





# Introduction to the St. Barnabas LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

For Christians, Lent is a time set apart. Forty full, rich and long days to reflect and to pray, to look within, to discover the things in our lives that create distance between God and ourselves, and to consider gently letting them go. Lent is a time to discern how God may be calling us. What might we take on, or let go of, in order to more freely love God, our neighbors and ourselves?

We offer you the St. Barnabas Lenten Devotional and invite you to spend some time each day reflecting on Holy Scripture with our St. Barnabas community. These reflections have been written with great care and attention by the people of our community, and they offer us an opportunity to move more deeply into our relationships with God, with one another and with ourselves.

My heartfelt thanks to all who prayed and pondered and wrote so beautifully from the riches of their own lives to make this booklet happen. This little devotional is a great gift to us all, and it has been my privilege to have had a hand in bringing it to you. I invite you to use it to pray with and to come closer into community by coming to know a bit more of the people who have written these reflections. May this Lent be an especially rich and holy season for us all. Faithfully, Karen†

*Joel 2:13. Rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.*

*“Rend your hearts and not your clothing.”* Rending your garments or clothing refers to the act of tearing one's clothes or cutting a black ribbon worn on one's clothes. This rending is a striking expression of grief and anger at the loss of a loved one. But, in this passage from Joel, God says, Rend your hearts, not your clothing. In other words, tear your heart in two, not your clothing. It is a way of saying, with all the rest God is saying in this chapter, truly commit. Be fully in. Rending your clothing is a good show, but, rending your heart, now that is real grief, real commitment, real devotion. It is a tough line, and one that is often cited, but not always understood. In Lent, we are asked to take a deeper step, to attempt to look deeper into ourselves, deeper into our practice, deeper into our Christian living. We are encouraged to think about how we might, in this day and time, “rend our hearts” for the grief of all we see happening in our world, and to consider just how we might more fully commit to a life of Christian practice so that that world, our world, might be made even closer to the kingdom God envisions for us. On this day, meditate on this idea, what does it mean in your life, now, today, to “rend your hearts and not your clothing?”

The Right Reverend Gregory H. Rickel, VIII Bishop of Olympia

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27<sup>TH</sup>

*Ephesians 5:18b-10. But be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts.*

Our assigned reflection is based on a passage about SINGING, which seems very appropriate for a couple of choir members. Singing was obviously very important to the apostle Paul and to the early Church. The inclusion of music has continued for 2000 years as a key element of Christian worship. Much of the text of our hymns is directly from the Bible; in fact, in looking on the same page as the above passage from Ephesians, a couple familiar hymn verses jumped out at me immediately: “Live as Children of Light”, “Sleeper, Awake!”. I love the thought that many of the hymns we vigorously sing at St Barnabas have been sung by our ancestors for hundreds of years... and are also being sung in churches around the world on the same day with the same enthusiasm. Singing together brings us closer together as a community.

Paul and his fellow members of the early church must have recognized the communal benefits of singing. A quick google search on the benefits of singing yielded a plethora of results: strengthens the immune system, improves posture, lowers stress levels, improves mental alertness, widens your circle of friends, has a calming but energizing effect on people, and even helps alleviate snoring. Who knows how accurate these things are, but I know that there are few things I enjoy more than just letting it rip when singing a favorite hymn at church... and a good tune will sometimes stay in my head for days, maybe weeks; giving me continual pleasure.

When Peggy and I looked at this passage we were both immediately reminded of a writing by St Augustine that Peggy and her sister incorporated in their father’s funeral service: *“So, brothers and sisters, now let us sing alleluia, not in the enjoyment of heavenly rest, but to sweeten our toil. Sing as travelers sing along the road: but keep on walking. Solace your toil by singing -- do not yield to idleness -- sing, but keep on walking. What do I mean by walking? I mean, press on from good to better. The apostle says there are some who go from bad to worse. But if you press on you keep on walking. Go forward then in virtue, true faith and right conduct. Sing up -- and keep on walking.”* (Sermon 256; St. Augustine of Hippo)



So, during this Lenten season, as we read these daily reflections maybe we should, as Paul suggests, sing a bit as a part of our prayers “making melody to the Lord in (y)our hearts.”

Kirk and Peggy Eichenberger

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28<sup>TH</sup>

*Philippians 4:7. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Writing about Jesus' ministry in Galilee, the Evangelist Mark recounts that Jesus fed four thousand Gentiles in the desert from just seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. Jesus first spoke to his disciples saying, ***I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat.*** *Mark 8:2*

After giving thanks Jesus took the seven loaves, broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute along with the fish. After the people ate and were filled the disciples took up the broken pieces of bread that were left over – seven baskets full. Jesus saw an urgent need, felt compassion and miraculously put God's love into action.

Lent is a season of reflection, a time to work on growing closer to God. That doesn't mean drawing back from the world around us, focusing primarily on ourselves. We grow closer to God every time we feel compassion and reach out to someone in need.

Compassion is core to our humanity, our decency. It is a selfless expression of love. Acts of compassion take all kinds of forms: Aid workers risk their lives to deliver medical care and food in worn-torn areas of Syria and Yemen. Big Brothers and Big Sisters bond with at-risk youth. Members of St. Barnabas deliver food and loving support to the Chaplains on the Harbor community in Aberdeen. We reach out to friends, neighbors and family when they are grieving or in pain. We volunteer and donate to organizations that do good work. And we pray for people in need of God's love and mercy. When we are compassionate we connect with God and with the people we help, and those connections are powerful and life affirming.

As we go through life there are times when we all experience varying degrees of physical, emotional, and yes, spiritual pain. Every human being deserves to be on the receiving end of acts of compassion. Lent is an opportune time to heighten our awareness of the pain, the need, in the world around us. When we follow Christ's example by being compassionate we draw closer to God and we make the world a better place.

Mo Godman

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29<sup>TH</sup>

*John 17:23. I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

Sometimes it's best to start at the beginning....especially if one is confused, or even lost. This passage begins with Jesus speaking to his Father, knowing that his time on Earth is coming to an end. And so, in verse 23 Jesus recounts doing his Father's work, which is to make us perfect, or whole; what an incredible gift! I have to pause and give thanks for such a gift.

But there's more: Jesus has made God known, and made God's love known, to the world. Through his life and actions, Jesus has manifested God's love for us. In fact, God loves us as he has loved His only son. That abundance of love, unlimited love, universal love, is hard to comprehend. It is sort of like looking at the sunrise this morning over Mt Rainier - I really can't look straight at that glory. It is overwhelming in the very best and soul-filling way. Thanks be to God.

Linda Maxson

*Matthew 4: Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.*

What initially struck me as I first read this scripture passage was Jesus being “led up by the Spirit” before going into the wilderness. Jesus knew he had to go on this journey of ‘self-discovery’ and He knew that the Holy Spirit was there to help him with the devil's temptations. Because he was human like us, Jesus probably also entertained engaging in some of the temptations offered by the devil. However, he chose to invoke the Holy Spirit which lessened the grip of the devil on his physical and mental being.

Last year at this time, I entered into a dark 'emotional wilderness'. A major work reorganization and questioning my home relocation resulted in a major depressive episode with anxiety. My hijacked mind led me into believing mis-truths about myself such as, "I've made irrevocable mistakes", "I'm not good enough", and "I'm going to feel this way the rest of my life". Real self-doubt enveloped me.

In the thick of this wilderness, I felt very alone and calling on the Holy Spirit was difficult because I was angry with God for leading me into this difficult life chapter. In the few instances I called on God, it felt like I was yelling into an empty well where I got no response. Upon reflection, God and Holy Spirit were there.....I just chose to listen more to those mistruth statements than the voice of God.

What 'wilderness' are you experiencing this Lent? Are you calling on Holy Spirit to lead you through your wilderness or are you enduring the journey by yourself? Feeling God's presence while we are in the thick, dark, brush can be really challenging. However, if we mindfully STOP and take time to 'just be' with our God and Holy Spirit, there are moments of light and clearing that come through that thick, dark brush.

I wish you Peace and Discovery on your own Lenten Journey.

Tony Hansen



MONDAY, MARCH 2<sup>ND</sup>

*1 Corinthians 1:18. For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

In today's society, there is the ever-present message to push yourself forward. To promote yourself, to rise above others. The message of Christ is the opposite. To give without expectation of reward. To love our enemies. To be a servant. This is foolishness to the world we live in, as it was foolish 2,000 years ago when Jesus walked the earth. He manifested God's presence in the world, to show us the love of God. Then in an ultimate act of foolishness, he allowed himself to be sacrificed on the cross.

God's wisdom is foolishness to the social constructs humans have created. In the words of St. Francis, "In giving we receive, in pardoning we are pardoned, in dying we are reborn."

Foolishness to the world, but life giving to those who believe.

Dale Walker

TUESDAY, MARCH 3<sup>RD</sup>

*Mark 1:14. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.*

At the time of John's arrest, Jesus turned away from the state politics of incarceration and punishment that condemned John to prison and then death, to go to Galilee, where he called his disciples to join him in the counter practice of forgiveness and love.

As a Lenten thought, I wonder when Jesus knew of his own arrest and execution. Perhaps it was from the very beginning, or perhaps when he witnessed John's arrest and the cruelty of Herod, Jesus recognized what would lay ahead for him, realizing it was time to begin his ministry of hope and forgiveness.

John was a wild prophet, like many before him, and prophets foretold what was coming or to come, but Jesus was that coming into practice, the manifesting of God's love and mercy, there in the time of Roman cruelty and violent oppression, corruption in the temple, idolatry, and the exclusions of privilege practiced by the rich. Yet right when John was taken, Jesus didn't retreat into despair or fear, but began a restorative practice of healing those with wounds, exalting Samaritans who reached out to the outcasts, forgiving those who had been socially condemned, and preaching the practice of love to those who would listen.

