptions, this time about water. When the strange man used the phrase, 'living water', did he mean water that was being stirred up by an underground stream? Surely the underground stream would eventually dry out. It couldn't be 'living' forever! The woman could not imagine any water that was different from the water she had always known. Of course, in saying 'living water', Jesus was offering new life to the woman; a woman whom Jesus knew was living a kind of death...a death of her soul.

In today's passage in John, Jesus is being attacked by the Jewish religious establishment. By Chapter Five in John's Gospel, Jesus is getting tired of trying to explain Himself to them. This time, He tells them unequivocally that none of their human standards apply to Him, because He was sent to them by God.

We remember from this Gospel's opening words that Jesus is the Logos, who is both pre-existent *with* God before creation, and *is* God. And when Jesus goes on to say to them, 'you refuse to come to me to *'have life'*', we know exactly what He is talking about, because of our earlier encounters with Nicodemus

and the Samaritan woman. Jesus does not speak of life in the literal way we usually speak of it. Jesus talks about LIFE, in all capitals, abundant in ways we can only imagine. This amazing offer is why God has come down to us, in the form that we understand, the human form, God's very own self, 'broken up and thinned out', seeking an encounter with each and every one of us.

Jesus wants to liberate *us* from our literal and fossilized way of looking at things in order to be truly alive, in its fullest sense. Jesus wants to transform *us* and to offer *us* an encounter with the Divine.

I often wonder if I, and perhaps others, have not become fossilized in our way of hearing Jesus' words. We have heard these words explained to us so many times that, even though we know, of course, that Jesus speaks in metaphors, the words leave us numb to the power and numinosity of just what He is offering. Jesus is offering each of us transformation! He is offering each of us an encounter with the Divine! Jesus wants each and every one of us to be alive, fully and excitingly alive! To shatter and reorder *our* priorities. Jesus offers us a brand new way of looking at things, just like the new way of looking at things that He offered to Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and the entire Jewish religious establishment. Do I fully grasp the enormity of this gift?

***Holy God, may this Season of Lent draw each of us closer to you, to Divinity itself, so that we can fully grasp the enormity of what you are offering us. Amen.***



March 2, Lent II - Saturday

By: **John Gorman**

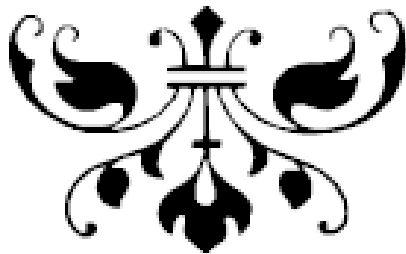
Jeremiah 5:20-31 Psalm 75, 76 Romans 3:19-31 John 7:1-13

For me, Lent is a time to focus on the things I may miss throughout the year, take for granted, or have trouble hearing.

This is why I particularly like the Jeremiah reading for today, Chapter 5, verse 21, which proclaims, "Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but do not see, who have ears, but do not hear," Too often, I pay attention to what is right in front of me, usually some challenge or another, failing to see the grace that permeates my life, and failing to hear the call to do greater things than I am.

On my wedding day I was given a coin to put in my shoe. When I asked why, I was told it was for good luck, and that the minor discomfort would keep me focused on what was important that day.

***May Lent be a coin in your shoe, bringing you both luck and focus. Amen.***



March 3, Third Sunday of Lent

By: Lisa Flores

Exodus 3:1-15 [Psalm 63:1-8](#) 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 [Luke 13:1-9](#)

The parable of the fig tree offers to us this question for the day, “Are you bearing much fruit or are you just taking up space?” My hope is that I am bearing much fruit, but I am not sure if I can answer the question at this point.

For most of us, we have followed the traditional path of life. It is not the same for any one person, but includes education, relationships, jobs, responsibilities, families – it is all the stuff that we deal with to become adults. As we move through our lives we are shaped by each of these encounters, growing to reach a new height in our quest to be the best person God has created us to be. But as we move through each experience we can find obstacles that cause us to pause, turn around, or possibly even to give up.

I think about the twisted nature of the fig tree. It is not like a pine tree that shoots straight to the sky, but it is more complex. The trunk can twist and turn and can become a sight for the eyes to behold. And then the limbs branch out from the twisted heart and grow in just as unique ways. I see our lives like that twisted fig tree: each of us complicated, yet beautiful. I see those rough knots as the obstacles that get in the way. But I also know that is what gives the tree its character, its beauty.

In thinking about the short-sightedness of the land owner in the parable, I sometimes think we don’t give ourselves or others the time to bear the fruit of our lives. We might get caught up by the obstacles that get in the way or we just haven’t had the time to mature and grow the deep roots that we need to flourish. It takes time to get to the place where there is abundance, and all too often we are scared and possibly scarred by the scarcity of life.

So back to the question of the day, “Are you bearing much fruit or are you just taking up space?” I think we all need space to grow, develop, and mature to get to the place of bearing much fruit. And just as the tree cycles in the development of fruit, so do we. There are times when we just need to take up space and be cared for, to be nourished, so we can continue to grow. So, perhaps I am bearing fruit at this particular point in my life, and in the future I will just need some space. I pray that when that time comes I will be open to God’s work at hand and allow for someone to care for me.

Let the words of the Psalmist lift us in prayer:

***O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you... For you have been my helper, and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice. My soul clings to you; your right hand holds me fast. Amen.***

March 4, Lent III - Monday

By: Gerard Finan

Jeremiah 7:1-15 Psalm 80 Romans 4:1-12 [John 7:14-36](#)

In reading the gospel today the one item I keep thinking about is how selfless and humble John the Baptist is. When told by his followers that Jesus was performing baptisms and people were flocking to him, John's first response was "that's great". He even went as far as to say in John 3:30 "He (Jesus) must increase but I must decrease". John wanted Jesus to grow more prominent while he moved into the background. Now the thing to remember is John was no slouch himself. In fact, upon his death Jesus stated "I tell you among those born of women there is none greater than John." So here is John who understands from an early age his job is to spread the word of the Lord and to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. He moves to the wilderness, eats insects and honey and lives his life with the sole purpose of teaching his followers to repent their sins and prepare for the coming of Jesus through baptism. John's message was so overpowering that people flocked to him by the hundreds sometimes thousands to hear him preach and be baptized. He eventually even baptized Jesus himself in the Jordan River.

So let's think about this for a minute; here is John who has been doing one thing his whole life and doing that one thing extremely well with a large following. Yet when he hears of Jesus beginning to perform the same work he is overwhelmed with happiness and offers to slide into the background without a second thought.

My first reaction is what would I do? How would I react? I think about how I would behave if at work we hired a new employee and I was asked to train that employee on everything I did in order to transition some of my tasks to the new employee. Then sometime later I hear the employee I trained was recognized or promoted in part for doing the work that I had been doing and which I trained that person to do. Would I be genuinely happy for that person? Would I be willing to move into the background allowing that person to garner the attention? To be honest the answer is probably not. I would not be as instantly selfless as John was. Shouldn't I be happy that someone became successful in part due to the training I provided? Was I asked to train the new person for a greater purpose? Should I feel a sense of satisfaction knowing I laid the groundwork for someone to become successful?

This passage gives me a belief that everyone has a calling, although not all of ours are as obvious to us as John's was to him. After really reading these verses I now look at things a little differently, trusting that everything happens for a reason and there is a greater picture to look at. The surprising outcome of following this thinking (besides from being a happier person) is the increase in energy I have. It is amazing how much energy we burn worrying about why me!

***God is good all the time  
All the time God is great***

March 5, Lent III - Tuesday

By: **Mary Stewart Ramsey**

Jeremiah 7:21-34 Psalm 78:1-39 Romans 4:13-25 John 7:37-52

On Jesus' last day, John (ch.7) tells us that the Scribes and Pharisees were extremely jealous of Jesus' popularity and his teachings and wanted Him arrested and killed.

