

2025 Lenten Devotions



"The Bronze Serpent" by Gustave Doré (Public Domain)

Written by the Pastors of the
St. Cloud and Little Falls
Circuits (LCMS)

Dear Friends,

Jesus says, **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matt 5:17-18).**

The Old Testament is Christ’s script. All other characters failed to fulfill it. Adam failed at being the perfect son of God. Jesus comes as the second, perfect Adam. Solomon failed at being the eternal son of David. Jesus is the sinless son of David who sits on the throne for forever.

One wonders exactly what Jesus told the disciples on the way to Emmaus. **“Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Lk 24:27).**

These Lenten devotions are an attempt to show you what that conversation might’ve looked like. Each devotion focuses on a person, animal, or event from the Old Testament and shows how Christ has fulfilled the entire Old Testament.

God bless you this Lenten season. We pray these devotions help you and your families as you walk the Christian life. Check out our other resources at lcmscloud.org.

In Christ,

Rev Joshua Reber (Editor)
The Pastors of the St. Cloud Circuit
The Pastors of the Little Falls Circuit

March 5 - Jeremiah, the Weeping Prophet (Ash Wednesday)

Lamentations 1:1-4; Luke 13:34-35 by Rev Joshua Reber

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! (Luke 13:34)

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matt 5:4). Jeremiah and Jesus were both mourners. In fact, Jeremiah mourned so much that his nickname was “The Weeping Prophet.” He was the Eeyore of the prophets, but he mourned for a good reason. He wrote a whole book of mourning called Lamentations because Jerusalem was utterly destroyed by the Babylonians.

But it’s not entirely accurate to attribute the destruction to the Babylonians. It was God who destroyed Jerusalem; He was merely using the Babylonians. Why? Because of Israel’s sin and constant rebellion against Him. Lamentations lodges a complaint to God for the destruction, but it also acknowledges why the destruction had to happen - our sinfulness.

Jerusalem means “the city of peace.” It’s an ironic name for a city that killed all the prophets that were sent there. Jesus mourns because that same city is going to kill Him, but of course, the only way we can have true peace is through the blood of the Son of God.

On Easter, that mourning was turned to joy. **“Weeping may tarry the night, but joy comes in the morning” (Ps 30:5).** How will you respond to the prophets God sends to you?

Prayer: Dear Father, make us mourn over our sinful nature so that in the morning when the sun of righteousness rises, our weeping may be turned to joy. Be with us this Lent as meditate on Your Son’s passion. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

March 6 – Adam, the Son of God

Romans 5:12-21 by Rev David Steege

For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many (Rom 5:15).

Jesus' genealogy in Luke 3 goes all the way back to Adam, and there, Adam is described as the son of God (Lk 3:38). Adam had no earthly father. God was his Father. But, Adam failed to bring life to the world. Through his sin, he brought death.

Jesus is the second Adam. Like Adam, Jesus has no earthly Father. Like Adam, Jesus wants a wife, but Jesus gives up way more than a rib for His Eve, the Church. He gives up His entire life as blood flows out of His side.

The devil tempted Adam and Eve with food – a piece of fruit. They failed within 40 seconds. The devil tempted Jesus with food – bread, after He'd been fasting. This second Adam outlasted the devil for 40 days.

Jesus is the better Adam. **For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ (Rom 5:17).**

Prayer: Dear Father, give us Your Spirit this Lent, so that we can walk by faith and overcome the temptations of the evil one, just as Jesus, the second Adam, did. Through the same Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

March 7 – Abel, the Innocent One
Hebrews 12:18-24 by Rev David Buchs

[You have come] to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (Hebrews 12:24).

The first question is: what word is spoken by Abel's blood? Cain killed Abel in jealousy, not mastering the sin which was crouching at the door. He was jealous of God's favor, but would not heed God's favorable Word. He wanted to be acceptable because of his burnt offering without having to sacrifice his own heart.

Cain took a life which belonged to the Lord. When the earth opened its mouth to swallow Abel's blood, a cry went up. The word spoken by Abel's blood was a despairing cry for justice. The cry was in despair because this wrong could not be righted. The deed could not be undone. And just as Cain feared, the guilt would follow him. This first murder would not be the last.

Praise God, however, that the cry from the blood of Abel reached the throne of the Almighty. From that throne, the very Son of God came down and willingly offered his own innocent blood. And His blood speaks a word better than a desperate cry for justice. His blood speaks a word of mercy to the hopeless, forgiveness for sinners, and righteousness credited to the lost.

Prayer: Receive our thanks and praise, O God, for the sacrifice of Your Son, whose blood is more precious than silver and gold. Teach us to rest easy in the merciful word spoken by His blood. In Jesus' name, Amen.

March 8 – Noah, Our True Rest

1 Peter 3:18-22 by Rev Benjamin Hollingsead

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you (1 Peter 3:21).

Peter draws a powerful connection between Noah's ark and the salvation found in baptism, which ultimately points us to Jesus Christ. Just as Noah's ark saved him and his family from the flood, Jesus' death and resurrection save us from sin and death. Noah, whose name means "rest," foreshadows the true rest found in Christ.

Noah's ark was a means of escape from God's judgment, a picture of God's grace in the midst of destruction. Likewise, Jesus' death on the cross was the ultimate act of grace, rescuing us from the judgment we deserve. Through His resurrection, we are given new life, just as Noah's family was given new life after the flood.

Peter also connects this to baptism, saying, "**baptism now saves you**" (**1 Peter 3:21**). Baptism is the means by which God brings us into His salvation, just as the flood waters brought Noah and his family into safety. It's not the physical water itself, but the promise of God's grace that cleanses and restores us. In baptism, we are united with Christ's death and resurrection, receiving the rest Noah longed for — eternal rest in Christ.

As Noah found rest in the ark, so we find our eternal rest in the saving waters of baptism. Jesus is our true ark of salvation, and in Him, we have rest from the storms of life, secure in His promises.

Prayer: O Lord, You preserved and provided rest for Noah and his family in the ark in the midst of the flood of judgement on this sinful world. Preserve and protect Your Church today whom you have gathered in the flood of Holy Baptism and give us rest in the ark of Christ through this troubled world. Through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. Amen

March 9 - Abraham, the Man of Faith

Gal 3:15-29 by Rev Zach Hoffman

For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise (Gal 3:18).

The case seems closed until a stunning legal discovery turned the tides and overturns every preconceived notion. The lawyer representing the accused is relieved to see the intern come bursting through the door with the research in hand. The lawyer announces the discovery with triumph. The jurors have no other choice but to rule in favor of the accused. Case closed.

Last minute discoveries work well in legal dramas, but Paul points out what we should have known all-along. The inheritance of salvation and the right to be children of God comes not from the law, but from a promise. It was in Genesis 15 that the statement was made: **“And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.” (Genesis 15:6).**

Re-read the story and what did Abraham do to merit God’s favor? Nothing. What special quality did he have that forced God to come down and bless him? None. God chose him out of divine grace, and Abraham believed.

I pray that this Lent you would hold on to the same discovery. Faith in the Son overturns the guilty verdict and silences the accuser.

Prayer: Almighty Father, let us cling to Your Son and listen to His Word and promises in faith, as He is the only one who is able to overrule the power of the law which accuses and condemns us. Amen.

March 10 - Melchizedek, Greater than Abraham **Hebrews 7:1-10** by Rev David Steege

He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace (Heb 7:2).