It seems that the season of Lent offers a similar time for us, when dark wounding places can open up for healing in our own incarcerations of spirit, or in the oppressive practices we recognize around us. Lent brings us through those times of Jesus' persecution to His Easter transformation, so that we might move through productive meditations on oppression to imagining, more precisely, how the hope for healing might be fulfilled. Perhaps in Lenten meditations we might find our own inner Galilee, where we can call up our resources of spirit for the radical practice of acceptance and love.

Sue Ellen Case

*Mark 1:39, 45b. And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons...and people came to him from every quarter.*

In Isaiah 61 it says “He came to bring the good news to the poor . . . and set them free.”

Galilee was a small province with many closely spaced towns, villages and synagogues. Because it was so easy to travel between these communities, the good news was able to spread like a firestorm so much so that “people came to him from every quarter”. He found that he had to go to secluded lonely spaces just to be able to preach and heal in manageable crowds. Those must have been heady times for the disciples to witness his unimaginable power and the enthusiastic crush of the fervent crowds. It probably was very easy for the disciples to get lost in the moment.

Likewise, although it is exciting for us to hear the retelling of these miracle stories and the powerful teachings, it can become easy for us to get lost in the excitement of the crowds’ crush. Even some of the people he cured and commanded to “tell no one,” in their excitement, immediately went out and told everyone.

But if one listens to the quiet, there is a gentler voice that commands us to serve. For as Isaiah says, it is this service that sets us free. Unlike Janis Joplin’s words that “freedom is another word for nothing else to lose,” Jesus tells us that the freedom he offers gains us everything. It is the freedom to serve the poor, the less fortunate, the oppressed, the prisoner, the sick and those who mourn.

I receive so much inspiration from music, and one piece that the choir will sing this Lent has words written by St. Teresa of Avila, a 16th century Carmelite nun. The lyrics perfectly describe how Jesus’ example of serving leads us to serve:

“Christ has no body but yours.  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours.  
Yours are the eyes with which he sees,  
Yours are the feet with which he walks,  
Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world.”

We are truly blessed at St. Barnabas to have so much opportunity to be Christ’s body, hands, feet and eyes.

Roger Vielbig

THURSDAY, MARCH 5<sup>TH</sup>

*Micah 6:8. He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

What does the Lord require of you? When I was 23 my husband and I were unable to have children, we contacted an adoption agency, and we were offered a child. We were told that this child's mother and grandmother had histories of mental illness. I had at that time, had no contact with anyone with mental illness, and I really didn't know what to expect. However, I felt that anyone giving birth to a child accepts that that child may have things wrong, and why should I not accept the same risk? Clair was beautiful and very intelligent, but as a teenager started to have problems. When she was thirty, my husband died of cancer, and Clair was pregnant. I doubted that Clair could cope on her own, so I asked her to come and live with me in England. She gave birth to Nicholas. When Nicholas was four months old Clair jumped out of the window and broke her pelvis. From that time, I did the large part of bringing up Nicholas. Nicholas was frequently traumatized by Clair's behavior and an attempted suicide. Clair became more violent. Nicholas talked to his doctor and she advised us to leave the family home, and we moved to America where my other daughter lives. Six months after moving here Clair died, the coroner could not find a cause of death. Nicholas has had a difficult time as he feels if he had not moved away, he could have prevented Clair's death. Nicholas does have mental health problems, but I feel having lots of young people in our house prevents him feeling isolated.

In retrospect I don't feel I should have done anything differently as it was what God required of me.

Amanda Hettleman

*Mark 2:17. When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."*

This passage comes after the Pharisees asked how Jesus could be eating with tax collectors and sinners. How could he? They, the religious leaders of the day, had all the answers. They knew the right ways of worshipping God, of living a pious life. They spent their days teaching others how to be close to God, right? So what was Jesus doing breaking the rules?

I hear this sometimes at home. "Mom, he's not following the rules," "Mom, kids in school aren't raising their hands when the teacher asks a question, they're blurting out the answer and they're not supposed to do that!" How often do we tell God "that's not the way it's supposed to go?" "That's not the way that relationship was supposed to end," "that's not the way we do church."

Jesus surprised the religious leaders by saying that in the same way doctors help those who are sick (not the healthy), he came to call sinners, not the righteous. Not those who do everything right and have all the answers. He takes away the pressure of having to be perfect. And isn't that good news? Because every one of us falls short, even when we think we know what's right and think we are doing things the right way. We fall short. I fall short. We are all sinners in need of God's grace. What a gift, to be surprised by God's grace.

How is God surprising me today? How can I let go of what I think is right and allow myself to be surprised by what God is doing?

Bethany Anderson

*Mark 2:27-28. Then [Jesus] said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."*

These verses are traditionally interpreted as presenting a conflict between following rules (Pharisees) and extending mercy (Jesus) regarding the sabbath. We know that the sabbath concept, in Judeo-Christian culture, is based on the day of rest established in the creation story (Genesis 2:1-3) and subsequently through Moses (Exodus 16:23).

Many years ago I was first inspired by the spiritual wisdom of Fr. Wallace Bristol, our Rector Emeritus at St. Margaret's in Bellevue, who promoted the idea of "adding on" rather than "taking away" during Lent. In my case he suggested adding more rest. He meant this additional rest to include more than an extra hour of sleep or a weekend nap, although those would be considered beneficial. An essential part of meaningful rest, in his opinion, focused on listening to God. Calming the body, quieting the mind, opening the heart and truly listening.

A beautiful prayer for listening comes from Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini, a saint in the Roman Catholic church, *"Every day, with the help of your light, I learn more of your loving care. Continue to increase my awareness of the gentleness of your loving plans. I want to follow the purpose for which I was created."*

I encourage you to also be intentional about setting aside time for meaningful rest and listening this Lent.

Laura Carroll

*Romans 4:9b, 16. "Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness"...in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants.*

I have to admit that I had a bit of trouble understanding the wording of this verse, so I looked into other translations and read more of the chapter. The passages before and after these verses are all about circumcision and justification through faith rather than only through the Law. Through this passage, Paul expands the role of Abraham as the father of the Jewish people to the father of many nations because of his faith in God. The main point seems to be that the promise to inherit the world is not dependent just upon Jewish Law but is available to everyone through faith and the grace of God.

So, what is God asking us to have faith in? I'm not sure it's just about believing in God's existence any more than it is about believing every tenant of whichever denomination or faith group you belong to. Having grown up in the Roman Catholic Church, I know how hurtful and ostracizing the "rules" can be. I also know many from my youth who have lost their "faith," who deny or doubt the existence of God. They are still good people, will they no longer inherit the earth?

So, what does it mean to have faith? For me, Abraham's example of leaving his home and everything he knew and trusting in God's promise is an example of what I think it means to have faith. Taking that first step on a journey full of uncertainty requires a level of trust that I struggle with. I heard a saying recently that reinforces this perspective on faith. "Faith begins where knowing ends."

But doesn't it seem a little Pollyanna to trust that everything is going to work out fine? As my mother used to say - "sure, God will take care of us, but it's our job to pick up our feet and tie our shoelaces." It was her colorful way of saying we must respect the gift of our lives and take care of our own physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. We must use our intellect to know and learn what we can, but that is not enough. At the same time there is a need to trust that God we lead us down a path of opportunity. Opportunity for self-growth, opportunity to help others, opportunity to experience God throughout creation, even opportunity to pass through the refiners fire. In short, opportunity to be what we were meant to be.

Paul also states that the promise rests on grace. So, what is the relationship of grace and faith? I looked for a definition of grace to remind myself. "Grace is the ongoing, benevolent act of God working in us, without which we can do nothing." (John 15:5). Grace is such a lesson in humility!

Abraham's reward is not obtained by obeying the law or just by belief in the existence of God. It is obtained by faith through grace. Even the act of faith itself is only possible through the grace of God. We cannot will ourselves into a deeper faith. It is only through unmerited grace that we can deepen our relationship and our trust in God.

As I move toward retirement, I am disturbed by the uncertainty of what the future holds. I have been riding that ferry five days a week for virtually 27 years. I have been on this career path for 40 years. What will happen when I stop? What is next for me? With God's help, it could be a tentative first step away from "knowing" and into a deeper faith, accepting and expecting the freely given grace of God to hold me up. I really don't know what is next for me, but I believe there is something next and I have to learn to trust that God will lead me to it.

Mary Anne Smith



MONDAY, MARCH 9<sup>TH</sup>

*1 Corinthians 4:20-21. For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power. What would you prefer? Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?*

Corinth was a cosmopolitan city where people from all over the Mediterranean world converged. People of all kinds brought their own religious beliefs. They had very little understanding of the ways of Christian teachings that went against their concept of religion. Paul was in Corinth between 50 and 52 AD bringing a small group of people together to be Christians in a new church believing in God and following Jesus Christ. This was not an easy mission for Paul. After Paul left Corinth, he received word there were many problems in the church including immorality, jealousy, quarrelsomeness, disunity and self-righteousness. Paul wrote this first letter to the Corinthians rebuking them for their behavior. He told the members of the church that he would return and that believers need to demonstrate a lifestyle of Christlike love and purity.

Paul is clearly frustrated with the leaders of the church who are arrogant and prefer talking while ignoring the power of God. He tells them God raises up human leaders like himself as his servants, but Christ should be believer's source of pride. He tells the arrogant leaders he is coming to teach them that the kingdom of God is not about talk but about power. In this scripture, Paul seems to taunt the leaders: "Am I to come to you with a stick or in love with a gentle spirit?"