Nicodemus, a member of the high court who had interviewed Jesus and was awed by him risked his reputation, high position, and his life to speak up and say, "Is it legal to convict a man before he is tried?" The Chief Priests and Pharisees whose pride interfered with their ability to reason, answered only by saying, "Nicodemus, are you a wretched Galilean too?" The Pharisees had become obsessed with killing Jesus to save face with the crowd and were willing to ignore their own laws in order to murder Jesus. This liturgy speaks to us.

All of us have been faced with less dramatic decisions than Nicodemus: decisions of whether to speak up in a meeting, a conversation, or a visual vote. It is much easier to "follow the crowd." Well, yes, if the discussion is not important, perhaps it is just as well to be quiet. We need not always be the dissenter.

But if the question is important -- if it defames another unjustly, if it disregards respect for those of a different culture, a different orientation, those who have not been exposed to opportunity and education, or those good people who worship God differently -- then there is a need to speak up as did Nicodemus. He did not give answers, but asked soul searching questions of the Pharisees. Our question to ourselves and others might be, "Is it good and right to denigrate a person, a culture, a different way of life, the less fortunate, or people of different religions beliefs?" Until we understand how it feels to walk in another person's shoes, how can we judge?

Where do we get the strength to ask the questions? How do we phrase our question to the crowd so there will be thought and understanding? This strength and knowledge can only come through our faith and our trust in Him; remembering that Jesus said, "In as much as ye have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

At times we may not have to talk or ask questions, only to act out the "right and good" for others in our lives. Do I always act or pose the question? Of course not. This analysis is for us all.



March 6, Lent III - Wednesday

By: Michael Harmuth

[Jeremiah 8:18-9:6](#) [Psalm 119:97-120](#) [Romans 5:1-11](#) [John 8:12-20](#)

The Bitter Herbs—Jeremiah 8:18-9:6

adapted by Gedaliah Fleer from the stories of Rebbe Nachman

A Jew and a German were travelling together. Since Passover was drawing near, the Jew began to describe the sumptuous feast customarily eaten in honour of the holiday. "Wine is served in abundance and the specially prepared delicacies are out of this world." But the German, who had never been to a Seder, could hardly share his companion's enthusiasm.

"It's something you've simply got to experience," said the Jew, "perhaps I can teach you to pretend you're Jewish. Then on Passover eve, you can accompany me to the synagogue where the good-natured members of the congregation will surely invite us to their homes for the feast."

It sounded like a good idea and the German quickly learned to pose as a Jew. He even learned the Yiddish language which was quite similar to his native tongue. Shortly before the holiday his friend briefly explained the traditional Seder customs. "There's the Kiddush, recited over a glass of wine, the washing of the hands and the eating of some cucumber. Then the Haggadah which explains about the exodus from Egypt is read and discussed. Everything happens in a particular order, but eventually there's that delicious meal with all those luscious Jewish delicacies." Quite by accident however, the Jew forgot to tell his friend about the eating of bitter herbs. On the eve of Passover, before going to the synagogue, the German fasted all day. He wanted to be prepared with an appetite worthy of the forthcoming feast. When the synagogue service was completed the two friends were invited to separate homes to partake in the Seder. The aroma of exquisite foods filled the air. The German was shown to a comfortable chair near the head of a beautifully set dining room table. His mouth watered, as his host began the Seder by reciting the Kiddush. Everyone drank an entire glass of wine. "What a really nice custom," thought the German, "a good meal should always begin with wine." Shortly thereafter water was brought and people took turns washing their hands with an oversized goblet. "Quaint, very quaint," mused the German, "they're washing up for the meal." Then each person was given a small piece of cucumber dipped into salt water. "These Jews have some pretty strange ideas about hors d'oeuvres," he thought, "but the food I smell will surely be more substantial than this." After a while the German found himself growing impatient. He had not eaten all day and his stomach was beginning to complain. The wine and cucumber were making him ill. Everyone around him however, seemed quite content. The last two hours had been spent discussing the exodus from Egypt. "How much longer will this continue," thought the German, "don't they ever get hungry?"

Finally matzo was brought to the table. Another glass of wine was consumed and people began to wash their hands for a second time. The German looked at the matzo and forced himself to remain calm. Some real food would soon be had. The matzo was hard and tasteless but at least it was something of substance. He ate his fill and anxiously awaited the rest of the meal. His Jewish friend had prepared him for the events of the evening. He had been told about the wine, and matzo. He had even been forewarned about the peculiar washing of the hands. But now, for the first time all evening, the German

didn't recognize the food being served. "This must be the beginning of the real meal," he thought, as a dish piled high with grated horse radish was placed before him. "Take as much as you please," said his host, kindness radiating in his manner. Needing no further encouragement, the German heaped a brimming tablespoon of horse radish into his mouth and began to choke. His eyes bulged and began to tear. Thinking that this was what the entire meal consisted of, he ran from the house, back to the synagogue where he and his friend had agreed to meet. "Cursed Jews," he thought, "after all that ceremony they serve horse radish for their meal."

Shortly afterward, his friend arrived, fully satisfied and content. "How did it go with you?" he asked. "You Jews are crazy," said the German, "absolutely out of your minds." He then angrily proceeded to relate the events of the evening and how he had eventually fled from the Seder. "How foolish of you," said the Jew. "Had you been patient for just a moment longer you could have eaten the best of foods to your heart's content. Didn't you know that the real meal is always served after the bitter herbs?"

It is true that when we journey through the rough times of our way, we tend to forget that "the real meal is always served after the bitter herbs."

***O Lord, who suffered through the bitter herbs before your resurrection, grant us to be patient for just a moment longer. Amen.***



March 7, Lent III - Thursday

By: Lowell Duncan

Jeremiah 10:11-24 Psalm [83] or 42, 43 Romans 5:12-21 John 8:21-32

Where was God on December 14?

It is a question many of us asked after 20 first grade children and six teachers were gunned down in Newtown, Connecticut. If God is in control, why did He let that happen?

The reality is God gave us free will, and in doing so we – human beings – can separate ourselves from God, actions that have become known as sin and evil. God cannot prevent evil. That is something that we – humans – control. God can be there with us when we are confronted by evil. God can be there with us when our hearts ache over the tragedy and we wonder, “What can I do?”

During those horrific moments six teachers steeled their nerves – and gave their lives – doing what they could to stop the killer, putting themselves between the children and the bullets. Other teachers gathered their students and led them to safety, unfazed by the thought that the next bullet may be for them. Was God there?

An entire world was in shock and horror. Leaders of nations, some of which are not particularly friendly with the United States, expressed heartfelt sympathies. Hundreds of thousands of Americans went to churches, synagogues, and mosques to pray for the victims and their families – and for themselves and their families. One week later, bells from across the country pealed 26 times as we remembered. Was God there?

An anguished tweet from a news commentator, “What if?”, launched the *26 Acts of Kindness* campaign that has captured the hearts of millions of people around the world. Chris and his son delivered sacks of food to more than 150 families. Michelle signed up to be a bone marrow donor. Beth left a \$20 on the desk of a co-worker who was struggling. Another Beth paid school fees for 26 kids in Kenya with AIDs. Will went to Toys “R” Us and paid off a stranger’s layaway bill. And the stories go on and on. Was God there?

More importantly, now there is serious dialogue addressing the treatment of mental illness...dialogue on confronting a culture in which violence has become an acceptable means for resolving arguments, for enforcing one’s will, for home entertainment.

Where was God on December 14? God was in Newtown with courage and comfort. God was in big cities and small hamlets as we lifted our voices in mourning and prayer. God was in the hearts of men, women, and children as they carried out *26 Acts of Kindness*. God is with us as we strive to help one another, serve one another, and love our neighbor as ourselves.

***Great God, sometimes it is hard to understand what is going on in the world around us. We cry out like the psalmist, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Open our eyes, open our minds, open our hearts that we might know you are with us always...that you engulf evil with love, enabling us to rise to new heights of care and service to one another. Amen.***

March 8, Lent III - Friday

By: **Bill McGannon**

[Jeremiah 11:1-8, 14-20](#) [Psalm 95 & 88](#) [Romans 6:1-11](#) [John 8:33-47](#)

We are a little over halfway through our Lenten season, and what a blessing it is to have this opportunity for sharing, meditation and reflection.