If you sneezed while reading Genesis, you would've missed Melchizedek. His story is found in Genesis 14:17-18. It's just 2 verses, but Hebrews makes a big deal out of these 2 verses.

The point of Hebrews, which is the point of these devotions, is that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Law. He is greater than the Old Covenant because He is the New Covenant. Hebrews says to those still clinging to the Old Covenant, "You've got Abraham? Great. Jesus is a priest in the order of Melchizedek, meaning He's greater than Abraham."

Melchizedek's name means king of righteousness. Abraham was righteous through faith, but Melchizedek is the king. The Hittites called Abraham a prince of God (Genesis 23:6). Melchizedek was a **king**, and he was the king of Salem (Jerusalem), which means prince. Jesus is the Prince of Peace and the King of the Universe.

The only other place in the Old Testament that Melchizedek is mentioned is Psalm 110. The Father speaks to His Son and says, "**You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek**" (Ps 110:4).

Prayer: Jesus, rule our hearts and be our Prince of Peace, our Melchizedek, our King of righteousness. Amen.

March 11 – Jacob, the Romantic

John 4:1-26 by Rev Joel Kosberg

Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water” (John 4:10).

She had been looking for Mr. Right for her entire life. Young girls dream of their wedding day, for sure. But they don't dream of five different wedding days with five different men. And yet, that was this Samaritan woman's reality. She had had five husbands. None of them had worked out. And the man she had now was not her husband. She was searching and searching for the right man, and could not find him.

This Samaritan woman's story, in some sense, is the story of all of Samaria. The Samaritans were descendants of Jacob but their ancestry was complicated. When the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel they brought five foreign nations with whom the Samaritans intermarried. The Samaritan people had gotten hitched with five different nations and now they lived under Roman occupation.

The Samaritan woman was searching. The Samaritan people were searching. And, to some extent, all of us are searching for the one who will satisfy our thirst. It is in the middle of our search that Jesus comes and sits next to us at a well and says, “Don't you know who I am? I am the one you have been searching for. I am the one that gives you water to quench your thirst eternally.” Jesus is Mr. Right. Jesus is the one we have been searching for. Jesus has living water for you.

Prayer: Father, thank you for sending Jesus, the Bridegroom, to satisfy the thirst of the Samaritan woman and the Samaritan people. Lord, calm our searching hearts with the living water you are able to give us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

March 12 - Israel, the Wrestler with God

Luke 18:1-8 by Rev Justin Hesterman

*And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night?
Will he delay long over them? (Luke 18:7)*

In Luke's Gospel we hear Jesus tell a parable in order to teach His people to always pray and not lose heart. In the parable we see a stubborn widow wear down an unrighteous judge until she receives justice. This encounter also brings to mind Jacob who wrestled with God until finally God allowed Jacob victory.

The Bible reveals that God's people have always wrestled with God, but they often give up too quickly when He doesn't respond the way they desire. And we are no different. We continue to wrestle with God, we pray and plead and when those petitions remain unanswered or aren't answered as quickly as we want, we pack it up and call it a day. But our Lord through this parable teaches us to be stubborn with our prayers and to put our trust in God. If a widow can wear down an unrighteous judge who doesn't care about anyone or anything, then certainly God's people will be treated far better. Justice was given to God's elect when Christ came. Our wrestling match is over, and because of Christ we have the victory.

Prayer: Righteous Judge, you have promised to hear your people who cry to you day and night. Give us patience and strength to trust in your promises, help us to turn to you and not lose heart. Forgive us our sin for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ who brings justice to your people. Amen.

March 13 – Judah, the One Who Offered Himself
Genesis 43:8-9; John 15:13 by Rev Dr TJ Rehwaldt

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).

In the reading from Genesis, Judah, offers to be the protector and guardian for Benjamin, as he brings him to see their brother Joseph who had become the “ruler of all Egypt”. In this account Joseph, who had been sold into slavery by his brothers, is testing his brothers to see if they will honor their father, Jacob, who had been renamed by God as Israel. In an attempt to fulfill the demand of Joseph as the leader of Egypt, Judah promises to his father Israel that he will keep Benjamin safe. Judah offers his own life as a guarantee for Benjamin’s safety, and ultimately his salvation, and the salvation of all of Israel’s household. Judah pledged his life for his brother’s life.

Jesus makes the same promise to His Father. ***“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again” (John 10:17)*** and ***“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).***

Jesus offered Himself for you! He offered to be your Protector and your Guardian! Just as Judah said to Israel his father, Jesus says to your heavenly Father, “I will be a pledge of his safety.” Jesus is our safety!

By His saving action upon the cross, by His sacrifice of Body and Blood, He has offered His life to redeem and guarantee our lives forever. He will see us through this life with all its trials and tribulations, and He will bring us safely home to our eternal Father.

Prayer: Dear Father, we rejoice in the giving of Your Son to be our guardian, our protector, our Redeemer, and our Friend, Who laid down His life for ours. May we find hope and peace in Christ alone. Amen.

March 14 - Moses, the Deliverer

Deuteronomy 18:15-19 and John 8:31-39 by Rev David Steege

The LORD God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you (Deuteronomy 18:15).

This is Moses speaking. "God will raise up a prophet like me."

So what did Moses do? He was God's servant. He was a prophet who spoke to God like a friend does. He delivered the people from slavery in Egypt.

Jesus does all these things, except better. But if the Israelites didn't listen to Moses, we can expect that people won't listen to Jesus.

Right after being delivered from Egypt, the Israelites wanted to return. How many Christians leave the faith? They've been freed from slavery and want to return! It's mind boggling.

Jesus tells us how to remain free. Listen to Him. He's the prophet like and better than Moses that God has raised up. **"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).**

We have the truth! Thanks to be God that we have the pure Gospel. Jesus speaks, and He speaks clearly to us. Listen to Him!

Prayer: Dear Father, thank You for sending us Jesus, a prophet like Moses, to deliver us from sin, death, and the devil. Keep us in His Word that we may know the truth and be free. In Jesus' name, Amen.

March 15 - Aaron, the High Priest

Exodus 28:1; Hebrews 4:14-16 by Rev Brandon Johnson

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession (Hebrews 14:14).

Aaron was a descendant of Levi and a brother of Moses. He assisted Moses in leading the people out of Egypt.

More notably, Aaron and his children are repeatedly featured as the predominant priests of the Israelites. Being descendants of Levi, the priestly tribe, Aaron and his sons are entrusted with overseeing Israel's worship of the LORD. However, they are a special clan among the Levites who alone are authorized to come near and officiate at rituals associated with the Tabernacle.

As great a high priest as Aaron was, he was also a flawed human. In Exodus 32, he led the idolatry of the Golden Calf, and he also rebelled against Moses' leadership in Numbers 12.

Unlike Aaron, Jesus Christ is a perfect High Priest. He is both the priest and the sacrifice. He has bridged the infinite gap between God and humanity. In response, we cling to Christ, the object of our faith. We have confidence in Christ as the High Priest.

Prayer: Jesus Christ, we give you thanks for coming to earth to live the life we could not live and die the death that we deserve. Help us to hold fast to our faith in You. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

March 16 – Passover, the Lamb of God

John 1:29 by Rev David Hinz

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)

John the Baptist is the forerunner of Christ. He is Elijah, if you believe what Jesus says about him. He announces the coming of God to earth. And the next day, something happens. He sees Jesus coming right toward him. He knows the moment has arrived. How he recognized his cousin as “the Lamb” in that moment we can only guess, but the time was right. John gets everyone’s attention: “Look! This person right here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

That’s a mouthful!