Paul covers a number of issues in this first letter. I believe the theme of this letter is love. He brings love into focus in many aspects and most significantly in Chapter 13. Of course, Paul wants to come to them with love not punishment. More power exists in loving than in beating with a stick.

I was moved by a recent saying on the sign board at the head of the bay: "The most powerful force in the world is love." That reminded me of a comment made in a sermon by our Rector at All Saints in Phoenix. He said "love is the energy of the universe." Both sayings reinforce God's first two commandments.

I was listening to some of our music recorded over the years and heard the lyrics from the "Circle of Life," a song from the play The Lion King. This lyric caught my attention: "Never take more than you give." What a wonderful way to position love. Clearly Paul gave love to God and to the Christians in Corinth. Paul wanted them to give love to each other and to God. Reverend Karen said "the way we love one another is the way we love God." Surely, Paul brought love, not a stick to Corinth.

Mike Killion

TUESDAY, MARCH 10<sup>TH</sup>

*Mark 1.30-31. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her and she began to serve them.... Mark 1.40-45 A leper came to him begging him to make him clean...Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him 'Be made clean.' The leprosy left and he was made clean.*

These passages of Jesus healing the wounded and ill stirred up within me the following meditation poem. I keep hearing His call to simply *Be with me*- without fanfare, without advertising, with simply being present with Him and the Holy Spirit. This past month I have been beginning my daily meditation with this chant which I find truly brings me deeper into my Centering Prayer practice, a gift I am grateful for, and fortunate to share with you at this time.

**Be here now**

Be with me

Be here now  
Breathe with me

Be here now  
Be with me

Be here now  
Heal with me

Be here now  
Be with me

Be here now  
Breathe with me

Be here now

Be with me  
*Sue Hylan*

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11<sup>TH</sup>

*Mark 4:11. To you has been given the secret of the Kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables.*

This sentence from the Gospel of Mark comes right after the parable of the Sower and the Seed in verses 1-10. That's the one where the farmer sows the seed, some falls here, some there, some on rocks, some among weeds. Then Mark 4:11 appears as the "Great Aside" as some theologians call it.

Perhaps Jesus could tell by the blank stares of His listeners that once again they're not getting the message of his parable. As He's alone with the apostles, they get the interpretation of what it all means – the secret if you will, the lengthy explanation of who is the sower, what is the seed and the ground.

As I hear these words again, I realize I've been all types of soil in my life – unable to sustain devotion to my calling like the clay, stubborn and intolerant like the rocks, thinking I can love some and hate others like the weeds and faithfully denying my will to the law of love that Jesus requests like the fertile ground.

What I like about this Great Aside is that, like the apostles, we have the secret of the Kingdom of God. I hope and feel that it matters only that we do our best to respond well to the word/seed. Each time we try to become this message that Jesus shared, the soil of our being becomes more and more fertile and the Kingdom of God comes nearer and nearer. May it be so especially during this Lent.

Joan Collins

THURSDAY, MARCH 12<sup>TH</sup>

*Hebrews 6:10. God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.*

The letters to the Hebrews were originally attributed to St. Paul, but more recently, due to inconsistencies in style, they are thought to have been written by an associate or pupil of Paul's. The Hebrews were Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem and the purpose of these letters was to encourage these Christians to persevere in the face of persecution. Some of them turned back to Judaism to escape persecution. The previous verses, (6:1-8), are ominous with warnings about how spiritual immaturity and doubt leads to faithlessness and God's judgment. However, the tone changes in verse 9 and becomes much more positive, indicating that these people are not necessarily doomed to judgment. They were criticized for being in danger of falling away, but at the same time they are living out a Christ-like love for others, which God acknowledges. The writer is asking them to be vigilant and not to drift, but to continue in their spiritual growth without feeling intimidated or frightened.

I find this very reassuring as I wrestle with my own faith, which is rather simplistic, based on love. My scientific brain tends to question and doubt some of the finer details. As I become older, I'm more prepared to allow these questions to go unanswered and to accept them as part of the many great mysteries of life. Perhaps this is an easy way out as I'm not really confronting them, but I am attempting to stay open to explore different ways to expand and grow on my spiritual journey. The encouragement to do this through the knowledge of God's love and the love I receive from this blessed community is a gift. We all have different paths to follow, we are humans each experiencing our own emotions and circumstances, and God loves us all as we muddle along through life.

Maggie Ball

FRIDAY, MARCH 13<sup>TH</sup>

*Mark 4:40. [Jesus] said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"*

Fear has been rare in my life, but after a divorce I found anxiety and fright hovering every day, every hour. How could Ted load so much confusion and pain on our four children? These changes upended their previously sunny days. Chaos took over, relationships splintered, unpleasant behaviors showed up, grades suffered. Steven, our middle son said sadly, "I never thought this would happen to us." I still am tearful when I remember those words. Sometimes, the boys would align with one parent and criticize the other, or gravitate toward the parent who was doing and giving them most. The ongoing disarray of life left the boys afloat.

I became angry with God. "If you are really a caring, omnipotent God, why don't you send me the words and the ways to comfort my children? I have lived an honest, kind, church-going woman from birth. Why didn't you take care of me and my sweet children? How could you let this happen to us? Why don't you notice the suffering and make it go away?" I had never felt this deep, dark, rolling black cloud of hopelessness, this consuming anger. I gave up on God. I stopped going to church, not even attending at Easter or Christmas. Yes, I had given up on God; no faith, no church, no praying. I had no relationship with God. He had abandoned me. Months passed before I realized that I was the one who had abandoned God; not God who had left me.

Eight years later, Mike and I met. He was (and is) a loving Episcopalian, teacher in the Episcopal church, and now my best friend. He has a strong faith, a certainty of God's love and omnipotence. He is certain that God arranged our coincidental, unlikely encounter thirty-five years ago. Mike is a model for me and perhaps others. His faith and his capacity for love have never trickled away. More likely his faith and love have increased and flourished.

Reverend Karen's sermons, discussions and conversation inspire and provoke. I feel that I am moving into deeper relationship with God. God is becoming a solid, kind, reliable friend with me. The theme that God is within us and we are in God, that He loves all, is new to me. Now, I am beginning to have a relationship with God. I do feel His presence, at moments. Perhaps, if I slow down my physical and mental rushing, I can spend more time with God.

Judy Tingley

SATURDAY, MARCH 14<sup>TH</sup>

*Mark 5:15. They came to Jesus and saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had the legion: and they were afraid.*

Fear seems to be the natural response to the miracles Jesus performed. Mark has just told us the disciples were afraid after seeing Jesus calm the storm, and here the gathering crowd is afraid to witness a demon-possessed, deranged, self-harming soul suddenly be of sound mind. Am I like them, fearful to witness the powerful force available to me with God?

Suffering is not a consequence of what the man has done, but what he's holding onto - or even more specific, what has a hold of him. Does this not sound familiar when considering any person tormented by addiction of any kind? Jesus issues an invitation to initiate healing: He asks the man's name. Lent is a perfect time to ask myself again, "Who am I? And to whom do I belong?" To be of sound mind, it is best to be near the feet of Jesus.

Take heart, Mark seems to tell us in this story, and over and over in his book. Fear is the norm for any of us contemplating change – be it voluntary or forced upon us. Even those witnessing the miracles were afraid and confused; others walked away – the new reality with Jesus was apparently too much to take. The significance of Lent is not about fear, but rather the invitation to know in a deeper way the One in whom we place our trust.

Julie Dougherty

*John 4:42. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."*

We are invited by the above verse, into the end of one of John's narratives of Jesus's travels. Playing the story from the beginning, we find that he was on the road between Judea and Galilee at a place known as Sychar in Samaria. It was midday and likely hot and being tired he had stopped beside a well while the disciples had gone to find something to eat. While there and still alone, a local Samaritan woman came along with a water jug. However, when Jesus asked her for a drink, the woman did not hesitate to question why he, a Jew, would speak to a woman and particularly a Samaritan. In the process of the discussion it apparently dawned on her that something very unusual was transpiring in this very ordinary place. So much so that in her growing excitement about what she was hearing from Jesus, she left her empty water jug at the well and ran back to Sychar to tell her friends and neighbours about the man she had just met by Jacob's well who proclaimed he was the Messiah.

Her enthusiasm must have been contagious and her telling of her story authentic and beguiling because many of her Samaritan friends were curious about Jesus and followed the woman back. At which point discussions progressed and interest in Jesus mounted, so they invited Him to stay with them in the city. During those two days in Sychar John tells us that many more curious people came to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. It was then that the people of Sychar said to the woman, *it 'is no longer because of what YOU said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world"*.

To a modern mind (at least to mine), questions of timing arise. For me, it is primarily the speed and depth with which the woman connects with Jesus. How can she be so uncritical? Then in the same vein, I wonder about the willingness of a group of Samaritan locals who seemingly without much question, believed the woman's testimony and subsequently followed her for further discussions with Jesus at the well, before inviting him to stay a couple of days in Sychar. What exactly was the instant draw for them? What did they so quickly see in Jesus, before they even met him? Can their "seeing" be transferred down through the ages to me? Is it even possible to believe someone so readily?

It's tempting, beyond vague wondering about these questions to describe the whole event as a miracle and search no further. However, I've come to understand a wider truth about the person of Jesus after a closer look at the story. I've gone from a

somewhat detached repetitious reading of the narrative where the familiar words of Jesus skipped over me, to a more visceral and affective connection with him through a new appreciation of His inner attractiveness. Otherwise, without this luminous inner quality, how did the woman know so quickly his words were true? What drew her with seemingly little hesitation to encourage others to engage with him?