Today's scripture readings seem to me to be a teaching about human behavior and our disobedience to God:

- \* Humans could not seem to live under the law.

- \* Baptism plays a role in our acceptance of Jesus Christ in serving to wash away the sinful behavior of the past and grant us freedom from sin. We have a new beginning.

- \* The importance of the new beginning, which releases us from the sins of the past and living under the law and puts us in a new relationship with God under grace.

Psalm 95 is an invitation to worship God and reminds me not to have a hardened heart, not to allow my heart to go astray or to quarrel with or test God.

Psalm 88 is a song of despair, but reminds me no matter how low I feel, when there is no relief in sight, I can always - through prayer - take my problems or the problems of others to God. God understands.

Jeremiah: God's blessings come when I am committed to him, not when I hang on to my sinful ways.

Romans: If I am no longer under the law but under grace, am I now free to sin and disregard the law? Paul says "by no means". Under law sin was my master. Law does not justify me or help me overcome sin. But now that I am bound to Christ Jesus, my master, he gives me power to do good rather than evil, to overcome sin, to have a new start, and the Holy Spirit will help me become what Christ has declared for me.

John: He who belongs to God hears what God says. In order for me to hear despite earthly distractions, I must focus, struggle, and work at it every day.

For me prayer and intercessory prayer are critical elements of a relationship with God.

***Heavenly Father, you have given me the freedom to make my own choices.***

***Please guide me that they might reflect your spirit of love and forgiveness.***

***Please keep me in your presence and may my life not be an impediment to those who seek to follow you. Amen.***

March 9, Lent III - Saturday

By: **Abby Escobedo**

Jeremiah 13:1-11 Psalm 87, 90 Romans 6:12-23 John 8:47-59

Just when you thought there was nothing better -- and there it was...

I came to Saint Michael October 5, 2004. I met Kimberly, the administrator. It was a Friday so the directors I was to assist were off. I was alone. I went to look for Kimberly and got lost three times. But somehow I ended up in my work area. This place is huge! It was nothing like I expected.

When I got the call from the temp agency to come and work at Saint Michael I thought it was going to be a very small, dark office with lots and lots of old books and documents. I thought it would just be me and a little old lady who had probably been here since the church was built. I had only worked in a corporate office, so I was really surprised to see it was nothing like that. Saint Michael was a huge place and no wonder I got lost three times on my first day.

I came back the next Monday. I was determined to know the place and find the administrative office without a map! I met the ladies I was going to assist, and they showed me around because of all the places I needed to put posters and signs for events, Bible studies, classes, etc. I got to meet even more church staff. Everyone was so nice. I also met a lot of members. Every day I met new ones. I did not feel out of place at all like I have felt in the corporate world. Everyone befriended me right away. I really wanted to stay.

Well that was 8 years ago. I am still here and don't plan to go anywhere. Unless Saint Michael moves to Anna, Texas. I doubt it.

I never thought I would work in a place that would make me feel so at home. My supervisors became my friends. How often does that happen? A lot of my co-workers are my friends outside the church. We get together every now and then. I am happy to wake up and make my long commute every week. I have never, ever felt God's presence as much as I do at Saint Michael. I am never alone. He is always with me.

***Dear God,***

***Thank you for bringing me to Saint Michael where I feel your presence every day. For I was lost and I found you, and myself, here once again. Amen.***



March 10, Fourth Sunday of Lent

By: **Matt Waller**

Joshua 5:9-12 [Psalm 32](#) 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 [Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32](#)

God does not delight in our sin. When we hide our sin, perhaps one of the reasons we do is that we project ourselves on God. We assume that God will hold our sin as we would, delighting in its discovery and keeping it before us as a reminder. If we are truly honest with ourselves, I think, we each have a little of this in us – that dark, embarrassing desire to find out the sin of others and to hold onto it in some way – as a lever in a relationship or justifying a quiet sense of self righteousness.

But thankfully, the psalmist reminds us that God is not like us. He says, “When I kept my silence, my body wasted away... Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity... and you forgave the guilt of my sin.”

Jesus makes this lesson abundantly clear in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. As we all know, the Prodigal squanders his earthly inheritance in dissolute living, and he realizes his mistake when he is reduced to feeding (and probably living with) pigs. The text says, “When he came to himself,” he went home to his father and said “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” When we are at that point, Jesus makes it clear in the symbolism of the parable, that while we are far off, God sees us, is filled with compassion, runs to us, embraces and kisses us. This is not a human response; this is God’s gift of Grace –God delights in our reconciliation to Him in His love.

The response of the good brother, however, reminds us of another lesson of the parable. He applies a human view of fairness to God’s Grace and Love and in the process misses the point altogether. He is angry that his good efforts are not truly valued in a world where the prodigal son can be forgiven. How human! The father reminds the good son, “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.” The challenge to the faithful is to remember and be grateful for what we have and not diminish God’s gifts to us through comparisons with others.

***Heavenly Father, we are so grateful for your gift of an incorruptible inheritance through the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ. Open our hearts and give us courage to look carefully at our lives and ourselves so that we may see and confess the sins we commit. Give us the grace to understand and receive the limitless power of your Love and forgiveness. As we grow and progress in our walk in the Way, remind us that You are always with us, and that all of what is Yours is ours. Finally help us to set ourselves aside, so we can reflect your Love and Grace to those around us that are “dead” or lost, so that through You they might come to life and be found. We ask in the name of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen***

March 11, Lent IV - Monday

By: **Beth Puckett**

[Jeremiah 16:10-21](#) [Psalm 89:1-18](#) [Romans 7:1-12](#) [John 6:1-15](#)

The four readings for today are a metaphor for my life. They illustrate the ebbs and flows of my faith. God is constant and almighty, but like the people of Israel, I fall in and out of relationship with God.

In the Jeremiah reading I am reminded of how I repeatedly fall away from God. I know what I should do, but through my sin nature and selfishness I separate myself from God and my punishment is loneliness and emptiness.

Psalm 89 is how I feel on sunny days and days with my family and friends. I feel joy and gratitude. I can see the Lord's handiwork all around me and I feel so much thankfulness. As the scripture says, "I could sing of your love forever." When I am in harmony with God I feel so alive, and strong, and confident.

Romans applies to the business of life—when I have work to get done, and I get single minded in my routines, to-do lists, and tasks. Sometimes, I get so caught up in the "job", the letter of the law, that I stop serving Christ and am only thinking of my goals and myself.

Finally in John we get the wonderful story of the feeding of the 5,000. Here I see myself in the boy who has 5 barley loaves and 2 fish. Like him I am hardly noticeable...a tiny part of the big story. I don't have much to offer the Lord—but He can take my little offering and create a miracle! All I need to do is show up with my talents and believe, and He will do the rest. Through Him, my little contribution can be magnified and directed for good I couldn't even have imagined.

Our family has had the blessing of growing this year from 4 children to 8. Two sets of siblings joined us when their parents died unexpectedly. In each instance I thought, "Lord, how can I handle 2 more children? How can our home possibly be good enough for them?" But, our family's 5 loaves and 2 fish have been enough THROUGH CHRIST. He has helped each of us grow, and to love, to heal, and to serve.

***Through HIM all things are possible. Amen.***



March 12, Lent IV - Tuesday

By: **Shelly Vescovo**

[Jeremiah 17:19-27](#) [Psalm 97, 99, \[100\]](#) [Romans 7:13-25](#) [John 6:16-27](#)

We are always looking for signs and miracles: for the spectacular, the glamorous, the quick cure, the fast meal, the Cliff notes version of whatever we are required to read - or the band-aid for whatever life situation we are forced to confront.

And we miss the point entirely.

And we follow for all the wrong reasons: because it feels good, satisfies a longing or a hunger, meets some physical need, calms some emotional storm, fills some deep spiritual hole.

Would we really see Jesus if he were standing right in front of us? Would we be able to pick him out of a line up?

There is a scene in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* when the characters are asked to choose the Chalice from the Last Supper from a huge selection of chalices. Will they go for the gold and glitz? Will they see the treasure buried in the simple clay?