The scene would be bizarre today because we don’t think about lambs much and we aren’t waiting for someone to take the world’s sins away. Christians already have one who does that, and non-Christians don’t care. But for these Jews, this was radical. They’d been sacrificing lambs for years. It was God’s will and a matter of holiness. Bring a lamb and sacrifice it on the altar and go home with a clean, free conscience.

Jesus is the lamb. And not just any lamb. This is God’s lamb. There’s never been anything like it. Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! And that means your sins, too.

Prayer: Lord, help me to trust in the Lamb of God who takes away my sin. Amen.

March 17 – The Day of Atonement, the Goat of the Sin Offering
1 Peter 1:1-2 by Rev Levi Willms

For obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. (1 Peter 1:2)

There is great joy coming out of the Exodus for God's people. God who once seemed far off is now brought near. Exodus ends with God literally living right in the middle of His people. What a joyous result! Yet we find that it isn't always so easy having this holy and righteous God in the midst of an unholy and unrighteous people. They are unclean.

We see in Leviticus that God, **“because of the uncleanness of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions”** must provide for them and make a way for His presence amongst them. The High Priest takes the blood of the goat and sprinkles it on the mercy seat in the presence of the Holy God. God accepts this blood to atone for the sin and to consecrate His house of worship. God provides the means for Him to remain in their midst and to bring them grace and peace.

Peter reminds us that God's presence with us is secured through the sacrifice of Christ. His blood multiplies for you God's abundant grace and peace. Is it easy now to have God's dwelling with His people. With Christ as the holy one and the sacrifice, Peter reminds us of the transformational power of being sprinkled with Christ's blood. He is ever present in His Word and Sacrament to make us forgiven and clean before our Righteous God. Now indeed by receiving Christ you are cleansed and consecrated for Holy Use.

Prayer: Dear Father, Your Son has cleansed and consecrated me and my brothers and sisters of faith through the sprinkling of His blood.

March 18 – The Day of Atonement, the Scapegoat

Mark 1:12-13 by Rev Joshua Reber

*“He was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him”
(Mark 1:12-13).*

The Day of Atonement had two goats, and Jesus Christ is both of them. Yesterday, Pastor Willm’s devotion was on the first one – the goat of the sin offering. That goat was killed and its blood was sprinkled on the people.

Today, we’re focusing on the second goat – the scapegoat. The high priest would put his hands on the living goat and confess all the sins of Israel. The scapegoat was then sent out of the camp of Israel into the wilderness. You can read the details in Leviticus 16. The picture is clear – someone else bears our sins and must carry them outside of society.

Right after Jesus was baptized, the Spirit threw Him into the wilderness. He takes on our sins in those baptismal waters, and then is sent out of society to do battle with the devil. We either die with our sins, or somebody takes them away for us. The only eternal scapegoat is Jesus Christ. He takes our sins, dies with them, and then leaves them in the grave. Your sins are forever buried.

After the priest sent the scapegoat in the wilderness, he went into the Holy Place and left his clothes there. On Easter morning, Jesus leaves His clothes in the tomb, a new Holy Place. He’s not only both goats – He’s also the priest. He completely fulfills the Day of Atonement.

Prayer: Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, we praise you for bearing our sins and forever burying them. Amen.

March 19 – Joshua, the Promised Land
Hebrews 4:8-10 by Rev David Buchs

So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God (Hebrews 4:9).

We're not there yet. That was painfully obvious to the people of Israel as they sojourned through the wilderness. What a thing to have to wait until all the generations but one passed away. What a thing to wait so long for that rest.

And yet, at long last, their Joshua led them through the Jordan River on dry ground, and they entered into rest. Sort of. For a time. A temporal rest. A rest that they could lose through disobedience. A rest that they did lose when they went after other gods and abandoned the one who gives rest.

Their Joshua could not save them from sin and death, but a greater Joshua has arrived. (Jesus is the Greek version of the Hebrew name Joshua.) The rest He brings is not temporal. It's permanent and unfading. It's wrought by His obedience. It's delivered to us through faith. It's been prepared for us by the one who established the Sabbath from the foundation of the world.

But we're not there yet. Our Joshua leads us on. Let us follow with confidence. Let us strive to enter his rest. Let us hold fast to his living and active word, which promises us salvation.

Prayer: Keep us, Lord, from falling by disobedience. Grant that we may enter the rest of eternal life in your kingdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.

March 20 – Deborah, the Mother Hen

Matthew 23:37; Judges 5:6-7 by Rev Benjamin Hollingsead

How often I would have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings (Matt 23:37).

In Judges 5:7, Deborah herself as a mother. **“I, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel.”** This was a time of great unrest for Israel, but it was also a time of deliverance, as Deborah led God’s people to victory over their enemies. Deborah is as a mother figure, offering protection and guidance to her people, much like a mother hen protecting her chicks.

In Matthew 23:37, Jesus echoes this imagery when He says, **“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.”** Jesus identifies Himself with the mother hen, expressing His deep desire to protect and care for the people of Jerusalem.

Deborah, as a leader and protector of her people, points forward to Jesus, the ultimate fulfillment of God’s protection. Just as Deborah sought to lead Israel to safety, Jesus longs to gather His people under His wings, offering them refuge from the dangers of sin and death. Where Deborah was a temporary deliverer, Jesus is the eternal Savior, who gathers His children not only for physical protection, but for the ultimate safety of eternal life through His death and resurrection.

Jesus is the true "Mother Hen," offering His arms of love and care to all who will come to Him.

Prayer: Help us, O Lord, to not wander from the truth of your word and protect you

March 21 – Gideon, The Victorious One
Judges 7:1-8 by Rev Bruce Timm

The Lord said to Gideon, “The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me’” (Judges 7:2).

The Lord wanted to make sure that no one doubted who gave the people victory over their enemies. He whittled down Gideon’s army to 10,000 and then down to 300.

The Lord did not give them much of an arsenal either. They carried trumpets, jars, and torches. It wasn’t a conventional battle plan. Break the jars, light the torches, blow the trumpets. The Lord’s weaponry and plan called for faith. Gideon and his men listened, believed, and the Midianites were routed. Through faith they conquered. (Heb 11:32).

Our Savior carried no weapons with Him to defeat our sins. Alone in the wilderness He carried and wielded God’s Word. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He told Peter to sheath his sword. By the time of the battle the Lord’s “army” was down to One and Jesus died. That is not a conventional battle plan, but it is the Lord’s plan, and it worked.

Jesus lives! The victory’s won. (LSB #490) The Saints around Jerusalem believed in the Lord’s Christ. When He died, they rose. Jesus rose victorious. Believe that battle plan, believe that Jesus, and you to will rise victorious.

Prayer: Lord God, You make Your own plans and fight our enemies in Your own way. You defeated the Midianites with jars, torches, and trumpets and You defeat sin, death, and the Devil with the flesh and blood of Your Son. Help us believe that through Christ Jesus alone You have given us the victory He won. Amen.

March 22 – Samson, The One Defeating Through Death
Judges 16:28-31 by Rev Joel Kosberg

Let me die with the Philistines (Judges 16:30).

Judges is a hard book to read. It tells the dark and twisted story of Israel's descent into sin after having been delivered into the promised land. It is a cyclical book. Israel rejects God. They are conquered by neighboring nations. They cry out to God. Then God sends a deliverer. Things are calm for a while but then... Israel turns away from God. They are conquered. They call out. And God sends a deliverer. This happens over and over again in Judges. Israel turns away, is conquered, cries out, and is delivered as they spin further and further down into depravity.