At this point, I'm reminded of a story told by Cynthia Bourgeault in her book The Wisdom Way of Knowing, but originally described in a personal narrative of Africa by Isak Dinesen in the 1930's:

*"One day, out in the bush, she came across a beautiful snake, its skin glistening with subtle, variegated colours. She raved so much about that snakeskin that one of her house servants killed the snake, skinned it, and made it into a belt for her. To her great dismay, that once glistening skin was now just dull and grey. For all the beauty had lain not in the physical skin but in the quality of its aliveness."*

This encounter at the well strikes me as a perfect love duet involving the quality of Jesus's inner aliveness and the woman's willingness to "see" it, in the same way the beauty of the snake could only be seen while alive. In the dynamism and energy of that moment, in this alchemical dance, the woman perceived the truth of who Jesus was and immediately responded by reorienting her priorities, leaving the empty water jug by the well and dashing to tell her friends and neighbours in the city.

In what must have been a relatively short space of time, the woman herself transferred to her friends the same energetic essence she had responded to earlier in Jesus. In turn many believed her and followed to engage further with Jesus.

It seems there are some qualities of inner aliveness that can only come to our conscious awareness in action (love being one). Jesus's inner aliveness and the attention he focused on the woman created a sacred alchemy of awareness that propelled the woman and her friends to action. The question then becomes - do I have the eyes to see the Divine around me in the ordinary moments of my life? Am I able to perceive the vibrancy, energy and beauty at the heart of all things?

Yvonne Rolston



MONDAY, MARCH 16<sup>TH</sup>

*Mark 5:34, 41b. [Jesus] said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease...Little girl, get up!"*

Of all the concepts in religious life, I struggle with "faith" the most. Do I have faith? The question conjures an inner test which I fear I can not pass. I look inside myself, where is my faith? Shouldn't it ride along with me, somewhere deep within? Can I produce it if asked?

This Bible story, of the diseased woman healed by her "faith," as Jesus says, shines light on a meaning that is embodied and real. In the midst of a crowd, this long-suffering woman reaches out to touch the robe of Jesus. He feels healing power flow out of himself, stops, and turns to her. He doesn't ask her to produce her faith; she has demonstrated it in her actions. "Your faith has made you well.

In Greek, "faith" derives from "pistus," which means "to be persuaded." This happens in dynamic relationship, and I can find myself in it. I often feel wretched, like the woman in Mark's story, when I ask for God's help. At that moment, I would fail any litmus test of faith. But in the practice of reaching out – over and over – I enact my relationship with God and am in turn healed by His presence and peace. The lesson of Mark 5:34, for me? "Reach for the robe." And I will be well.

Cathy Nickum

TUESDAY, MARCH 17TH

*Psalm 78:3-4. That which we have heard and known, and what our forefathers have told us, we will not hide from their children. We will recount to generations to come the praiseworthy deeds and the power of the Lord, and the wonderful works he has done.*

This summer I took my kids to a screening of Raiders of the Lost Ark at the Seattle Cinerama. You may rightfully question the appropriateness of taking a 7 and 5-year-old to a film famous for its graphical depiction of practitioners of a harmful political ideology receiving their comeuppance from the titular Biblical relic. But that didn't stop me. I LOVED Raiders as a kid. It was a story that I grew up with, that inspired me at times and that I wanted to share with my children. And I didn't want them to just watch the movie, I wanted them to experience it in a theater where they could feel the reverb of the sound effects, the power of the score and the reaction of the audience.

I think the Psalmist is expressing a similar sentiment. At the time of its writing, probably around 1015 B.C., the writer was reflecting on the importance of telling the story of the Israelites. The importance of remembering and celebrating the awesome power of God and the works that He had done for them. And the Psalm was not meant to simply be read. Psalm 78 is a Psalm of Asaph, a collection of psalms from the temple singers. It was meant to be performed by multiple singers and experienced in the temple.

Reading this 3,000 years later, it reminds me of the obligation we have as Christians to share God's story with the next generation, with our children. And not just simply recount it, but to relate it in a way for them to fully experience the power of God's story in their lives.

Dave Teves

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18<sup>TH</sup>

*Genesis 45:26a, 28. And they told him, "Joseph is still alive. He is even the ruler over all the land of Egypt." Israel said, "Enough! My son Joseph is still alive. My son Joseph is still alive. I must go and see him before I die."*

When Joseph was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, accused of a crime he didn't commit, then thrown into prison, who would have dreamed he was favored by God? It turned out that because of dreams (and plenty of God's favor) Joseph was elevated to a mighty position of power and responsibility. Because of him countless lives were saved. When Joseph's brothers learned this and broke the news to Israel (Jacob), their bereaved father, the old man was dumbstruck. While the brothers may have thought the top story in their broadcast was that Joseph was ruler over all the land of Egypt, all Jacob heard was that the son he mourned so many years was alive! Can you imagine his surprise?

Old and full of days as he was, Jacob knew what he had to do. Psalm 90:12 says "Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Jacob had the wisdom that comes with accepting his own mortality. He had his priorities straight. He didn't waste precious time listening to any more of the news, nor did he waste anger and energy rebuking the sons that had deceived him.

He traveled to Egypt where Joseph, this esteemed ruler over all the land, this man who was so favored by God and Pharaoh, ran to meet the dusty old man on the road and "fell on his neck and wept a good while" like any son who had missed his father.

I have three major takeaways from this passage.

- Jacob, like all of us, was only able to see a small fraction of the big picture and that part hurt a great deal. While God's hand was obvious in retrospect, it was certainly not so at the time.
- Relationships matter infinitely more than power and prestige.
- God makes the impossible possible.

Angie Bickerton

THURSDAY, MARCH 19<sup>TH</sup>

*Acts 17:26-27. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any of us.*

In these scriptures, Paul is preaching from the Areopagus (a high rocky outcropping near Athens) about the greatness and power of God, and that all people are related to each other as brothers and sisters because we all came from one man. Paul is assuring his listeners that God is so omnipotent that He created everything, controls everything, and placed everything and everyone where he wanted them to be.

In a difference sense, these scriptures are saying to us that, although man shall inhabit the whole earth, God intentionally made portions of the earth exceedingly uncomfortable for humans – establishing “the boundaries of their lands” -- and that we should leave unmolested and undisturbed the things that God has placed outside of our boundaries. He has established limitations for us that we do well not to exceed. We need to remain where we have been placed without venturing into where we should not be. There are things not within our control; only in His.

There have been times in my life that I have ventured past the “boundaries of my land.” I have tried to solve problems or resolve issues that are not mine to solve. While I am gladly the hands and feet of God, and am more than willing to do the work that He gives me, when I try to solve problems that need to be given over to God, I am frustrated until I realize that there are certain things of which I must let go.

This passage also makes it clear that all humans were made from one man which means we are all related to each other; we are all kindred. Any differences between us in complexion, features or language should not be used to separate us or cause us to fear one another but are a function of adapting to the land we inhabit and our surroundings. People in different parts of the world have adapted to their environments but we are still fundamentally the same so we should love and respect all humankind.

Most importantly, God is near to all of us; all we need do is reach out to Him. He is there. And He wants a relationship with us.

Kathy Bolles

FRIDAY, MARCH 20<sup>TH</sup>

*Mark 6:50. For they all saw [Jesus] and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."*

I must confess, I do not read much Scripture. I do get something from the readings in church, but it is not my way to spend time with the Bible. I am thankful for Reverend Karen's sermons that provide her interpretations of the readings, bringing present day thinking to bear on ancient words. I was moved, nevertheless, by this short and simple passage from Mark, and felt a sense of comfort and security reading the phrase "*Take heart, it is I.*" I know I have felt fear and terror at times due to an unknown force suddenly appearing, and then felt that subsequent sense of profound relief when the unknown becomes known or recognized. Thank you, God!

To me, this symbolizes God's presence becoming known and trusted in that moment, when one can truly let go and place one's faith in God. Jesus coming upon them and frightening them at first but calming them quickly represents, for me, a lovely personification of the experience "Let Go and Let God."

I chose to do a bit of background work after my initial read of this verse, to learn and understand the context: Jesus had recently fed 5,000 men from five loaves of bread, after which he sent his disciples away on a ship. He later saw them toiling against the wind, and then he came to them by walking upon the sea, at night. Frightening indeed!

As it pertains to Lent, for me the passage symbolizes releasing myself into the hands of God, letting go, trusting that God's love and support will be with me and in me wherever I am and in whatever I do. Giving over the ultimate control of my life to God and to the gifts of Jesus's love and wisdom is something I look forward to reflecting on during this season of Lent.

Will Nickum

SATURDAY, MARCH 21<sup>ST</sup>

*1 Corinthians 10:10. And do not complain as some of them did. And were destroyed by the destroyer.*

Putting this verse in context we find that the Pharisees had been questioning Jesus and His teachings; baiting Him almost. It seems as if Jesus loses His patience. He calls to the crowd in a very powerful and commanding way *"Listen to me, all of you, and understand..."* His tone leaves no doubt that what He has to say is important! Reading the verse and reflecting on its relevance to us today, I kept hearing the words *"Listen... and understand."* Today we are the crowd; He is talking to us and He has something very important to say!

Listen and understand!

Our crowd today consists of mothers anxious for their children, fathers worried about finances and the future. People dealing with the problems of health and aging. Citizens of the world; all of us bombarded daily by frightening news. Political chaos, man's inhumanity to man, global warming, impending pandemics, an unending list of fears.

Listen and understand!

Jesus knows our suffering He suffers with us. What He knows is that being scared and angry means that in certain situations we could hit out; act in anger or disrespect to others. The world is full of frightened, angry, ignorant people acting out their frustrations on individuals or groups of people. An example of this is the recent punching of a Chinese man in a New York subway by a person whose inside fear was clearly the Coronavirus.