Jesus says: "*You have come looking for me not because you saw God in my actions but because I fed you, filled your stomachs -- and for free*".

And, that food didn't really last long did it? We got hungry again!

He then asks the people to "*work for the food that sticks with you. Food that nourishes your lasting life, food the Son of Man provides.*"

And then he goes on to answer how to get that food. That is the lesson for tomorrow, the 4th Wednesday in Lent.

Today's other readings give us a clue about what this food to nourish our lasting life will look like so that we can recognize it when it stands right before us:

From Jeremiah: we set aside Sabbath time - which is time not only to rest from our labors, but also is a time to confess that everything we have and everything we are is from the Creator of the Universe.

From the Psalms: seeing God means that we look for those places and people who act out justice and who live a life in right relationship to God and to all of God's creation. If we want to truly follow Jesus and be fed, we will make sure that everyone gets a slice of the loaf.

From Paul in Romans: we hear that living a life dedicated to God's justice, to a right relationship with God and God's creation is not something that comes naturally to us. It is a darn hard struggle. And

we will fail if we try to do it on our own. The only way we can get this food, the only way that we can see how we can live and what we were created to be, is through the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Admit our powerlessness and trust in the power of God's love.

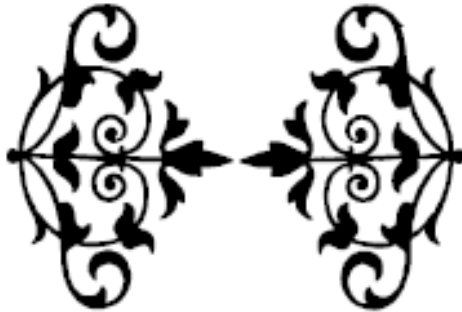
So, what is the point? The point is that when we look for balm for our souls and nourishment for the day, the only way we can get it is by looking at Jesus: at all he taught and did - at the way he lived.

Putting God first

Aligning ourselves with justice and right relationships

Knowing that without God's help we will be inadequate at best. With God's help, we can. Period.

***Give us this Day our Daily Bread. Amen.***



March 13, Lent IV - Wednesday

By: **Mary Ann Marshall**

Jeremiah 18:1-11 Psalm 101, 109:1-4(5-19)20-30 Romans 8:1-11 John 6:27-40

Many years ago, during the early months of Bob Ratelle's rectorship at St. Michael, he came to brunch at our house. There was good conversation that eventually, of course, came around to the church.

I was a relative newcomer to St. Michael at the time, and I spoke about how involved I had become at the Woman's Exchange. This had come about through the unknowing but perfect form of proselytizing by a neighbor whose insistence that I begin working there led to what is now a 30+ year history at SMAA with very active participation and a community that has been a mainstay of my life second only to family.

Father Ratelle's point that day had to do with how important it is to connect oneself to some part of the church that speaks to your heart, and that a connection with the church as a whole comes as a natural result. This was, unbeknownst to me, happening in my own life as we spoke. Though Father Ratelle did not mention it that day, he could probably also have told me that the richness of my experience in all that I was led to through the Exchange would far surpass any investment of time or talent on my part.

When all seems difficult and unsure, there is such a satisfaction in applying ourselves to something concrete and productive. Though we long always for the spiritual connection, there are inevitably times when we feel estranged and this concrete connection gives additional staying power. I have come to believe over the years that these gifts that we receive through our own giving are among the most precious--and anchoring-- available through faith. More than 30 years later, the friendships, the memories, the history, the strength of connection, are intact and thriving and indeed still a lynchpin in my life.

It is more than humbling to think of what has been given to me as a result of what seems such an insignificant offering on my part.

***Father, help us always to remember that your love for us is reflected in our love for each other, and that through kindnesses, caring and attention to each other we may strengthen our ties to you. Amen.***

March 14, Lent IV - Thursday

By: **Carolina Armstrong**

Jeremiah 22:13-23 Psalm 69:1-23(24-30)31-38 Romans 8:12-27 John 6:41-51

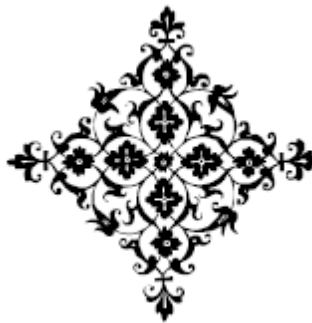
*So don't you see that we don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent. There's nothing for us, nothing at all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life. God's Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go! (The MESSAGE BIBLE)*

Eugene Peterson's interpretation here in Romans did not speak "Lent" to me at all back in December when I first gave it a once-over for this devotion. At the end of Advent and deep into the twelve days of Christmas, "things to do and places to go" was not a message I could get behind and certainly not for an upcoming season of penitence, quiet, introspection, and less...a "less" that I was craving after the inevitable "more" of the holidays. No new things, no new places, and no new lives for awhile, please.

For awhile (read: most of Epiphany), I felt pretty pleased with myself. I had really figured it out and would tear apart that Romans text and make sure everyone knew that the true meaning of this season is to settle in and hunker down and look at your life. You know, "Lent" stuff. And then, right under the wire of course, I saw how to take Paul's words and apply them to this holy time.

We are not called to a "grave tending life." Even Mary is called away from the tomb to "go." Maybe we don't owe the old do-it yourself Lent one red cent. Is it time to stretch beyond only giving up and taking on and additionally challenge ourselves to go? I wonder if we fear that if we seek new things and new places and new life and excitement creeps in that this time will lose some holiness. But I see that Paul tells us clearly it will not.

God's Spirit beckons. How will you answer?



March 15, Lent IV - Friday

By: Austen Crossley

Jeremiah 23:1-8 Psalm 102 Romans 8:28-39 John 6:52-59

I was born into a wonderful family. My parents have been happily married for over 40 years and remain deeply in love. They place great stock in being good parents, raising well-adjusted, confident, self-sufficient, happy children. All through adolescence as much as my sister and I pushed and goaded and challenged they made it clear, and we knew, how much they loved and supported us, however misguided our choices might be. They were there for us.

Three years before I was born my parents were in a terrible car accident. It was determined after the fact that a drunk driver had abandoned his car across an unlighted stretch of highway south of San Francisco and in the foggy dark night my parents didn't see it until just before impact. They were the first car in a massive multi-car pileup. My mother recalls looking at my father's legs showing below the caved-in side of the car and knowing he was dead. He wasn't, but he was in a coma and sustained many, many injuries that required a long recovery.

The story of "The Accident" is so integral to our family narrative I can't recall being told it, only knowing it. I wasn't born when it happened, but still it informs a part of who I am. I see and feel the hand of God in our family, for had his will blown a different direction the blessing that is our family might not have been.

***Heavenly Father, help us to remember that your love for us is deep and enduring, a solace for us in times of difficulty and a source of great joy forever. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.***



March 16, Lent IV - Saturday

By: **Colin Holden**

Jeremiah 23:9-15 Psalm 107:33-43, 108:1-6(7-13) Romans 9:1-18 [John 6:60-71](#)

67 “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. 68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

All too often, Jesus and I enter into this discussion: Colin, they did not treat you right; don't you want to leave too? Colin, your expectations were not met; don't you want to leave too? Colin, you have been disappointed; don't you want to leave too? Colin, you are right and they don't agree with you; don't you want to leave too?

Many times, without thinking, I strap on my self-righteous running shoes and I'm out of here. I am well down the road when I slow down and start to breathe in some sense. And Peter's perfect question enters into my head: where the heck am I going and to whom do I belong? The lessons in my faith journey are tough. They run counter to what I often hear and experience in my week, and without focus and intention, can rule the day.

This Lenten season, my challenge is start each day with the simple meditation, Lord, to whom shall I go? When life presses in, I will go to You. When loss comes, I will go to You. When I need help in preserving relationships, I'll go to You. When loving is hard, I will go to You. When peace and rest are needed, I will go to You.

***Lord, grant me the wisdom to go to you in all things and the courage to follow the answer.***



March 17, Fifth Sunday of Lent

By: Terry Demler

Isaiah 43:16-21 Psalm 126 Philippians 3:4b-14 John 12:1-8

As I try to understand the readings for the Fifth Sunday in Lent, I am mostly struck by the meaning of the season and the profound impact it had on my life a year ago and the rebirth I have gone through since then.