What can be learned from this book of the Bible that would make HBO blush? As we journey down into the depths of humanity's sin we find that even there, at rock bottom, God sends his deliverer. Into the muck and mire and sin of our lives God sends a deliverer. There are nine deliverers in the book of Judges and each one is flawed in some significant way. And yet, God uses these deliverers to teach us what we can expect in Jesus. Samson has lots of problems. He isn't faithful to his vows. He lies. Women are his weakness. But even in this mess of a man, we can see a glimpse of Jesus. Samson is the hope of Israel. He is seized by enemies, beaten, and mocked. And ultimately through his own death he delivers Israel one more time.

Like Israel, in the midst of our sin, God sends us a deliverer. His name Jesus and by his death we are delivered from all our enemies.

Prayer: Father, thank you for the deliverers that you sent Israel. Thank you for sending Jesus to die on the cross for me to deliver me from all my enemies. In Jesus' name, Amen.

March 23 – Boaz, The Kinsman-Redeemer

Ruth 4:7-17 by Rev Zach Hoffman

Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! (Ruth 4:14)

I should not have been surprised. We had a lot of family over, our kids were really excited, we had just moved into town, and we were still in the stage where we did not know where anything in our new town was.

It happened, with guests to entertain, kids to keep calm, and directions to look up and follow. Everyone got in their cars and left to get some ice cream.

Everyone, except me. I ran back inside to grab a forgotten item. I came out to the driveway, and everyone was gone!

Do you feel that God has passed you by in order to treat everyone else? To be left behind by God is to be left out in the wind with no place to go. Such was the estate of Naomi and Ruth.

Enter Boaz, their redeemer. Boaz married Ruth and restored Naomi. Look at Boaz and know that this is what your Redeemer, Jesus Christ, does for you. The Redeemer finds the forgotten. He finds the left behind and brings them back to the Father again.

You have not been left behind. Come to receive Christ’s mercy and redemption at his altar, but make sure you have everyone with you when you leave the driveway!

Prayer: Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! Amen.

March 24 – Samuel, Prophet, Priest, and King

Psalm 99 by Rev Justin Hesterman

The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! (Psalm 99:1)

The Psalm begins with the words **“The Lord reigns.”** Those words proclaim God’s kingship over all creation, as people tremble and the earth quakes. There is no king like God. However that didn’t stop God’s people from trying to establish a new king.

In 1 Samuel 8:6-9 we see the people demanding a king. God says to Samuel **“Obey the voice of the people in all they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.”** The prophet Samuel anoints Saul as the first king of Israel. If Saul and the other kings were faithful to God, it went well for Israel. But that never lasted long even the most righteous kings fell into sin and brought evil upon God’s people.

But our Lord is always in control, through the prophets, and priests He cared for His people, ruling over His kingdom throughout history, and then finally in His Son Jesus Christ, everything the prophets and priests did to care for God’s people was fulfilled. Jesus as prophet proclaims the Word fulfilled, as priest He offers Himself as the final sin offering, and as king He reigns for eternity. All of creation bows to the Lord our God our king.

Prayer: Almighty King, we bow before you in humble repentance and obedience. Help us to remain faithful to you, and recognize your authority over our lives. Let us exalt your holy name. Amen.

March 25 – David, the One Who Prays

Psalm 55; Hebrews 5:7 by Rev Dr TJ Rehwaldt

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Hebrews 5:7

Psalm 55 is filled with rich imagery of David's need for prayer. I encourage you to read and pray the entire psalm today. But for the moment here are few of those images; "I am restless in my complaint and I moan", "they drop trouble upon me", "my heart is in anguish", and finally "fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me." Like David, you and I have certainly felt this way.

But the truth of God's Word reminds us that even Jesus, the Son of God, our Savior and Lord also had these feelings. The writer of Hebrews relates some of the most poignant emotions of Jesus, when he writes; **"Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears"**. We are nearing the midpoint of the Lenten season. This season is meant to be a season of repentance. Sin is the source of all our fears, our doubts, our insecurities, and worries. Jesus had no sin in Himself. His loud cries and tears were on our behalf. Jesus weeps for those He loves. He weeps and He prays for you and me.

Jesus often went off by Himself to pray, but when He did, He prayed not for Himself, but for others. Even upon the cross He prayed for the forgiveness of those who were crucifying Him and for those witnessing His sacrifice for all people.

Prayer: Dear Father, when we are restless, when we moan, when trouble drops, when our hearts hurt, and fear overwhelms us, rescue us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

March 26 – Elijah, The One Who Ascends

2 Kings 2:9-14; Acts 1:1-11 by Rev Brandon Johnson

And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven (2 Kings 2:11).

Elijah was a prophet of the Lord to the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the reign of kings Ahab and Ahaziah. He spoke against Ahab and Jezebel and confronted the false prophets of Baal. He showed compassion to the widow of Zarephath.

In our story, Elijah and Elisha have just miraculously crossed the Jordan River (see 1 Kings 2:8), and Elisha requests a double portion of Elijah's Spirit to be placed upon him so that he may continue Elijah's prophetic mission work. Elijah responds that it will be done for him if he continues to watch. Elijah is then taken into heaven right before Elisha's eyes. Elijah's ascension highlights the special role of God's Prophets and foreshadows Christ's ascension.

Whereas Elijah was a great prophet of the Old Testament, Jesus is the greater and final prophet. Jesus has ascended to the right hand of the Father where He is enthroned over all enemies.

Prayer: Ascended Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for all the good gifts you continue to lavish upon us. We ask that you continue to be with us as you have promised to do. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

March 27 – Elisha, The One With Greater Works

2 Kings 4 by Rev David Hinz

As [Elisha] stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm (2 Kings 4:34b).

Can't say enough good things about Elisha! He watched Elijah get taken up by a chariot of fire into heaven. He does all kinds of miracles, more than Elijah did (twice as many – talk about a double portion of the Spirit!), and doesn't have the moment of doubt or exhaustion we remember Elijah having. And yet, no one talks about him afterward. He came, he did, and he went. The Old Testament talks about Elijah all over the place. Jesus refers to Elijah too. John the Baptist is said to be the "return" of Elijah, in a way.

2 Kings 4 narrates Elisha's care, prophetic power, and influence. From curing or multiplying food to giving and raising a woman's son, Elisha is privileged to provide. So why doesn't he get more attention?

That may be a question we need to ask ourselves. If John the Baptist is, in some way, the return of Elijah, what is John's job? To clear the path and announce the coming of God to earth. And who does he point to? Jesus. Jesus is, in essence, Elisha. The Old Testament people didn't speak of him again because they were waiting for him. John comes and points him to us. The question is, is he getting enough attention from us? That is something we can pray for.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to think on you, that my life might be formed by Your greatness.

March 28 – Nehemiah, the Fortress Builder
Nehemiah 3:1-2 by Rev Levi Willms

Then I replied to them, “The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem” (Nehemiah 2:20).

Nehemiah is facing fierce opposition from Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem. These leaders of the nations surrounding Jerusalem do not want the people of God to prosper. They seek to steal the confidence of Nehemiah the leader and thus steal the resolve of the people to build.

For Nehemiah, the wall is already built, they just need to do the work. Nehemiah instructs the people and they start to build, but the building is simply building on the promise and the conviction of God’s promise and provision. God builds a fortress in the man first and then builds the walls of the city. What fortress has he built in you?