Listen and understand!

Jesus comforts us by telling us that all this inside chaos cannot defile us no matter how angry and frustrated we become! What will defile us is if our inside fear and anger manifests as actions against another. Turning inside anger outside defiles! Together, let us pray that we will listen and understand, that we will hear what Jesus teaches and follow in His footsteps.

Carolyn Meyers

*John 9:4-5. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*

In this passage, Jesus is instructing his disciples, reminding them of the work we are called to do. The disciples have just queried Jesus about a man who was born blind, asking if his condition is due to his parent's sins or the sin of the man himself. Jesus explains that neither are to blame, but that *"the works of God should be made manifest in him."* Jesus later heals the man, demonstrating the power of God's healing light.

When Jesus answers his disciples, his tone is not unkind, as these men are his beloved pupils whom he has chosen. He is trying to help them understand the essence of the role God has in mind for us to be the light and there is some urgency for them to digest this information. This urgency is perhaps due to the fact, that Jesus senses he will not always be with them. His desire is to prepare them to be the light and to carry forth God's message and to do His work.

Reverend Karen, in guiding us in preparing our Lenten passages, explains how the Holy Spirit speaks to us through scripture. Upon reflection, I must state that I concur and I believe God is providing me with a gentle reminder. Let me explain that I have long been a bit of a night owl and this is something I am trying to curb in my advancing years. There it is in black and white... *"Night is coming when no one can work."* I have read these lines in several Bible editions and the message is both clear and simple.... night is for rest, when work is to be put aside. Jesus is once again asking us to respect this and to allow each one of us the opportunity to recharge ourselves. Proper rest helps prepare us, enabling us to enthusiastically continue in our efforts to be the light. May this time of reflection and prayer also be a time of rest and repair.

Drucy Burnet Hodge

MONDAY, MARCH 23<sup>RD</sup>

*Mark 7:37. They were all astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."*

These words follow Jesus' healing of the deaf and mute man. Looking at this verse in isolation can lose some of its significance and we recommend that you read the entire healing event as told in Mark 7:31-37.

The first thing we notice is where the healing took place. Jesus traveled to a non-Jewish area primarily inhabited by Gentiles. Could this be a way of reminding us that nobody is excluded from the love and healing touch of God?

A deaf man with a speech impediment was brought to Jesus. Some believe the man was completely incapable of speaking. Imagine what it was like in those days to deal with those obstacles. The crowd does not ask Jesus to heal him but to lay His hands on him. Perhaps they were not expecting healing, just a blessing. Certainly, they would be astounded, or amazed beyond measure.

Prior to healing the man, Jesus took him away from the crowd. Not all of Jesus' healings were private, but he did not want to make a spectacle of anyone. Jesus healed because he was moved with compassion. He was not looking for the admiration of the crowds. After the man was healed, Jesus commanded the crowd not to tell anyone. One reason for this might have been because Jesus came to teach and preach. Miracles backed up his teaching, but he did not want them to distract from his teaching. He also might have wanted to avoid a premature confrontation with the leaders in Jerusalem. But good news is hard to keep quiet, and the people couldn't keep it to themselves. The final words of Mark 7:37 remind us that in healing the deaf and mute, Jesus was demonstrating that he was indeed the Messiah, the Christ who does all things well.

God has given us ears that hear and the ability to speak. May we listen to God's word and grow in sensitivity and responsiveness to the suffering of others. Give us the wisdom to know when to speak and when to rest quietly with Jesus. And when we do speak, may it be in gratitude of God's loving kindness.

Peter DeMann and Paul Roy



TUESDAY, MARCH 24<sup>TH</sup>

*Mark 8:2. I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat.*

Writing about Jesus' ministry in Galilee, the Evangelist Mark recounts that Jesus fed four thousand Gentiles in the desert from just seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. Jesus first spoke to his disciples saying: ***I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat.*** *Mark 8:2.*

After giving thanks Jesus took the seven loaves, broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute along with the fish. After the people ate and were filled the disciples took up the broken pieces of bread that were left over – seven baskets full. Jesus saw an urgent need, felt compassion and miraculously put God's love into action. Lent is a season of reflection, a time to work on growing closer to God. That doesn't mean drawing back from the world around us, focusing primarily on ourselves. We grow closer to God every time we feel compassion and reach out to someone in need.

Compassion is core to our humanity, our decency. It is a selfless expression of love. Acts of compassion take all kinds of forms: Aid workers risk their lives to deliver medical care and food in worn-torn areas of Syria and Yemen. Big Brothers and Big Sisters bond with at-risk youth. Members of St. Barnabas deliver food and loving support to the Chaplains on the Harbor community in Aberdeen. We reach out to friends, neighbors and family when they are grieving or in pain. We volunteer and donate to organizations that do good work. And we pray for people in need of God's love and mercy. When we are compassionate, we connect with God and with the people we help, and those connections are powerful and life affirming.

As we go through life there are times when we all experience varying degrees of physical, emotional, and yes, spiritual pain. Every human being deserves to be on the receiving end of acts of compassion. Lent is an opportune time to heighten our awareness of the pain, the need, in the world around us. When we follow Christ's example by being compassionate, we draw closer to God and we make the world a better place.

Joe Salter

*Hebrews 10:8-10. First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

We are made holy, we are sanctified, we are set apart by Jesus willingness to do God's will, to be the Sacrifice. Once for all time. This was God's will. Jesus came to do God's will.

Often in my journey I remember the things I have done about which I am ashamed. As these things came to mind, I thought each one through, I told God how sorry I am and asked for and accepted his forgiveness for a very specific misdeed, and asked the Holy Spirit to change me.

Sometimes the same misdeed comes again and again into my mind, causing emotional pain, grief, and scary fantasies that grip my imagination. It happened today. But today I reminded myself clearly that Jesus did forgive me, that I am called to live in freedom and joy, and that if I allow my mind to go back again to the misdeed, replaying it over again in my mind, and grieving anew, then I am ignoring God's Word that is true, and turning my back on His Grace, deliverance, freedom life, and joy.

Thus, I stop the grief and the fantasies right in their tracks. Of course, it doesn't work very well unless I grab something good to replace those thoughts in my mind. Sometimes I turn on music. Sometimes I wonder what to think about and am reminded that *anything "right and true, lovely too, honest and of good reputation, excellent ways and all that is worthy of praise--let your mind meditate on these and concentrate on these things...* (from a song we used to sing in a fellowship group I attended for years, adapted from Philippians 4:8). If stumped about what to think about...singing a few bars of that song usually inspires me with wonderful and exciting thoughts that bring life into my mind and my spirit!!

Karen Carncross

## THURSDAY, MARCH 26<sup>TH</sup>

*John 19:38-39a. Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night.*

Right away it strikes us that this is a scene of ultimate solemnity for all who witness it, whether believer or not. Some may feel shock, deep loss and sadness, regret, despair. Others perhaps confused, changed, bewildered. Some may have even experienced relief, if only momentarily.

The custom of the time and place was that criminals were deprived of a proper burial, generally thrown into a common grave. But here was Joseph of Arimathea—a “secret” disciple—accompanied by Nicodemus—who had visited Jesus at night—asking for his body, burying it with great ceremony with myrrh, aloe, and linens, in a never-before-used tomb. Who were these guys? Where did they come from? Why did they do this? Joseph of Arimathea was mentioned in other Gospels to be wealthy (Matthew) and a respected member of the Sanhedrin (Mark), a good man who had not voted with the majority to condemn Jesus (Luke). Nicodemus was likewise a member of the Sanhedrin (or Supreme Council—the body that condemned Jesus). They followed Jesus in secret because they were fearful of their powerful colleagues in leadership.

Rewinding the tape a little, I have often puzzled over how it happened that Jesus rode into Jerusalem to Hosannas and palm leaves lining his path, yet ended shortly thereafter wearing a crown of thorns with crowds shouting for his crucifixion. Reading for this I found that his overturning tables and challenging authority in the temple was a big turning point. Suddenly he threatened the livelihood of the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, and his following was growing. Here it was Passover; the city was crowded with Pilgrims. From the point of view of local leadership, he must be executed to keep Law and Order in the streets. Pilate, as governor of Roman-occupied Jerusalem, must be convinced to order this and carry it out.

So these two fearful leaders stepped forward at a moment of supreme tension, perhaps to the gasps, raised eyebrows, and gossip of many in the crowd. They risked their reputations and the safety of their comfortable lives to give Jesus a respectful burial. What do we learn from Joseph and Nicodemus? They followed Jesus and had done good deeds, yet their efforts had failed. Jesus was dead. Time to turn away and move on? Not these guys! Risking it all, they stepped forward. Going against expectations, against enormous hostility, they completed the work tenderly, with great love and sacrifice, just in

time for the beginning of the Sabbath.

Carrying this story in my heart may help me to speak out, stand up, fight back when it would be easier and safer to stay silent, sit still, lie down. When pressure is great, and courage is called for is the moment to know what we stand for and to act in great faith with unstoppable love.

Barb Bolles

FRIDAY, MARCH 27<sup>TH</sup>

*Mark 9:7b. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my son, the Beloved; listen to him!"*

Jesus had been with the disciples and had been teaching them many astonishing things. When they saw people being healed, they were amazed! Some things they understood, and some things they did not understand. After six days Jesus led Peter, James and John up a high mountain, and there He was Transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, and Elijah and Moses appeared before them, and were talking to Jesus. The cloud then overshadowed them, and they heard the voice. When the vision was gone, they were struggling and wondering how they should respond to Jesus' teaching.