Lent: Spiritual discipline, sacrifice, repentance, and the reflection on the life and death of Jesus Christ. All things I hadn't necessarily associated with Lent in the past.

Last year I was fortunate to participate in a Lenten study group. The lively discussions and camaraderie around the true meaning of Lent was a special time in my journey here at SMAA. During the time of this study and within a week of today's date, I lost my sweet momma. Although she was 94 and ill, the loss was more than I could bear. The support of SMAA and specifically, the Lenten study group provided immense help as I began to cope with her loss.

The readings for today are about restoration and looking ahead to a greater prize. Particularly in Paul's letter to the Philippians, I am struck by the call to continue my journey and draw on the resources of this wonderful place to help me in my personal and spiritual goals.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Jesus Christ.

These words from Paul resonate very strongly and help me to fill the void I have felt in this past year. As we all look towards the Easter season, let's be reminded of the greater goal and the support we are fortunate to have for our faith here at SMAA and the community of kind, loving hearts to help us along the way.



March 18, Lent V - Monday

By: Sheryl Wylie

[Jeremiah 24:1-10](#) [Psalm 31](#) [Romans 9:19-33](#) [John 9:1-17](#)

In reading today's lessons, I can't help but think of the 1985 hit "Everyone Wants to Rule the World". It's about everybody wanting power and the misery it causes. I think it's ironic that it was performed by a rock band named Tears for Fears.

Do we fear not having power, not having control, not having the last word? Looking around me, I think that society scoffs at dependence on others and praises those who have risen to the top by being in charge. Toddlers are applauded when they learn to "do it by themselves." Teens often butt heads with their parents over control issues and strive to beat out peers in class standing and athletics. We adults want to win that argument with our spouse, because, of course, we are always right. We want the biggest house; we want the smartest kids; we want our political candidate to win; we want to have it our way. We are seduced by self-sufficiency, control, and power.

But where does this really lead? To stress, to self-centeredness, to distrust, to detachment from others, controversy, to conflict? On the world scale, the struggle for power can lead to war.

The tone of today's readings is somber. Everyone seemed to be in conflict with others. There was not much happiness. Even when Jesus brought sight to a blind man, the Pharisees didn't rejoice. They didn't see the light, the majesty of the miracle, and believe Jesus to be the Messiah. Instead it was a head-on collision. They were too caught up in being right in terms of the rigid rules about the Sabbath. They were threatened by Jesus and didn't want to concede any power to him.

David faced personal tribulation brought on by his enemies. He was King but did that give him peace? The guy on top is often threatened by others who seek power. Nonetheless, David found his peace by trusting in God, his rock and his fortress.

Romans 9 tells us that God is sovereign, all powerful. We are not. We can't rule the world. God has absolute authority, but with that authority he has given us the freedom and the responsibility to accept the gift of grace through Christ Jesus.

It may seem hard to relinquish control to God. But in actuality, if we let go and freely accept the gracious gift of God, I think we'll ultimately say, "that was easy."

***All powerful and gracious God,  
Help us to not crave power,  
Help us to trust you,  
and help us to accept the greatest gift of all through Christ our Lord. Amen.***

March 19, Lent V – Tuesday

**By: Kevin Huddleston**

Jeremiah 25:8-17 Psalm[120], 121, 122, 123 Romans 10:1-13 John 9:18-41

## **STANDING IN THE SUN**

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Standing in the Sun  
Heat rising like a tsunami  
Water, the source of life  
Mixed with salt  
Stings my eyes  
Blurring my vision  
Causing me to wince, squint at the faces that  
drive by

Somehow they become distorted, distended  
images  
I no longer see the *imago Deo*  
I see the devil inside

Selfish, self-absorbed, self-centered strategy  
Become as plain as noonday sun  
I feel it gnawing at my soul.  
The great NOTHING that pretends to be  
something.

Something terribly wrong with life.  
too busy  
too full of things  
too full of myself

As empty and thirsty as if in the desert for  
weeks,  
NO, the desert is in me.  
Misused, misspent, missed the point  
spiritually starving in success;  
busy, busier than ever  
not sure I know where I am going  
why I am even going there.  
Manna—monotony— misery.

I have misplaced my faith in myself.  
I have misplaced my way of understanding of  
the way.  
I have misplaced my hope in the belief that I  
alone can pull myself up by my bootstraps.  
I have misplaced my trust;

Across the sea,  
like the call of a foghorn,

the bright light of a watch tower,  
above the noise of the waves comes the  
question:  
How much will you steal from God this year?  
How much of the life God has entrusted into  
my care will I dare to keep?  
Embezzling, exploiting, purloining of a sacred  
trust?

A picture has been held up to me  
a mirror reflecting  
the truth,  
the way,  
the life I now live.  
It is a way that brings no peace, nor am I at  
peace

Caught in quicksand of culture  
the harder I fight  
the quicker I sink  
I am up to my ears.  
Gasping, gulping for air, for life, for my soul.

Life is a gift  
a crocus in winter  
A snowflake in July  
to be nurtured, nourished, treasured,  
protected  
so that it may grow into the *imago Deo*



March 20, Lent V - Wednesday

By: Dana Juett

[Jeremiah 25:30-38](#) [Psalms 119:145-176](#) [Romans 10:14-21](#) [John 10:1-18](#)

Today's readings are rich in showing the character and love of God. Jeremiah pleads with the Judeans to repent and return to worshipping the true God. His warnings of the dire consequences of God's judgment for their rebelliousness hits very close to home.

Also, if we did nothing else today but read and reread the petitions, confessions and professions of the Psalmist and felt a similar devotion, passion, contriteness, reliance and trust in God and His word, the day would truly be sacred. Taking this kind of prayer and praise into our daily lives will serve us well, no matter what God puts in front of us each day.

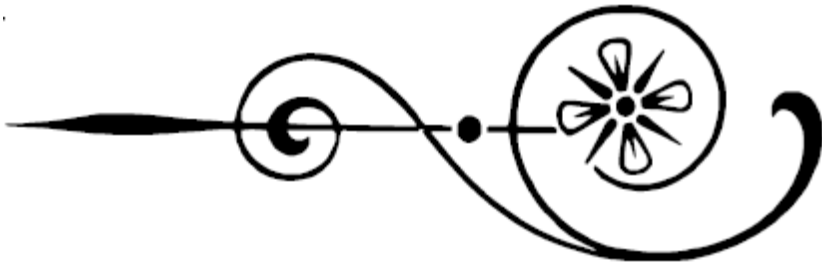
Likewise, grasping the richness of John's analogy of Jesus being our Good Shepherd should give us great comfort. William Barclay tells us "the necessary characteristics of the shepherd were constant vigilance, fearless courage, and patient love for his flock". What an incredible gift to have a divine spirit know all about us, give us guidance, protect us from danger in whatever form it appears, and ultimately be willing to die for us. Furthermore, Jesus is an 'Equal Opportunity Good Shepherd' as he does this for all mankind. Can we have any greater blessing or be loved more fully? Knowing this also guides us to discern when we are called to be the sheep, and when we are called to be a good shepherd to those around us.

While these passages are meaningful as they are both comforting and challenging, I feel the most conflicted over Paul's words in Romans. He tells us one cannot believe if they have not heard the Word of God and they cannot hear the Word of God unless someone preaches it to them. So, if we count ourselves as 'believers' then we are called to preach the good news to those around us. There's the big 'E' word again (evangelism). When I read this I start to question my own faith. I know intellectually I am only called to preach the Word and am not responsible for the outcome as that falls in God's court. I get squeamish as I have never really felt evangelism as one of my gifts or real interests.

In wrestling with this I feel like one of the people Boa and Kruidenier refer to in their book *Romans*. They say "May we be people of *passion* more than *fashion* as we take the good news of the gospel to a waiting world". Their words cut deep as I realize I often feel more comfortable with the fashion of calling myself a Christian than living the job description. Luckily, there is comfort in verse 21, "*All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.*" The realization of the outstretched hand in my life starts to sink in and I feel more at peace. I also wonder why I have not reached for it more often.