As we journey to lent we follow our leader Jesus Christ who is resolved to fulfill God’s plan of salvation. Christ is a fortress to the attacks of all who would seek to sap His conviction. **When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51).** We follow one who with determination has solidified our protection from all attacks of sin, death, and the devil. Now we are to build. With God’s fortress already built, start building. Build on the Gospel of Christ in all places He directs. It is easy to let the opposition get to us. Christ is our fortress, now build. “God in heaven will make us prosper,” in Christ.

Prayer: Dear Father, fill me with confidence in your promises and the salvation of Your Son. Give me conviction to block out the attacks of the evil one and to build as you direct. Fill my life and my relationships with your precious Word and Sacraments and lead me to do Your will. Through Christ my Lord. Amen.

March 29 – Ezra, the Restorer of Worship

Ezra 3:8-11 by Rev Joshua Reber

“And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets” (Ezra 3:10)

Nehemiah is about rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Ezra is about rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem.

What’s so important about the Temple? It’s where God dwelt, for one thing, although it seems that His glory never returned when He left in the days of Ezekiel. It’s where sacrifices were made. It’s where the people worshiped God.

Worship was broken when Jesus was born. The Pharisees and Sadducees were the worship leaders, and it’s clear that God wasn’t happy with their worship. Jesus called them white-washed tombs - pretty on the outside, but dead on the inside. And yet Jesus was constantly in and out of the Temple and the synagogues. Even though the religious elite were corrupt, Jesus showed up to church. Duty to His Father outweighed the corrupt leadership.

One reason Jesus was always around the Temple and synagogues was to restore true worship. He tells the Samaritan woman at the well **“the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (Jn 4:23)**. True worship means worshipping the true God. Notice that Jesus mentions all 3 persons of the Trinity – Father, Spirit (Holy Spirit), and Truth (Jesus is the way, the *truth*, and the life). Only after the resurrection is the Trinitarian formula explicitly given (Matt 28:19), but now the hour is here for true worship!

Prayer: Father, let us worship you in Spirit and Truth for Your Glory.
Amen.

March 30 – Job, Sufferer with Confidence

Job 19:23-27 by Rev Zach Hoffman

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth (Job 19:25).

It doesn't make sense. In the middle of complaint and accusations from his friends, Job makes this confession of faith. **"I know that my Redeemer lives!"** Spontaneity can be such a negative word in Lutheran circles. We like order. We like it when the Spirit comes to us in ways that God has told us about in advance. Gather together, and God will speak through his Word. Print out our responses as well. Keep it orderly.

This sudden outcry of faith does not seem to fit with the order that we love. What's more, is the shocking certainty with which Job speaks. *Engrave these words on a stone!* Job's heart had enough. Forget everything else. It's time to say what matters most. It is not about how he can show that he is innocent. It is not about how he can prove himself. What matters is that he has a redeemer.

Whether it is your past that stalks you, a troubled conscience, grief, shame, or being surrounded by mockers; there is one confidence that bursts from our hearts. The cry of the Spirit within us: "I know that my Redeemer lives". It's a worthy interruption even if it doesn't fit the flow. This is our triumphant cry in the face of every suffering. A bit out of place? Maybe. Still, if we were silent then the rocks would cry out. "We know that our Redeemer lives!"

Prayer: Almighty Father, fill our hearts with the certainty that our Redeemer lives. Amen.

March 31 – Proverbs, the Wisdom of God

Proverbs 8:12-36 by Rev Benjamin Hollingsead

The LORD possessed me [Wisdom] at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old (Proverbs 8:22).

In Proverbs 8, wisdom speaks—not as mere human understanding, but as the eternal wisdom of God Himself. **"The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His work, the first of His acts of old" (Proverbs 8:22).** This is no ordinary wisdom; this is Christ, **"who became to us wisdom from God" (1 Corinthians 1:30).**

The world seeks wisdom in power, wealth, and intellect, yet rejects the wisdom of God. The cross appears as folly to the world, but to those who believe, it is the very power of God. Christ, the eternal Word, was with the Father before creation. Through Him, all things were made. He is wisdom incarnate, calling sinners to Himself, offering life instead of death.

"Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates" (Proverbs 8:34). To seek Christ is to seek true wisdom. To reject Him is to **"wrong one's own soul"** (v. 36). The fear of the Lord—the faith that clings to Christ—is the beginning of wisdom, for apart from Him, there is no life.

On the cross, divine wisdom fulfilled its purpose. The foolishness of the cross is our salvation. The world stumbles, but we rejoice, for in Christ, **"whoever finds me finds life"** (v. 35).

Prayer: Heavenly Father, all true wisdom comes from you, lead us to seek You daily, to trust in Your cross, and to walk in Your truth. In the name of Jesus Christ Your Son, our Lord we pray. Amen

April 1 – Isaiah, the Suffering Servant
Isaiah 53:1-10 by Rev David Steege

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows (Isa 53:3)

Why is there a need for the suffering servant? Why is the church today and throughout time treated with such a lack of respect? Isaiah says it this way: **“Who has believed what he has heard from us?” (Isa 53:1)** The answer is no one. **“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned —every one—to his own way” (Isa 53:6)** This describes the reason for the need for Jesus to restore the fall of man. With this the Father lays suffering on your Savior because of your sin He takes on the iniquity of us all. In other words, you are baptized into His death and resurrection. With this you have faith that keeps you and brings you to repent over and over again trusting that He is crushed for you. Yes, He is your Suffering Servant.

The Lord takes all of the grief of the cross that He might take your soul into eternity. He now crushes your sin and even your guilt. It’s all because in the gift of faith you become His offspring. Though fallen man has gone His own way now in the new man with the gift of baptism, with the blood the cross unity is brought and you become part of a new family. This new family prolongs your days in the promise in Jesus Christ. So with this in the church you prosper. You rejoice in His gifts. As the third article speaks you are now in the Spirit, in the communion of saints in the Holy Christian church. Thus in His bodily resurrection, this is all yours. That’s why we need a Suffering Servant, and thanks be to God that He sent us one!

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for taking on our sorrows and griefs. Give us faith, so that we would not despise You, but believe in You for eternal life. Amen.

April 2 – Ezekiel, the Good Shepherd
Ezekiel 34:11-16 by Rev Bruce Timm

I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy (Ezekiel 34:16).

The Lord had enough of the false shepherds in Israel. Those false prophets were not only fleecing the sheep but left them starving for life and peace and at risk of being devoured.

The Lord makes a promise through Ezekiel that He will do what no one else will do or can do. He will search His sheep out from wherever they are scattered. He will gather them together, graze them on good pastures, and give them peace so they can lay down and rest.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). That’s Jesus. He is the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s shepherd. God had enough of His flock being fleeced and torn apart and scattered to the end of the earth. The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

In Luke 15 Jesus tells the parable about the shepherd leaving 99 sheep to search for one sheep. That makes no sense, unless that one sheep is of great value to the shepherd, and you are. Jesus lays down His life for us, so that He might gather us to Himself and into His flock the church. He does not want us to be alone. A sheep alone is a soon a dead and devoured sheep. He has come to save us, gather us, feed us and give us rest in His forgiveness. That sounds like church. That sounds like heaven.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, our Good Shepherd, help us listen to Your voice, follow your lead, and feed regularly on Your Word and Sacraments. Amen.

April 3 – Daniel, Habitual Prayer
Daniel 6:6-10 by Rev Joel Kosberg

He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously (Daniel 6:10).