When I tried to imagine how they felt when the darkness overcame them, I remembered times when I have felt a confusion and darkness and lack of understanding. I have learned while on my journey with Jesus, that Spirit really does hear our prayers. Throughout this walk, I have come to learn that the Divine Presence enables us to release and let go of anxieties, and other struggles. When we finally can do this, we can learn to say "I do not know how the Divine Presence is manifesting perfect peace within me. I only know that it is so, and I am grateful.

God always answers our prayers. Sometimes it comes softly, quietly and gently. But sometimes it happens suddenly in amazing and astonishing ways. God is in all of us, and when we pray and listen, the perfect gift manifests in our lives. Sometimes we don't realize it is happening until we look back and are suddenly aware that we have been helped. Jesus is revealed, and the darkness is overcome!

Sally Sulonen

SATURDAY, MARCH 28<sup>TH</sup>

*Mark 9:24. Immediately the father of the child cried out, "I believe; help my unbelief!"*

...is the painful plea of the epileptic's father (Mark 9:24) as he asks Jesus to cast out the demon afflicting his son—a task already tried by the disciples, without success.

We read these words to mean "I have faith, but not without doubts, which must be cured." This clearly is a prayer of the father for himself, not his son. Jesus, hearing this, exorcises the demon, saying that can happen "only through prayer."

This miracle story is sandwiched between two occasions in which Jesus foretells his fate of death and resurrection to some of his disciples, which they clearly do not understand. So are the words of the father in this context more than they seem? God clearly wants for each of us to max out the lives he has granted us, so that we may fully enjoy the gifts we have been given, and live wholesome, fulfilling lives, loving one another throughout. Here we are given the tool to remove the impediments, that is, through prayer, to cast out the doubts that diminish our faith and our lives, as Jesus has used prayer to cast out the demon. Is Jesus not doing just that in the foretelling of his fate, casting out his own doubts and perhaps those he knows his disciples will have when they understand better, and embracing his own *raison d'être* without reservation?

In his new book *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*, Charlie Mackesy's mole reflects "*Most of the old moles I know wish they had listened less to their fears and more to their dreams.*" Is this not a creed to live by? Cast away your self-doubts; have confidence in yourself.

A personal reflection, if I may. In my high school yearbook, my classmate-editors appended to my name a quote from somewhere: "He is able because he thinks he is able." Me, the youngest, near-smallest, non-athletic kid in the class, to be so evaluated by my peers! That attribute had never occurred to me, but I confess that I was then, and continue to be, inspired by the way I was perceived. I did things that I didn't know I couldn't (or shouldn't) do—like hitch-hiking thousands of miles while in college, and teaching at a Big Ten university when I was 20 years old (OK, it was a lab section), and did these things without considering that it might not work out. But, somehow, they did.

It is traditional in Lent to give something up, usually something we like. How about using this Lent to try something a little different, and that is to give up something we would really like to get rid of anyway—specifically, self-doubts about our faith? What's the risk of trying to be fully committed for six weeks? We might find that we have enlarged our lives, and those of the people around us whom we love.

Remember the story about The Little Engine That Could: beginning the long pull of cars up the mountain with doubt, it realized "I think I can, I think I can..." And it did. So can we.

Tom & Karen Beierle

*Luke 10:29-36. 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?'*

In Godly Play, we introduce parables in the same way every time. Parables are always described as *a gift for you that is more precious than gold. It is for you, specifically. And parables are sometimes hard to enter - you need to be ready to hear them and sometimes, even when you are ready, you still don't understand them. They are gifts we can come back to over and over again, and one day you will be able to enter them.*

One Sunday I was telling the parable of the good Samaritan. The story Jesus told before he told this parable is the story of the two greatest commandments- loving God and loving neighbor. I told the story of the traveler, the robbers, the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan and then we began to wonder together... I wonder who the Samaritan's neighbor is? Is it the Priest? The Levite? I wonder, could it be the robbers? No, no, no, the children all say, it is the Samaritan! Then we mix it up a bit. Who is the neighbor of the priest? Is it the traveler? Is it the Levite who worked with him? How about the Samaritan? The robbers? This question is harder. And we progress through all the characters in the same way, ending with the robbers themselves. Who is their neighbor? Now there is much disagreement among the children and one boy asks me in a strong clear voice. "Who is it? Don't you know? We have to look it up and find out!"

As adults we know that parables have deep meaning, meaning that can change or become clear in some new way as our lives and needs change. It is hard to help young children understand this in today's world of instant google answers and attitudes that all knowledge is factual and prove-able. I gently reminded this child that *parables are our stories*. It's up to us to decide what they mean. I guess parables are funny that way. They hit you wherever you are in the moment, sometimes in the most unexpected ways and from the most unexpected voices, even those of children. Maybe especially those of children.

A Sunday Morning in Godly Play, as told by Mary Anne Smith

MONDAY, MARCH 30<sup>TH</sup>

*Mark 9:37. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.*

The ICE van arrives and two families exit and make their way into The Inn in a church basement near downtown Tucson. Having been on a long journey from their home countries, escaping the violence and poverty that was their daily life, they have finally made it to the U.S. and now await a hearing in a year or two that will rule on their asylum claim. But for now, they are no longer in detention and are welcomed by warmth and hospitality for the first time in a long time. Beds await them; showers are down the hall; snacks are set out and served by the volunteers. Once they settled in a bit, you can see their faces and body language change from trepidation of the unknown to relief and hope. Calls are made to their sponsors who arrange bus reservations and tickets.

A game and toy room attracts the children, a television with Spanish-language movies plays on demand, washers and dryers are available and sought-after following days on the road. Volunteers cook and serve three meals a day, make up beds for new arrivals, and support the staff that coordinate intake and activities at The Inn.

Then after several days, a travel kit with water and snacks are put together, goodbyes are said, and a volunteer drives the family to the Greyhound depot and waits with them until boarding is assured. And with a hug, a wave, a handshake, and a wish for *viajes seguros* (safe travels), they're off to their uncertain future with hope and prayers for a new, safe, better life.

If you'd ask me a year ago as a new arrival from Bainbridge Island if I saw this volunteer effort in my future, I would have shrugged at best. But with encouragement from Mother Taylor, a curate at St. Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church, I took the first step involving border ministries and took a shift at The Inn. It's now become a nearly weekly volunteer role. Providing a welcome to a parent, to a child, to our brothers and sisters indeed welcomes our Creator. And the best part is when I transport a family to Greyhound and wish them *viajes seguros*.

Chuck Kirchner



TUESDAY, MARCH 31<sup>ST</sup>

*Mark 9:50. Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.*

When Reverend Karen invited me to submit a Lenten reflection, my immediate reaction was to decline; how presumptuous to think that I might have something profound or insightful to offer our faith community. I reluctantly agreed to participate and when I received my verse, it did seem like it was chosen for me by the Holy Spirit. Not because I had some profound insight, but because I felt it was speaking to me directly.

*'If salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it again?'* This verse comes at the end of a difficult chapter in Mark. My New American Standard version includes a heading above this section - "Dire Warnings." Jesus instructs his listeners that if their hand, or foot, or eye causes them to stumble, they should cut off that member and warns that the consequences of continuing to stumble are serious and eternal.

If we have lost the "saltiness" in our souls, the God-given seasoning that inspires and offers the abundance of living that God promises, what are we to do? The passage implies that our saltiness can be restored, that our life of abundance can be renewed and that by restoring our saltiness we will be at peace with one another. In today's divisive and polarized world, that seems too good to be true.

Lent offers a designated time set apart in the church year to focus on renewal, repentance and reflection. Forty days that we can be more disciplined and more deliberate about our spiritual growth and our faith journey. Lent provides the opportunity to improve our spiritual practices - quiet time, Centering Prayer, meditation, Bible study, spiritual reading or some combination – in order to regain our "saltiness" and in so doing, to find peace and abundant grace. May we individually and collectively engage in a holy Lent.

Linda Heller

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup>

*Mark 10:15. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.*

Often, we hear or read something that is just wrong in our own mind, and makes us react with umbrage. The quote from Mark 10:15 was such to me: “God would not deny anyone to heaven. Not MY God.” The gist is that word “as”. Here Jesus is not saying when a child, but rather with childlike awe and wonder, I think, accepting the loving presence as well as the mystery of God in one’s life unconditionally.

Many scholarly people were probably involved in studying the original Greek gospels and worked together to discern the best translation to match the intended meaning by studying the context in which it was written. Just a simple change, though, often brings clarity as is found in the small adjustment to the language between the King James and New International versions:

Mark 10:13 KJV

15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

Mark 10 NIV

15 Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

The relevance of this understanding is that today, with the various media forms, we hear or read things taken out of context or, with a simple word change, give us a wrong impression, twisting what was actually said. Just as I was defensive reading the King James version of scripture given to me, so are many of us about something we hear or have read without researching the entire context in which the supposedly inflammatory words were said or written. So, it truly behooves us to do a bit of research to keep that kneejerk reaction from hitting us in the chin and in my case, knowing my God is one and the same as He who Christ said to believe in as a child would.

Babe Kehres

## THURSDAY, APRIL 2ND

*John 6:35. Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever come to me will never be hungry, and whoever believe in me will never be thirsty."*

In one of the many references in John to bread and wine, Jesus recalls the feeding of the masses with the multiplication of the loaves and fishes enough to nourish those thousands who have come to see him. To that, he references simply physical hunger of the day's demand. Later in the chapter, he refers this bread that is his flesh and to this wine that is his blood. This is a gift to those who believe in Him and through Him, the Father: *"he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."* John 6:56.

As I am living now in Sarajevo, albeit with my wonderful family, I sometimes feel a little far from home. I am so aware every time I receive communion of the Peace which is unlike any other moment in my day or week or work or life, and of my sense of being home again. I love returning to my seat, and being aware of the quiet movement around me, of the coming and going of my fellow communicants, and within me, as though something everlasting has happened again. It requires nothing of me but to be fully available, present, and open.