The loving hand has shown itself in those that came to tell me the good news and those that came to comfort me in my time of need. Realizing this I begin to appreciate what a precious gift I have been given through these speakers of the Word. The uneasy feelings of responsibility, obligation and guilt start to fade and a more joyous feeling comes. Joy in the prospect of passing the gift of the Word to someone else willing to listen and hoping it will be what they need to hear. I don't yet feel naïve enough to think it won't be difficult or uncomfortable, but know I must try. That effort will require grasping the outstretched hand and receiving the guidance it gives. Maybe I can do it after all!

*Most Gracious Heavenly Father, thank you for the unconditional love you give us as you reach out to us wherever and in whatever condition we find ourselves. Nudge us to place our hand in yours so we may be open to sharing your Word and your ways in all our relationships throughout our lives. In your Son's name we pray with thanksgiving. Amen.*



March 21, Lent V - Thursday

By: Suzanne Finan

Jeremiah 26:1-16 Psalm 131, 132, [133] Romans 11:1-12 John 10:19-42

### Courage

Courage is the first word that comes to mind as I read the passage from the *Jeremiah 26:1-16*. The Lord gave a command and Jeremiah carried it out, knowing full well that his own life was at risk. Often when I read about the heroes of the Bible, as I call them, I wonder how it would feel to be so completely selfless that the word of the Lord would come before any earthly desire that one might have. I think of this often, especially when I have a hard time saying no to the smallest earthly pleasure most days. The example that comes to mind in my life is keeping a Sabbath day (Exodus 20:10 - *but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall do no work...*). For several years now I envisioned our Sundays to be just this: a quiet, electronic-free day of reading, sitting in good conversation and closing with a large family meal. As a working mother of four young girls, most people laugh out loud at my attempt to keep Sabbath at all. In all practicality, Sunday is some of the only time our family has to get ready for the busy week ahead. To keep Sabbath on Sunday afternoon would require a great deal of preparation and discipline on our family's part, as many of my Jewish friends can attest to. However, like Jeremiah, I feel many weekends God is practically screaming to me to slow down and take moments that are truly for contemplation and rest. Yet I ignore His voice and continue on with our chaotic schedule. Jeremiah boldly spoke that the Lord commanded if the people of the towns of Judah did not change their ways destruction would come.

As I contemplate this story and put it in the context of today's world, I wonder what my own destruction might be if I choose to ignore His command. Will it be anxiety, depression or other health issues? Maybe it will come in form of a lack of concentration and attention to details? Most devastating to me would be a lost precious moment sharing and connecting with family and friends. These sobering thoughts are what keep me striving for the courage to create this Sabbath for my family. I say courage because it means going against what society bombards us with every moment of our life. Every day new social media is being developed to keep us distracted. Keeping oneself distracted means not ever having to truly go deep into relationships with others.

Recently, my husband, who is a terrific chef, has begun a step for a Sabbath by cooking wonderful Sunday meals. There is hope for us yet! This Lenten season, join me in praying for the courage not only to listen to whatever message God is speaking to you, but also to carry out His commands.

***Dear Heavenly Father,***

***Today I pray that Your will be done here on earth. May we seek to listen to your commands, and may you be pleased with our actions. Keep us on the path of righteousness and like the good shepherd keep watch over your lost sheep.***

***In Your Son's name-***

***Amen***

March 22, Lent V - Friday

By: Beth Hise

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-13 Psalm 22 Romans 11:13-24 John 11:1-27

“My God, my God, why have you deserted me?” Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46

This verse, written by two different authors separated by nearly 800 years, reflects the anguish of the Psalmist and the agony of Jesus as he hung dying on the cross.

And these are our words as we struggle to see God’s grace in senseless tragedies which infiltrate our world and our souls. We ask, “Where was God in Newtown, Connecticut? Where is God in Afghanistan, in Syria, in the hungry bellies of 25% of Dallas County Children?”

We wrestle with our doubts, our limited understanding of God. Scripture reveals a God who displays every possible human trait: loving, jealous, vindictive, forgiving, merciful, vengeful, slow to anger, quick to judge. Does He cause us to suffer? Is there a plan for each of us? Is God in complete and total charge or do we have the ultimate gift of free choice? Surely, a God who created the universe of over 100 billion galaxies should be powerful enough to intervene, to protect, to overcome evil. And doesn’t God love each and every one of his children? Didn’t Jesus Christ come to proclaim the Good News to all of us?

How are we to find God among these questions, paradoxes, these debilitating losses and pain?

As a parent, I have realized the importance and need of letting go of my children’s lives so that they may grow in strength, wisdom and independence. I must quietly sit on the sidelines and watch them choose their paths. Perhaps God the Creator does the same with us as He permits us to navigate our lives, answering His invitation to allow him into our hearts and souls – or not.

Regardless of our choice to believe in God, to search for His presence, to dedicate our lives to His service, I believe that it is impossible for God to separate Himself from us or our lives. His life-giving Breath is in each cell of every part of creation. He is present in the joys but even more present in the suffering and pain which we experience. Jesus Christ was never more human than when He was hanging in agony on the cross. God is with us, using our hearts and souls and bodies to redeem the darkness and the tragedy. We are His ambassadors who will bring the hope of healing and the power of love to our world.

***Dear God, when we are totally and utterly lost, when we have lost our vision and darkness overcomes our souls, grant that we may glimpse your eternal presence in the smile of a friend, the warm embrace of someone we love, the unexpected generosity of a stranger. May we feel your love in the pink sunrises and the glitter of cloud-filled dusks. May we follow you in strength and courage through the beckoning of babies’ eyes and the tiny hands of little children. Remove our blinders, dear God, so we may witness the miracles of the ordinary and transmit your healing love.***

March 23, Lent V - Saturday

By: **Andy Sahl**

Jeremiah 31:27-34 Psalm 137:1-6, 144 Romans 11:25-36 John 11:28-44

Jesus is shouting!

John 11:28-44

A big part of my work at St. Michael as the director of youth ministry is to hang out with high school kids, often with no more of an agenda than to hang out and be in relationship. Often I visit school campuses for lunch or to watch a volleyball game or musical performance.

I am always struck by how different a young person can be around church and at school, and I don't mean "good behavior" vs. "bad behavior." What I often see is a young person that wears cowboy boots at school and only dress clothes to church, or they love the latest rapper, but eat their lunch in the orchestra hall because they love being around their orchestra friends (you might expect their taste in music to be different).

This "testing" of different ways of being is an important developmental task for young people. I often refer to it as young people having three or four hats, and they change their hat based on their context. As adults we tend to be a little more consistent in our personality across different contexts. And then God shows up, rocks our world, and gives us a new "hat" to try on, and we begin to wonder if this "new hat" is who God is calling us to be.

Jeff and Laura were a young couple with small children. Jeff was an executive at a technology company; Laura was a supermom/artist. Laura was good at crafts and the youth group kids seemed to like this couple, so we asked them to come on our summer mission trip (involving running a craft/art centered day camp).

Jeff and Laura thought they were coming along on this trip to hang out with kids and do art, but God had something else in mind. As a result of going on a high school mission trip as adults, Jeff and Laura entered into a courageous, lifelong journey where their entire purpose changed to focus on changing the world (particularly the inner city) to be more just. Their journey included career changes, new friends, and new conversations with old friends. They had a "Lazarus moment", as if Jesus were standing outside of their tomb yelling at them.

I don't expect that we're ever going to see another "Lazarus moment", where a person who was dead for four days rises and walks. But I do imagine that there are a number of people who Jesus is yelling at to "rise up and walk," to use their gifts and skills to serve the kingdom in a life-giving, life-affirming way. Jeff and Laura had a taste of a new life on their trip, and anything other than a lifestyle of serving others would have felt, to them, like a "dead" life.