Stubbornness is a virtue. Sometimes. Oftentimes we are stubborn about the wrong things. I am stubborn about my preferences. My preferences for worship. My preferences for how Pastor preaches. My preferences for dinner. My preferences for how others should behave.

Daniel was stubborn about the right things. The advisors for King Darius had a great idea! It should be a law that nobody can pray to any god or man other than King Darius for the next thirty days. And should anybody be caught praying to any god or man other than King Darius, they ought to be thrown into the lion's den. King Darius loved the idea and so it was decreed. That created a problem for Daniel. He prayed three times a day, every day, in full view of everybody in the Kingdom. And his prayers were to Yahweh, not Darius. But, stubborn man that he was, even under threat of his own death, Daniel got down on his knees three times a day, every day and prayed.

Jesus was stubborn, too. Even under threat of his own death he walked out to the garden of Gethsemane, got down on his knees, and prayed. And His prayer was for you, that God's will for your forgiveness would be accomplished in him even if it killed him. Now that is stubborn! Prayer can make you stubborn about the right things. About grace. About forgiveness. So, despite all the reasons not to, keep on praying.

Prayer: Father, thank you for the stubborn prayers of Daniel and Jesus. Help me to be stubborn about the right things. Through prayer, make me a person of grace, who speaks words of grace, who lives a life full of grace for the sake of those around me.

April 4 – Amos, the Justice Giver

Amos 5:18-24; Matthew 12:18 by Rev Dr TJ Rehwaldt

*“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim **justice** to the Gentiles” (Matthew 12:18).*

Amos calls upon the people of Israel to fear ‘the day of the Lord’ which was to be a day in which Israel would fall to its enemies and be destroyed. Why does the prophet bring such a doom and gloom message to God’s People? Simply stated, Israel was not living righteously before the Lord. Outwardly all seemed well. But the hearts of God’s People were turned away from the righteousness that the Lord desires. They were in every way simply pretending to be the People of God. They were simply going through the motions. Amos calls God’s People to repentance for their falseness, to abandon their “solemn assemblies” that offer no true worship or praise. He challenges their giving of “burnt offerings and grain offerings” because the offerings do not come from righteous living. They had the “noise of... songs” in their worship, but the Lord does not listen because their worship has become an insincere sham of righteousness. Amos preaches, **“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”** Justice and righteousness are synonymous. Amos is calling God’s People to repent for their falseness and failure to live righteously.

In Matthew 12, the portion of Isaiah is quoted which teaches that Jesus has come to proclaim justice and righteousness to all people. May His righteousness and justice given to us by Word and Sacrament be sincere and evident in our daily lives this Lenten season.

Prayer: Father, give us hearts that live for Your glory and are filled with the justice and the righteousness that has been won for us by Your Son Jesus upon the cross. Amen.

April 5 – Obadiah, Possessor of All the Earth

Obadiah 15-18; Acts 2:42-47 by Rev Brandon Johnson

But in Mount Zion there shall be those who escape, and it shall be holy, and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions (Obadiah 17).

The Book of Obadiah is the shortest of the Old Testament books. While we do not know exactly when Obadiah wrote his prophecy, it applies to the people of God while they were captives in Babylon. He writes to bring comfort to the people of Judah.

In verse 17, Obadiah says **“Jacob shall possess their own possessions.”** He means that the people of God will once again enjoy all the covenantal blessings God had promised as Jacob's inheritance (Gen 28:13-28). Inheritance is an expression of God’s graciousness. As a loving and gracious Father, He abundantly provides for His children.

In our lives, we see how God abundantly provides for us in the worship service. We joyfully gather together to worship Him and receive His gifts (Acts 2:42). In worship, God serves and provides for us by speaking to us His Word. We speak God’s word in the confession of our sins, we hear the story of our salvation in the readings, and we even celebrate the Lord’s Supper.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, our only refuge in times of trouble, strengthen our faith and lead us to show compassion, especially to those who need to hear the forgiveness found in the Gospel. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

April 6 – Jonah, 3 Days in the Belly
Matthew 12:38-42 by Rev David Hinz

For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:40).

When Jonah was thrown into the sea, a great whale swallowed him up. Inside the belly of the fish, Jonah became a type (or foreshadowing) of Jesus as he lay in the tomb. But when Jonah “rose,” he went to Nineveh. There he preached “Forty days and Nineveh will be changed.” And it was. By the end of forty days, Nineveh repented. Man and beast were wearing sackcloth and lying in ashes pleading to the God of the Israelites for mercy. And God granted it.

Fast forward several generations, and Jesus is speaking to Scribes and Pharisees knowing the cross and tomb are not far away. He is heading to them directly. Still, along the way, he is preaching. Will they respond like Nineveh? Will we?

Jesus offers only one sign to them, a death and resurrection. Many in those days refused to believe. But for those who did it changed their lives. The Cross of Christ has been put in front of your eyes. You’ve seen it! How do you think Jesus wants your life to change?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, please encourage me to believe the sign of your death and resurrection, and change my life to fit your will. Amen.

April 7 - Micah, Born in Bethlehem

Micah 5:1-5a by Rev Levi Willms

“And he shall be their peace” (Micah 5:5a).

I once had a member of my church that didn't like the church calendar. “It makes no sense! We just got done celebrating Jesus' birth and we are ready to kill him off again.” In further conversation, the thing he really thought was that the regular pattern of special days relating to the life of Jesus would cause a diminishing importance of the events themselves. Here we go again, observing Good Friday. I did that last year. Been there, done that.

The struggle, I guess is real. We have to be honest that experiential passion in our observances can ebb and flow. Here we are talking again about a little one born in Bethlehem, who will be ruler. Been there, done that.

“And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.” (Micah 5:4). I'm not sure secure is meant to be so ho-hum. With a king like ours who is victorious and reigns supreme, our observance is actually ever increasing in intensity. Our ruler has saved me from more sin and destruction than I knew about last year. More people have been saved from utter destruction than I knew of last year. The people of God have been bathed in the abundant grace of the Lord again and again and Christ's gifts and rule has not ended. Been there, done that, thanks be to God. Indeed, this ruler promised from of old, is our peace and our joy.

Prayer: Dear Father, Thank You for every day I have lived and received your mercy and grace. Thank you for extending Your kingdom daily in my life, family, church and world. Open my eyes to see and take joy in Your works. In Jesus' name, Amen.

April 8 - Habakkuk, the Righteous

Habakkuk 2:2-4 by Rev David Buchs

The righteous shall live by his faith (Habakkuk 2:4).

Habakkuk, a faithful prophet, rightly wonders: **“How long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear?” (Hab 1:2).** He wants to know when the injustices of God’s people will end. When will their wickedness be corrected?

God’s answer? **“I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation” (Hab 1:6).** They will chasten the Israelites at the Lord’s command. “But wait!” Habakkuk cries out. “They’re worse than we are!” He wonders at the scandal of it all.

The Lord’s answer is the key to all Scripture. Righteousness is not earned through obedience to God’s Law. **“The righteous shall live by his faith.”** This is Habakkuk’s lesson, and he also learns that the fruits of righteousness must be received with patience. **“If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay” (Hab 2:3).**

This conversation reverberates until it finds its fulfillment in the work of Christ. “How long will my people be enslaved to their sins?” You can hear the Lord reply, “I am sending the cross and the tomb.” Jesus, with tears and sweat like blood, observes the scandal of it all. And yet, he submits willingly and waits patiently. His faith is rewarded with vindication over death and the grave. God answered the plea of our Savior, and we will live through faith.