Suzanne Ivey

FRIDAY, APRIL 3<sup>RD</sup>

*Mark 10:34. They will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again.*

Jesus makes this statement to his disciples, talking about himself as the “Son of Man,” predicting this drama will happen when they arrive in Jerusalem. The chief priests and teachers of the law will condemn him and hand him over to the Gentiles, to be persecuted and killed. And after three days he will rise again.

Jesus looks unblinkingly at the reality unfolding before him—dark forces gathering to extinguish the threat of the Truth he was teaching and embodying. He states the situation so matter-of-factly. His words give no sign of resistance or rejection of what is in the process of becoming manifest. What would it be like to be so grounded in God’s Presence while in the midst of a fractured, fallen community and world? What would it be like to embody that kind of trust and faith in God as the ultimate Reality, no matter how ugly, how frightening, how threatening the world becomes?

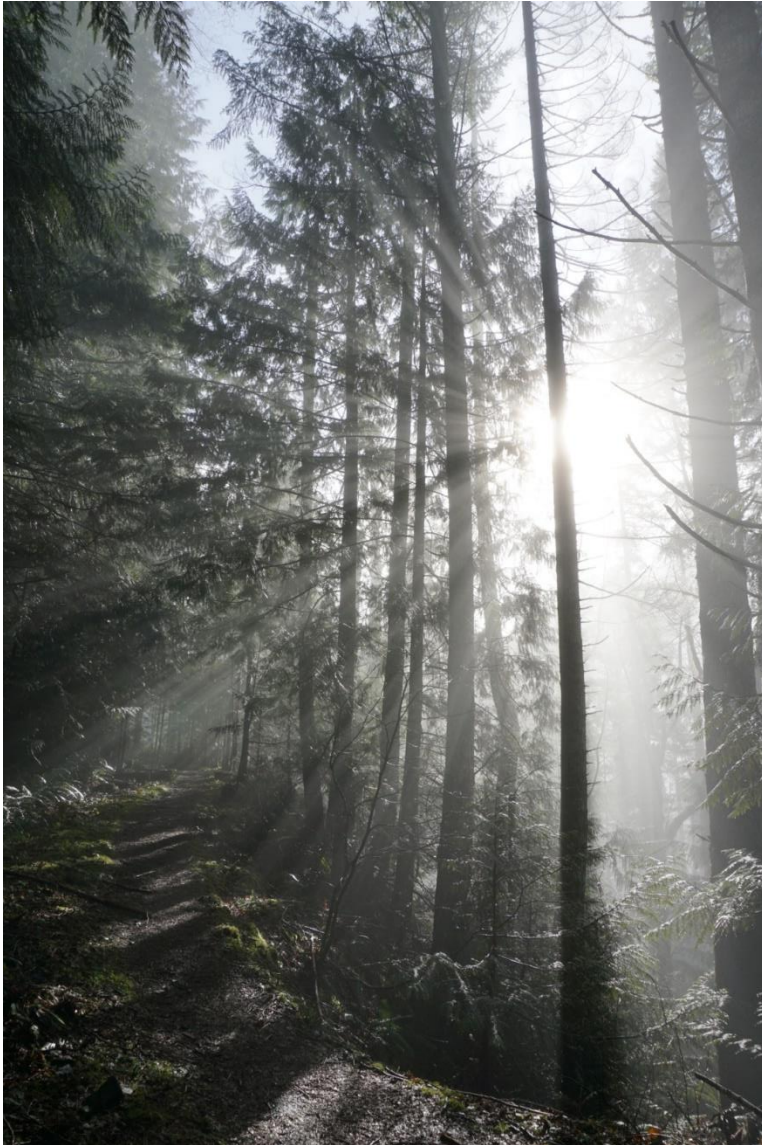
I find so many things in our world nowadays so very ugly, dark, threatening. The polarization of our political life, and the demagoguery based on persecution of “other” around the world especially scares me. It feels like the bottom has fallen out from society, and humanity is falling, descending.

Jesus states that after his abuse and death, “he will rise again.” He trusts that no matter what happens, there is and will be a Risen Reality that the world has no power to destroy. I pray to trust as Jesus trusted, in God as Ultimate Reality transcending and yet part of a manifest world that swings between light and darkness, creation and destruction, order and chaos. And in a very personal God who, no matter what happens, loves, supports, holds, calls me to a Risen Reality.

Kerry Grant

SATURDAY, APRIL 4<sup>TH</sup>

*Mark 10:49c. Take heart; get up, he is calling you.*



*Photo by Megan Koehler*

Wow. God is there, go!

Megan Koehler & Heidi O'Brien

*Matthew 26:43. When [Jesus] came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy.*

Sleep is a sacred institution in our home especially during the work week with Horacio (and Bacon) being a faithful observer. He approaches bedtime religiously knowing consistency and eight hours are essential to his (and my) wellbeing for a productive and happy subsequent day. I am, however, a heathen at night with Horacio needing frequently to remind me to sleep even long after we've gone to bed and he wakes to find me lost in the temptations of the internet. I know all too well his understandable exasperation; come morning on the other side of this fought sleep I am most unpleasant.

I think Jesus too was exasperated as he beseeched his disciples (although in this case to stay awake) more than once. As Jesus prayed wrestling with fear and faith, I sympathize that he wanted the support and company of those nearest and dearest to him; I think he also wanted them to prepare. When he came to them a third time, finding them asleep, yet again, he let them sleep. I think he knew that they too would wrestle with fear and faith in the coming days and in an act of love he sacrificed his own needs, carrying the burden for their sake... even if they were not entirely deserving.

Every morning when the alarm goes off at 4:30am Horacio quietly slips out of bed leaving my heavy eyes to sleep. He feeds Bacon, lets him out, puts away dishes, and completes a host of other chores before faithfully returning with a latte to coax me out of bed, ensuring we make our ferry, and helping me prepare for my day. While he knows an early bedtime the night before is the obvious ritual and would benefit him more in the sharing of morning duties, he too sacrifices with love... even though I am not entirely deserving.

Mavis Norwich

*Isaiah 42:1. Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.*

Many points of focus emerge within the book of Isaiah – false worship, idolatry, willfully ignoring God’s teaching, ego, trust, humility, fear, judgment. Our separation from God. His sorrow and impatience with us, with me, as we / I get wrapped up in our ways. Yet despite His anger and our perceived unfairness of pain and loss, He only wants me to turn to Him with complete abandonment and trust.

I have walked the pathway of a lost soul, broken and alone. And much like the Kings and cities talked about in Isaiah had to be torn apart and laid bare. Not so much to harm me but rather to get my attention shifted back to Him for I was filled with ego, mistrust, and false idolatry. However, with time, suffering, and openness I began to trust Him as He was the only way back to life. And it is always becoming clearer that once I unlearned many lessons and followed His teachings to relearn how to love and live - that He is proud of me. That in fact he has chosen me to, in my own way, speak for him through my words and actions. We do walk together as He promises to be by my side. I try everyday to accept His love with humility.

God and I now have a saying “Well, here we are.” **Nothing else** exists in the space. I can enter as-is and He is always there, waiting, to teach me. How many times have we rejected ourselves and others so needlessly, basing our rejection upon our own ego and judgments without hearing what is being said or seeing what is being expressed? How many times do we allow our ego driven selves to reject another life?

Nothing really matters except for His truth. Lay aside all fears, be trusting and open to Him every day. We do have the awesome blessing to be His emissary to the nations. As Jesus wandered for 40 days in the wilderness, may we use this Lenten period to come back to Him with humility and gratitude.

Denton Kiehle

*John 12:23-24. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."*



It seems only a week or two ago I brought out Christmas decorations. First, I carefully unwrapped the crude clay 1963 Chinese-made nativity. I greeted the figures with sentimental joy as I recalled standing for hours before cardboard boxes at a small five and dime, selecting each with care, rejecting any with chips or sloppy painting.

I arranged the scene on top of a small bookcase, stood back, and felt shocked. I had unwittingly placed the nativity in front of a wall of crosses. The baby rested at the foot of a black Celtic cross. Incarnation and crucifixion: the juxtaposition of two strong Christian symbols felt confusing. Glorious life and rejoicing stood united with sorrowful death and grieving.

Jesus must be both human and divine to reveal God dies with us and God rises with us. In Jesus, the best and most authentic of humanity offered himself to death on behalf of all. God became human to reveal in its fullness lives in union with God. Incarnate (enfleshed) God reveals the participation of Divinity in all of life—and death. God participates in all our sorrows, joys, sickness, health, poverty and wealth. Jesus' unreserved offering of himself reveals created life's true relationship to God and God's Realm.

When we proclaim Jesus is lord of our lives, we die to the old self-centered ways of choosing and acting, humbly offer ourselves, and rise to new servant life centered in God. We are transformed and, through us, the world is transformed. Dynamic divine love is scattered like incarnate wheat, dying and rising to new life.

We are the seeds of new wheat. Be not afraid. It's harvest time!

The Reverend Nancy Tiederman



*Psalm 70:5-6. But for me, I am poor and needy; come to me speedily, O God. You are my helper and my deliverer; O Lord, do not tarry.*

In the story of Holy Week, we are midway between Jesus' dramatic entry into Jerusalem and his betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion. His destiny is reaching its climax, its purpose, but on this Holy Wednesday he has withdrawn from the stress of pre-Passover Jerusalem to the relative calm of nearby Bethany. And yet, while for Jesus Wednesday may be a bit of a lull before the storm, it is not for those who would see him dead. Behind the scenes, the Jewish leaders—the Roman collaborators—are conspiring to isolate him from the supportive crowds and bring him to trial. Jesus must know this, and during this brief lull we can imagine him praying the above Psalm. He was a devoted Jew who prayed the Psalms every day. He may well have memorized many or even all the Psalms.