***God, we pray for disruptive, radical Lazarus moments in our lives. Give us opportunities to serve you with significance. Call us out of the dead places in our lives and show us how to live a new life with you. Amen.***

March 24, Palm Sunday

By: **Dee Dockery**

Luke 19:28-40 Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 Isaiah 50:4-9a Philippians 2:5-11

Palm Sunday is fraught with paradox: During the preceding months, Jesus has been teaching near the Sea of Galilee, gaining a following, gradually migrating to the south, and he now enters Jerusalem, the center of religious authority, continuing to teach within the temple. In the context of his itinerant life, it is a glorious entry to the city, with disciples and others laying garments on the road in front of him. But in the context of the nearby temple, the procession, with Jesus atop a borrowed colt, remains humble. And as the Biblical reader knows, Jesus is only days from his crucifixion at Golgotha. Is Jesus powerful or vulnerable? Is Jerusalem hailing him or mocking him? Will his mission succeed or fail?

All of the above. Jesus teaches us that there is a parallel universe, not easily seen but in fact fuller than our mortal world, in which God's law predominates, sometimes defying earthly notions of success and correctness. In God's world, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner." Living in this godly counter-culture might irritate our secular neighbors, yet "I [give] my cheeks to those who [pull] out the beard," knowing that in the final day, my adversaries "will wear out like a garment" (a little strong, but you get the idea).

The Palm Sunday circumstances are a sacrament of this dichotomy between God's world and the secular world. Those who live holy lives, especially Jesus, walk along the nexus of God's world and the mortal world.

***Dear Lord, during your earthly life, you emptied yourself, taking the form of a servant. Because of this, you are now highly exalted. Let Palm Sunday serve as a sacrament, reminding us of the tension between your world and the earthly world. Like Jesus, let us walk at the nexus of these worlds. Amen.***



March 25, Holy Week Monday

By: Elizabeth Lang

Jeremiah 12:1-16 Psalm 51:1-18(19-20) Philippians 3:1-14 John 12:9-19

*Please reread the beginning of Jeremiah and the whole passage from John.*

Lent started early for me one year. In late January I miscarried for the sixth time. That Lent I prayed a poem by Gerard Manly Hopkins that starts with Jeremiah's lament. While Jeremiah acknowledges that God is "in the right," nonetheless, he presses charges against God. He asks,

Why does the way of the guilty prosper?  
Why do all who are treacherous thrive?

Using Jeremiah, Hopkins writes:

Thou art indeed just Lord, if I contend  
With Thee; but, sir, so what I plead is just.  
Why do sinners' ways prosper? And why must  
Disappointment all I endeavour end?

Wert thou my enemy, O thou my friend,  
How wouldst thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost  
Defeat, thwart me?

These were my questions during that dismal Lent when I felt betrayed by and detached from my body. Colors muted into pale pastels, grays, and beige. Sound carried no music. I felt as though I absorbed heat without feeling or emitting warmth. Intellectually I knew that trusting God and serving as a Christian educator did not protect from life's grief. Emotionally I complained (as did Hopkins) that although the wicked thrived and nature flourished, I could "not breed one work that waked."

But here is the really wild part. Hopkins ended his lament with the prayer, "Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain". As Lent moved on, I focused on that prayer. The Lord of Life did send my roots rain. At the Easter Vigil that year, I became fully alive. My senses were thrilled by the blaze of light and color, the fragrance of incense and flowers, the sound of glorious music. If I had not gone into a kind of death that Lent, I would not have entered Easter with such joy.

Who would not follow the one who brought such life? Because Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the crowds followed Jesus. They shouted "Hosanna" as they entered Jerusalem with Jesus. Those who opposed Jesus saw the raising of Lazarus as their biggest threat. Because Jesus had power over death, he attracted people but threatened those whose peace depended on keeping people in order and denial, "saving" them from enduring loss and gaining life. Those opponents lost. Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection testified more powerfully to His glorification through God.

*Lord of Life, send our roots rain so that our lives may testify to your power for resurrection. Let us follow Jesus, willing to undergo the repeated pattern of descent and ascent, death and resurrection so that we know eternal life. Amen.*

March 26, Holy Week Tuesday

By: **Greg Pickens**

Jeremiah 15:10-21 Psalm 6, 12 Philippians 3:15-21 John 12:20-26

There is a distinction made between a vow and a promise. We are all familiar with promises. A New Year's Resolution is an obvious example of a promise. Promises are wonderful things and can be the glue of friendships and business relations. People will make promises (or resolutions) with all good intentions, and yet we know that promises are abandoned -- some with good cause. Things happen, schedules change and a promise may not be kept -- few think anything is amiss if the reason is good enough.

But a vow is a very different thing altogether. A vow is defined as a special sort of oath -- it is a solemn promise or pledge where the Divine is both the witness and the recipient of the pledged action. Today is Holy Tuesday, a special day for many clergy in our diocese when the ordained pause from ministry to gather, reflect and rededicate themselves to the vows made at ordination. It can be a day to ask some introspective questions. How did the clergy person do in performing her or his vows? How can he or she change to true-up behavior with the ordination vows?

Funny thing about an ordination vow, no one really expects to be able to perform them over the long term and under their own power. It would be impossible; the call is too high, the obstacles to success are too many. The readings for today are bold witnesses to the power of the Lord. It is the Lord who calls us to do Kingdom work. It is the Lord who provides the power to work for the greater good in a way that we could not do on our own.

Meditation: Find some quiet time to spend with the readings above. Think about a vow you could make to the Most High. Would you venture to make a vow to advance the Kingdom of God in some way that could not be done under your own power? Write down the ways you might be able to live into a commitment like this and resolve to take action today.

***Then say: Amen.***



March 27, Holy Week Wednesday

By: Peggy Carr

Jeremiah 17:5-10, 14-17 [Psalm 55](#) Philippians 4:1-13 John 12:27-36

When I was in the second grade, my mother made me wear these awful brown, high-top shoes to school, and I hated them.

Out on the playground one day, there was a wonderful puddle of water and my best friend and I proceeded to jump in the puddle several times—I hoping that my shoes would be ruined. Our socks and shoes were drenched and we were sent to the principal's office. After being questioned about why we had done this, the principal tried to reach my mother to bring dry shoes and socks to school. This was probably the one time in my life that my mother wasn't home in the daytime so the office then had to call the Emergency Friend number in my record. Somehow, Mrs. Murray, who lived up the street, got dry socks and shoes and brought them to me. I was a bit nervous walking home from school, thinking that my mother might have heard about my misbehavior (why would I think she hadn't?) She told me I had to walk up the hill to Mrs. Murray's, apologize for my behavior and thank her for bringing the shoes and socks to school. I begged and begged for a spanking rather than having to apologize—to no avail.

I can still remember how I felt, walking up that hill, sobbing all the way. I rang the doorbell and Mrs. Murray came to the door. Through my tears, I told her how sorry I was for my misbehavior that caused her to have to make a trip to school, and she was so very kind in her response, thanking me for coming to tell her. I remember how much better I felt after I had apologized. The next year, the Murrays moved to California.

Fifty years later, Mrs. Murray was in Memphis and came to visit my mother who was sick, and I happened to be in town. During the course of the conversation that afternoon, I told them of my memories of that terrible day and they both laughed and laughed. Neither one of them could even remember the incident that had caused me so much grief!

This reminds me of how our Heavenly Father is when we go to Him in trouble—which He already knows. We can feel our dismay at what we have done and try to apologize for our behavior, asking for forgiveness, which lifts our burden. He receives our confession and, through His grace, forgives us. And then He forgets. I had carried this memory with me for many years and neither my mother nor Mrs. Murray even remembered that day. How much more will Our Lord forgive us and forget when we go to Him with our problems.

***My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught. . . .My heart is in anguish within me. . . .Fear and trembling have beset me. . . .Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you." Amen (Psalm 55)***

March 28, Maundy Thursday

By: **Brenda Sol**

Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14 Psalm 116:1, 10-17 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 John 13:1-17, 31b-35

One summer, while the rest of our confirmation class went on a float trip down the Missouri, one of my best friends and I went to Camp Metigoshe located in the Turtle Mountains on the Canadian border. Her family had vetoed her participation in the river voyage, and my family was always happy to have a new driving destination, so off we went.