Prayer: Grant us, Lord, freedom from every false pursuit of righteousness, and teach us instead to trust in you and your blood and righteousness. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

April 9 - Zephaniah, the Singing Redeemer
Zephaniah 3:14-20 by Rev Zach Hoffman

The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing (Zephaniah 3:17).

Isaiah felt his sins as he stood gaping in the temple as he heard the songs of the angels crying out “Holy, Holy, Holy!”

Centuries later, Jesus would tell the story of a prodigal whose head was full of thoughts of repentance, and as he was still planning his speech his father came running out to meet him.

Jesus gave his final cry before dying on the cross and the crowds fell silent.

Maybe you are also in a deep silence before God. It is not that you have lost faith, but maybe you just do not know what to say for yourself anymore. The weight of sin can sink in so that all we can do is sigh. Listing or naming sins in particular can seem quite hollow. Not because of insincerity, but because there is just too much to confess!

Still, not all is quiet. The Son has cried out over you “It is finished!”, and the angels have not stopped rejoicing and singing ever since. Even your Father in heaven, rejoices over you!

The Mighty Lord is in your midst. Instead of a mournful silence, be stilled by his unfailing love.

Prayer: Mighty God, we give you thanks that though we are unworthy of your mercy, you have quieted our guilt by sending our Son. Amen.

April 10 - Haggai, the Greater Glory

Haggai 2:1-9 by Rev Bruce Timm

I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts (Haggai 2:7).

The Temple was in shambles, but the people were living in five-bedroom, three car garage homes in the suburbs. Not exactly, but close. The Israelites had returned from exile in Babylon to Jerusalem. They were to rebuild the city and the Temple. However, instead of caring about the Lord's house, they looked after their own housing.

Haggai was their prophet. He told the people that because they were neglecting the Lord's house, they would not prosper. They would plant, but harvest little, drink but not quench their thirst, pile on clothes but not be warm.

Haggai's sermon also included the Lord's invitation to return to Him. He called the people to "work, for I am with You." He promised that soon all creation would be shaken and the nations bring their treasures to the Lord. His glory would fill the Temple far greater than anything prior.

Jesus is that greater glory. He was presented at the Temple when He was 40 days old. As a 12-year-old He taught the teachers in the Temple. When He died the Temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom. Forty years after Jesus rose from the dead, the physical Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. It wasn't needed anymore because Jesus is God's dwelling place on earth. He is the glory of God and the eternal Temple of God. He is the presence of God for you to give you peace.

Prayer: Help us not to neglect our worship of You, O Lord, but come to Your house, that we may behold Your glory, in Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

April 11 - Zechariah, the Day of the Lord
Zechariah 14:1-9 by Rev Joel Kosberg

*Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.
(Zechariah 14:5).*

As a kid, my brothers and I would play King of the Hill. We would fight and claw and push to stand on top of our parents' bed while knocking each other to the floor. I was the youngest. I was the runt of the family, so I routinely ended up on the carpet.

God is not the runt of the family. God is the King of the Hill. And a day is coming when he will stand on top of the hill watching all of his competition flee. He is the strongest. He is the one in control. He is the King.

That's how Zechariah describes the day of the LORD. His feet will stand on the mountain as a conqueror. But, there is a twist. God is not standing alone on the mountain. He has all his holy ones with him (v. 5).

When Jesus goes to the cross he climbs up a hill past his enemies with a crown on his head. But he is not alone. There are two criminals on his side and one calls to him, "Jesus –King! – remember me!" And Jesus responds, "You will be with me."

Jesus is the King of the Hill. Conquering all your enemies and you, his holy one, stand with him in his victory.

Prayer: Father, thank you for your victory over every enemy. Thank you for bringing me with you through the cross of Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

April 12 - Nisan 10, The Chosen Lamb of God
Exodus 12:3-6; John 12:1-8 by Rev Joshua Reber

“On the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb” (Exodus 12:3).

Passover was held during the month of Nisan, on the 15th day. The Passover Lamb to be sacrificed was selected on the 10th day of Nisan.

6 days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany to have dinner with Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. After dinner, Mary anointed Jesus' feet. Remember that the Jewish day was sundown to sundown. After dinner would've constituted a new Jewish day, meaning Jesus was anointed on the 10th day of Nisan, the very day when the Passover Lamb was selected.

When she anoints Jesus, Mary is picking out the Lamb of God for the sacrifice. Jesus makes this clear. **“Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial” (Jn 12:7).**

The feet that Mary is anointing are the very feet she just fell at after Lazarus died (Jn 11:32). Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, but at what cost? His own life. These are the feet that would crush the serpent's skull at the cross. How beautiful are the feet that defeat sin, death, and the devil!

Prayer: Father, give us faith like Mary of Bethany, who received Jesus as her priceless treasure, the perfect Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

April 13 - Solomon, Son of David (Palm Sunday)

1 Kings 1:32-40 by Rev Dr TJ Rehwaldt

*“They brought the **donkey** and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them” (Matthew 21:7).*

In 1 Kings 1, King David said, **“Take with you the servants of your lord and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule and bring him down to Gihon. And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet there anoint him king over Israel. Then blow the trumpet and say, ‘Long live King Solomon!’”** Later, we read, **“As the Lord has been with my lord the king, even so may he be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David.”** And finally we read, **“There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, ‘Long live King Solomon!’ And all the people went up after him, playing on pipes, and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth was split by their noise.”**

What a scene that must have been! But an even greater scene is the one we celebrate today! **“Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”** Jesus arrives as our victorious King who has and will conquer sin and death for all believers. The battle is yet to be fought upon the cross on Friday, but the victory is secure through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer! The victory is confirmed when Jesus rises to life again on Easter! But the celebration begins today, and for all believers it will last for all eternity!

Prayer: Lord and King, we praise you for Your victory over sin, death, and all that is evil. Allow our lives to be a continuous celebration of Your gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation! Amen.

April 14 - Feast of Booths, the Palm Tree King (Holy Monday)

Leviticus 23:33-43; John 12:12-19 by Rev Brandon Johnson

So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" (John 12:13)

In Leviticus 23, the Lord instructs the people of Israel concerning the feasts and festivals they are to observe. The annual pilgrimage feast, the Feast of Booths (also called the Feast of Tabernacles), was celebrated after the yearly harvest. The seven-day feast began and ended with a special sabbath.

Part of the celebration included the construction of temporary shelters, "tabernacles" or "booths," in which to eat and sleep during the feast (Neh. 8:14-17). These shelters would be made out of Palm Trees.

John connects Jesus' entry into Jerusalem during Passover to the Feast of Booths by describing Palm Trees. Both the Feast of Booths and the Passover emphasize the theme of God delivering His people. Jesus entered Jerusalem to be crowned as king who would save His people.

But as the Gospel narrative reports, His crown will be one of thorns, and his throne will be the cross. The throne of the King will ultimately be the altar of sacrifice. All this He does for you.

Prayer: Jesus Christ, King of all Creation, thank you for delivering us from the clutches of sin, death, and the Devil. Preserve us that we may always cry out in Hosanna. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

April 15 - Jehu, The Conquering King (Holy Tuesday)

2 Kings 9:1-13 by Rev David Hinz

Then in haste every man of them took his garment and put it under him on the bare steps, and they blew the trumpet and proclaimed, "Jehu is king" (2 Kings 9:13).