So, as we join Jesus as he contemplates what is coming, we may be tempted to identify with him. And we should give into this. He is not only our Lord; he is also our brother. Where he has gone, we also will go. This is what it means, he tells us, to be his follower. To take up our the cross. Like Jesus on Holy Wednesday, much of our lives are lived in the lull of life's storms, and like Jesus we cannot avoid the storms of life, and especially the last storm, our death, no matter how much we try to deny it or ignore it. But the prayer of Jesus can be our prayer as well. His faith in God can be our faith. His faithfulness to the end can be our faithfulness.

The Reverend Jan Heller, Ph.D

*Matthew 26:29. I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*

Jesus said, *"I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."* He has just told his disciples that the wine they are drinking is his blood of the new covenant poured out for the forgiveness of sins, after which together they go out to the Mount of Olives. Could it be that his words come from a heart that is breaking, that his soul is athirst?

He thirsted first for us. He thirsted for our freedom. Thirsting for us to come to God, he would draw us to himself. But we tested God in our hearts saying, *"True, he struck the rock, the waters gushed out, and the gullies overflowed; but is he able to give bread or to provide meat for his people?"* Rather than drawing water from the well of God's abundance, we rely on our own devices—power, prestige, influence—seeking to satisfy our appetites, not with spiritual, but with material sustenance that inevitably runs dry. Jesus would satisfy our thirst with a spring of water welling up to eternal life. Christ, the Living Water, thirsted to shower us with life. But we would not drink of it.

Still, he thirsts for us to come. But now he thirsts for our sake. Before we are even able to recognize our thirst for the imperishable, he thirsts in our place. Seeking holy and life-giving wine, Jesus descends to the depths of chaos and death where, at the last, he becomes a thirst for God. Now it is Jesus' relationship with the Father that bears the weight of his pain. That part of oneself that searches for the unsearchable cries out in anguish for emptiness to be filled. His is the soul's thirst for God that sums up all our thirst. For only those who know their need of God can be satisfied.

Lest we neglect to need and yearn and thirst for God's kingdom, we pray to remember how blessed are they who know their need of God. To attempt to drink from our own abilities rather than the power and glory of God, to seek for wells of success in our own experience, is to attempt to bring God down to our level, to mold God to suit our cravings, to use God for our purposes, to reduce and even trivialize God. In the process of making God fit the ponds of our lives without remainder, we will soon discover that we have no God at all.

God chose initially for his church foolish people, weak people, lowly and despised people to confound the world's wisdom. Whatever that church accomplished, it could not boast of; it could only give God the glory. And that is as it should be. Knowing our need of God, thirsting for those foolish things to which God attaches importance—justice, loving loyalty, humility—we will find the

fullness of God's consolation and glory. Emptiness and separation will be filled. That fount is the only real blessedness there is, and that fountain of blessing cascades from thirst down to us from the cross.

The Reverend Judith M. McDaniel, Ph.D.

*John 19:16b-18. So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them.*

This past January I traveled to the exact spot where tradition and scripture says this passage took place. I was struck with a sense of wonder, to be with hundreds of pilgrims from many countries, speaking many languages and each of us in our own way carrying our own crosses. Just inside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, two staircases lead up to Golgotha where you can touch the rock of Golgotha through an ornate hole in the floor under the altar. Many crouched under the altar to touch this sacred spot to perhaps find redemption, healing or a closeness to God.

I discovered that to simply touch that extraordinary rock seemed rather ordinary. What divine inspiration would spring from that very smooth rock, touched by millions of pilgrims? If Jesus could use water, word, human touch, bread, wine, a meal, and yes, even mud and saliva as a means of encounter and revelation, then nothing in our world is off limits when it comes to ways in which God might draw us in to God's loving and caring for us.

Our crosses do not have to be borne by ourselves, God is present in the ordinary around us. Even what seems far removed from what we would ever consider the realm of the sacred can speak to us and reveal dimensions of God's presence.

The Reverend Dan Fowler

*So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb which he had hewn in the rock. (Matthew 27: 59-60a)*

After the anguished drama of the Crucifixion, the shouting mob, the screaming victims, the weeping witnesses, the coolly descriptive neutrality of this verse delivers the shock of finality. Jesus is dead and gone. The presence who had shaken the world like an earthquake is suddenly no longer. All that remains is “the body”—and the profound silence of an irreversible absence.

Everyone who has seen a loved one die knows this silence, knows the numbing realization that a voice so familiar will never be heard again on this earth. As W. H. Auden imagines the first hours after the cross, “we are not prepared / For silence so sudden and so soon; / The day is too hot, too bright, too still, / Too ever, the dead remains too nothing.”

Although theology likes to declare victory over death and sin on Good Friday, and Christian imagination has envisioned Holy Saturday as a triumphant storming of the gates of hell by Christus Victor, we must not deny Jesus’ full humanity by exempting him from the fate of every mortal: the complete and absolute draining away of life. “He descended into hell,” the condition of non-being, non-relation, and non-communication which are the opposites of God.

Whatever “the Father” was doing on Holy Saturday, the Son was lying in the tomb, enduring the same lifeless solitude and silence which are every mortal’s fate. As Hans Urs von Balthasar astutely notes, this was the final form of the Redeemer’s solidarity with the rest of us. Among the dead, “solidarity means being solitary like, and with, the others.” Stripped of all life and power, Jesus still found a way to keep us company. As we all shall one day be, he was dead and gone, passively awaiting the next move by the Creator who always makes something out of nothing.

In this final and utter surrender to death, the Incarnate One made even the dire extremities of the human condition part of divine experience. He took the nothingness and silence of nonexistence into the heart of the Creator, where it was finally and decisively overcome. As Irenaeus said, “only what has been endured can be healed and saved.” No matter how lost we get, no matter how deep we fall into the abyss, Christ has already gone there before us, making that abyss into a road—the unexpected path to life eternal.

The Reverend Jim Friedrich

*John 20:15-16. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means teacher).*

Today we find Mary Magdalene weeping outside the empty tomb where Jesus had been laid just days before. She had come early that morning, making her way in the darkness before dawn. I think she must just have wanted to be near Jesus. I know that feeling. I remember shortly after my Dad died, going to the cemetery early one day, finding the tree that was near the bench that was near my parent's graves. I went just to sit. To sit and remember and pray and to be as close as I could. I cannot imagine what it must have felt like for Mary to have arrived at the tomb only to find the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. She ran to tell Peter and the other disciple what she had found and the three of them went running back to the tomb, wanting to see for themselves. When they did indeed find the empty tomb, the other disciples looked around and then returned home. But Mary stayed. She stayed, weeping at the tomb. And then it happened... "Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?" At first, she didn't know it was him – of course she didn't. Not only was he dead, he was gone. But when he spoke her name, she knew.

Mary couldn't see Jesus right in front of her, because she thought she knew the whole story. How many times have I been blind to what is right in front of me because I am sure I know exactly what is going on? How many times have I missed God's presence because I've already decided what's true? Mary knew Jesus had died and that was the end. But God's story doesn't end in death, it doesn't end at all. God's story, our story, is resurrection!

Resurrection! In it, God offers us reconciliation, redemption, hope and great joy! May all God's blessings be upon you as you are born again and again and again, becoming ever more Christ's shining light in the world, beautiful icons of love.

The Reverend Karen Haig



## LENT AND HOLY WEEK AT ST. BARNABAS

### OFFICE OF EVENSONG | SUNDAY, MARCH 8<sup>TH</sup>, 6PM

Sung by the Women's *Schola Nova* Choir of Bainbridge Island

### WEDNESDAY EVENINGS IN LENT | SOUP SUPPERS & ENGAGING THE MYSTERIES OF HOLY WEEK

#### WEDNESDAYS, MARCH 4<sup>TH</sup>- APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup>, 6:30PM

On Wednesday evenings in Lent, we are engaging with the liturgies and theology of our holiest week, the dramatic and transformative journey from Palm Sunday to the cross—and resurrection. Each evening begins with a simple supper at 6:30 (program at 7:00) and concludes with a brief ritual reflecting the evening's theme.

### LENTEN EVENSONG | SUNDAY, MARCH 22<sup>ND</sup>, 5PM

For nearly 600 years, people have sought out the experience of evensong, in cathedrals and churches across the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States, and many other sacred places. It thanks God for the day just past and asks God's protection during the coming night. It is a quiet, reflective set of prayers, songs, and psalms, asking the worshiper to be still in spirit.

### PALM/PASSION SUNDAY | APRIL 5<sup>TH</sup>

8am | Liturgy of the Palms, Passion Gospel and Holy Eucharist Rite I

10am | Liturgy of the Palms, Passion Gospel and Holy Eucharist Rite II

### A SERVICE OF HEALING AND RECONCILIATION

6pm | Confessions

7pm | Reconciliation Service with Holy Communion

### MAUNDY THURSDAY | APRIL 9<sup>TH</sup>

6pm | Maundy Thursday Supper Service, beginning in the parish hall

### GOOD FRIDAY | APRIL 10<sup>TH</sup>

Noon | The Liturgy of Good Friday | Spoken

7pm | The Liturgy of Good Friday | Choral

### THE GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER | APRIL 11<sup>TH</sup>

8pm | The First Service of Easter and Festal Eucharist | Incense will be used

### EASTER SUNDAY | APRIL 12<sup>ST</sup>

9am | Festive Easter Eucharist Rite II

10:15am | Easter Egg Hunt/Festive Coffee Hour

11am | Festive Easter Eucharist Rite II