Camp Metigoshe was amazing to us on many levels. First of all, coming from the Montana prairie, we were awed by the setting. We were also thrilled that we were the only two girls in our age-division because that allowed us to have many “adult” conversations with our female counselor; not to mention that the high school area of the camp was separated from the “little kids” by a long hike and a swinging bridge. The ten of us cooked all of our own meals, and had free reign of the sailing boats and canoes—sometimes we paddled “all the way” over to Canada! Even our worship times were distinct from the rest of the camp. Julee and I felt as though we were on our own and were coming into our own!

I’m sure this coming-of-age feeling led me to the conclusions I drew about the foot washing ceremony we had one night. We must have read today’s Gospel as part of the service, but I don’t particularly remember it. What I remember more was that washing each other’s feet somehow felt like another “very grown-up” thing we were doing as independent campers. Never witnessing such a ceremony at church until recent years, I thought this was simply an activity our counselors created to mark our spiritual maturity.

Re-reading today’s passage, I realize that while my young thinking was a bit off base, I did “get it” on some level. The disciples don’t just receive the foot washing and then relax into their new status. Rather Jesus directs them to wash each other’s feet. While the ritual symbolically marked their rite of passage, it was also the beginning of additional responsibilities. Having demonstrated that the master will become the servant and the servant the master, Jesus explains they are to live out this example in the world spreading God’s love...person-by-person-by-person.

***God of compassion, be patient with us as we learn how to live into all you have called us to do in this world so in need of your love. Amen.***



March 29, Good Friday

By: Frank King

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 Psalm 22 Hebrews 10:16-25/Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9 John 18:1-19:42

“...and by his wounds we are healed.” The enormity of it presses down and begs me to wonder just how much suffering is required in order truly to be a “follower”. Isaiah pushes the point testifying to just how little my [Lord] had to offer from the world’s point of view as “he was despised and rejected,” unlike me and yet through “the suffering of his soul...my righteous servant will justify many.” The many is us; it is me. And therefore are we not called to do the same? Or not even the same, but just a little? Just to show humility and mercy in our daily walk? A close friend described it as “loving without words.” It is suffering the daily injustices, or the opportunity to touch another in some certain affirming way, without regard to ourselves. “He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth,” as He gave everything. To strip away my ego and live for another is certainly the picture the prophet vividly paints; and maybe it’s to my horror. Loving without words requires a willingness to give with no reward. That is, to live by the example of my Lord. So can I do it? “For he bore the sin of many”...so can I just give a little?

The question sobers me each day in the “real” world of spouses, and children, and parents, and co-workers, and on and on. To love without words is to suffer. It is to tear at the very fabric of my ego, my worldly being and to come face to face with the fact that, if I am to truly call Him my Lord and Savior, I am to suffer -- to suffer the worldly injustices of being for others, as He was.

“...my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up...” And so we are back to faith or at least an eternal perspective, for why else would I consider the question of suffering? And yet, in the end I am left with the single fact – “he was pierced for our transgressions.” Loving without words, to suffer, to shed my worldly self, my ego and live in all ways for others. And to that end, alone, am I called.

***Lord, Christ, I pray for the peace that comes from loving without words in complete and total obedience to your example and instruction. I pray for the necessary courage to shed self, and abide in others. Each day, Lord, cause a little of me to fall away and be replaced by Your Holy Spirit. And though fail as I will, please continue to call me closer to You. Amen.***



March 30, Holy Saturday

By: Ross Badgett

Job 14:1-14 &/or Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24 Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16 1 Peter 4:1-8 Matthew 27:57-66

Let's set the scene: everyone's worst fear has been realized. Jesus has died a criminal's death at the hands of the Romans. The disciples have gone into hiding, fearing for their own lives. Jesus' body hangs on the cross, deserted by friends and foes alike.

Enter Joseph of Arimathea. We don't know much about Joseph, except that he's a rich man. But he springs to action courageously on Jesus' behalf when no one else will. He approaches Pontius Pilate, the very man who handed down Jesus' sentence, and identifies himself as a friend of Jesus and asks for his body. Mind you, Jesus has just been executed like an enemy of the Roman state: it's not a safe time to be his friend. Likewise, Joseph's request goes against traditional Roman customs: normally criminals' bodies were left on their crosses to rot, as a gruesome symbol of what happens when you defy Rome. But Pilate, in a moment of humanity, allows Joseph to take the body.

Joseph takes the body to his own tomb. When you're rich, you get to pick out a nice tomb before you die. Then Joseph performs a burial ceremony for Jesus, but according to Matthew's Gospel only the two Mary's are present: no disciples come. Jesus has been deserted by his closest 11 friends. It doesn't matter: we all know what happens three days later.

Joseph identified a problem, and he provided a solution. No matter that he wasn't one of Jesus' closest friends or family. No matter that he faced significant opposition from all Jesus' enemies in the synagogue. Joseph was a man of action. He's like that one stubborn camel that actually fit through the eye of the needle (Matthew 19:24). If no one else was going to give Jesus a proper Jewish burial, then gosh darn it, Joseph would do it himself.

Like Joseph, our faith compels us to act at times. But it's in our nature to over-think things: we worry about others' perception of us, the consequences of our actions, our comfort level with performing the necessary actions, etc. When we feel that our reservations are significant enough, we choose to be passive. We shy away from action like the disciples, hiding because they got caught up in their own self-preservation. What would it take to ingrain an active mindset in these situations?

Joseph's faith was the guiding instinct that gave him the courage and resolve to do what he felt was right. May we also be prepared for action by the strength of our faith.

***Lord, give us strength to act on faith when You call us. Amen.***

March 31, Easter Sunday

By: Bob Dannels

Have you ever seen a shooting star?

Someone asked me that recently and, of course, my answer was "yes."  
But for a few moments I had a flashback to my childhood.

I remember when I was 8 or 9 years old in the early spring on our family farm -- the air smelled fresh, the wind was crisp -- just after dusk, my grandfather would invite us to sit on the front lawn of the big house and look for shooting stars.

It seemed for several years, my sister and two brothers would see them -- my sister would squeal, "I see one!"; my oldest brother would chirp, "There goes one!"; and my middle brother would exclaim, "Wow, there's one now!" And I would chime in, "Oh yes, uh huh, how nice." But I have to admit that I lied. I believed they were real ... I trusted the experiences of my siblings, and maybe I saw one or two, but I'm not sure I recognized it. I believed that stars were shooting, but I don't believe I ever experienced one first-hand, until the next year. Then it happened; I saw my first shooting star.

You and I know that it's quite possible to see things and believe in the reality of something in a vague and generic sense, but never really recognize it ourselves ... never have a first-hand experience. Like when the church declares beginning today: "Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia."

Now, you and I believe this great truth in the same sense that I trusted the sight and experience of my siblings regarding shooting stars. We hear the squeals, the chirps and the exclamations, but sometimes we're left on Easter morning saying: "I guess I saw it, but I'm not sure."

Gerard Manley Hopkins once used the word of Easter as a verb in a poem:

God wants to Easter in us,  
To be a dayspring to the  
dimness of us,  
To cause a crimson-cresseted east.  
But the barrier wall stands before our face,  
tyrants and demons besieging our space.  
Release the light, the Spirit said to me, the  
Easter in you can set you free.

The subject of the verb Easter is always God, and the object is always us, the people whom God loves. God ever wants to Easter in us, to raise us up from dimness to light; from fear and sin to love; from death to life. God wants to move us from noun to verb.

Jesus once said, "blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

Easter is not only a noun -- to name an event long ago. Easter is also a verb, a reality that meets us in our seeking, our looking, our inquiry, our need. According to Hopkins, "God wants to Easter in us, to be a dayspring to the dimness of us, to cause a crimson-cressed east."

Easter elicits not sympathy for the crucified Jesus, but thankful response to the risen Christ, the One who Easters in us. As we commit more of ourselves to more of Christ, may we be found asking more readily and deeply: "What would the risen Christ have me be ... and do?"

A joyful Day of Resurrection for you and yours, my friends.





Lenten Meditations 2013  
Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church