Cleaning the house is something we all must do. Some houses are dirtier than others. Looking at our mess might even feel overwhelming. Some homes are spic and span and never used. Yet keeping a house full of people clean is tough. Do you enjoy cleaning the house?

Elijah announced Jehu would become king, and as king he would clean house. It was a different kind of mess. Ahab and his wife Jezebel, were the current rulers, and they were really bad. The smell coming from their kitchen had reached God's nose. God sends Jehu to clean up. The people hear and, in their excitement, lay down their garments. Jehu rides over them in honor.

God's house still needs cleaning. Jehu didn't get the job done because he kept up the practice of idolatry. So God sent a better Son to clean house. People saw him come and cast their cloaks on the road. Jesus rode in honor, and cleaned out the money changers. He climbed a cross throne and cleaned the house inside of us. Today we keep praying that he cleans house in us and the Church, that we might be a fitting house in body and soul.

Prayer: Lord, take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to thee. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

April 16 - The Rock in the Wilderness, Thirst Quencher (Holy Wednesday)
1 Corinthians 10:1-4 by Rev Levi Willms

For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4).

“Obey Your Thirst!” I grew up in the time of Sprite’s campaign to make clear soda cool. I’m not sure that they succeeded in the end, but the phrase was memorable anyways. The problem, however, was that maybe my thirst wasn’t for their product. Obeying my thirst wasn’t going to get me to buy more Sprite. If they could have somehow convinced me to obey the drink instead of my thirst, then they would have had something.

Israel was in a desert and they were thirsty. Obeying their thirst leads them to grumbling and complaining. God provides them with water and they drink it. It is interesting how that works when you are really thirsty and there's only one option. Paul shares with us in 1 Corinthians the secret. The rock and the water that flowed was Christ.

God gives us what our thirst actually needs. Oh, there are many other wells, drawing our thirst’s attention. They leave us drinking sand. **“But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again (John 4:14).** In a sense we obey not what our thirst tells us it wants, but what it needs. We actually obey the drink that the thirst is meant to seek. Christ is the rock and the water. You have a busy few days coming of worship. I hope you are thirsty, the water is flowing. Joyfully drink and be satisfied!

Prayer: Dear Father, daily grant me a thirst for Your Word and for Jesus. May I joyfully know the satisfaction of being filled by You. Be with those who seek that which is not true water. Give them your Son to drink and to live. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

April 17 - Manna, Bread from Heaven (Maundy Thursday)

John 6:35-40 by Rev David Buchs

“I am the bread of life” (John 6:35).

It is the unimpressive waters of the Jordan river that scandalize Naaman the Syrian. Aren't the rivers of Damascus better (2 Kings 5:12)? Naaman's servants prevailed upon him – **“It is a great word the prophet has spoken to you” (2 Kings 5:13)**. He washes and finds his skin renewed like that of a little baby. “How can water do such great things?” we rightly wonder. The water is there to scandalize us. The word is there to assure us.

So it goes with bread. There was the painfully ordinary bread that appeared every morning to sustain the people of Israel. Would they believe it was the bread of angels? Or would they despise it, preferring the leeks of Egypt?

Now Christ has appeared, but he does not do away with bread. Rather, the bread persists. The bread is there to scandalize us. The word is there to assure us: **“This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever” (John 6:58)**.

“This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” (John 6:60) we rightly wonder. Nevertheless, let us press on by faith and confess with Peter: **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68)**.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, you are the bread who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Give us this bread always. In your name, Amen.

April 18 – Isaac, the Son of Abraham (Good Friday)

Genesis 22:1-14 by Rev Bruce Timm

“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, ... and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Gen 22:1).

If the only prophecy we had of Christ in the Old Testament was the sacrifice of Isaac, we would have enough to point us to Jesus.

Abraham’s only son was miraculously conceived. Isaac was his first born, begotten, beloved son. Now the Lord tests Abraham’s faith in God’s promise. Is Abraham willing to sacrifice his only son, trusting that God will still keep His promises through this son to bless the nations? By faith Abraham offered up his son believing God would raise him from the dead. (Heb 11:19) His journey to Mount Moriah took three days. Isaac carried the wood for his sacrifice. Isaac willingly let his old father bind him and ready him for sacrifice. In the end the Lord provided a substitute to die in Isaac’s place.

Behold Jesus, the greater Son of Abraham. He is God the Father’s only begotten Son. He is the beloved of His Father. He willingly comes down to earth for us men and our salvation. His conception in the womb of Mary is miraculous. He allows Himself to be bound up with our sins, our death, and God’s judgment against us. He carries the wood of His own sacrifice. Three days later He arrives at His destination – the resurrection. Jesus is the substitute the Lord Himself provides that we might be set free from death. He is the greater Isaac.

Prayer: Bless our observance of Good Friday, O Lord, that we might confidently trust that the sacrifice of Your only begotten Son, sets us free from sin and death. Amen.

April 19 – Malachi, the Sun of Righteousness (Holy Saturday)

Malachi 4:1-3 by Rev Benjamin Hollingsead

"But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings" (Malachi 4:2).

Holy Saturday is a day of waiting. The cross stands empty, the tomb is sealed, and the world holds its breath. It is a day between sorrow and joy, death and life. Malachi speaks of a coming day, a day of fire for the wicked but healing for those who fear the Lord's name.

On Good Friday, darkness covered the land as Jesus bore our sins. It seemed as if the night had won. But even in the silence of the grave, God's promises stand firm. The Sun of Righteousness has not been extinguished—He is about to rise. Christ, our Lord, rested in the tomb, fulfilling the Sabbath, and soon, He will break forth in victory.

For the unbelieving world, this day is one of ignorance and judgment to come. But for us who fear the Lord, it is a day of quiet hope. Like the morning sun that chases away the night, Jesus will rise with healing, conquering sin, death, and the devil.

As we wait, we do not despair. We cling to the promise: The Sun of Righteousness will rise. Easter dawn is near. Sin is defeated. Death is swallowed up in victory.

Come, Lord Jesus, and shine upon us!

Prayer: Lord, in the silence of this day, keep our hearts fixed on Your promise. Let the light of Your resurrection dawn upon us. Amen.

April 20 - Joseph, the Forgiving Brother (Easter)

Genesis 50:15-21; Matthew 28:10 by Rev Joshua Reber

Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me (Matthew 28:10)

The last person Joseph's brothers wanted to see was Joseph. They threw him into a pit, sold him into slavery, and told his dad that he was dead.

And yet, the first person Joseph's brothers wanted to see was Joseph. If they saw him, it meant he wasn't dead.

The disciples had abandoned Jesus. He was the last person they wanted to see. Jesus spoke words of judgment, and if He came back from the dead, what was He going to do to them? And yet, the first person they wanted to see was Jesus. That would mean the last 3 years for them and all of eternity isn't wasted! We see this cognitive dissonance in Mark's account of the resurrection - the resurrection is the most joyful thing in the world, and yet the women run away in fear. As long as we struggle in the sinful flesh, we'll have this cognitive dissonance.

Jesus has the last word, though. Don't be afraid. He calls His disciples *brothers*. "Yeah, you abandoned Me and left Me for dead. I triumphed, and defeated sin, death, and the devil for you. You are My brothers because we share the same blood - My blood."

They meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. That's the mystery and joy of Easter morning.

Prayer: Dear Father, we praise You for raising Your Son from the grave on Easter morning. Give us faith, so that on the last day, You'll raise us to eternal life with You. In the name of the resurrected Jesus, Amen.