

The background of the entire image is a rich, deep purple fabric with a subtle woven texture. On the right side, a crown of thorns, made of dry, light-brown, sharp-edged branches, is draped diagonally from the top right towards the bottom right. The lighting is soft, highlighting the folds of the fabric and the intricate details of the thorns.

REFLECTIONS FROM HERE

Lenten Devotional 2022

voices from Westminster Presbyterian Church

The background of the page is a close-up photograph of a purple fabric, likely a church altar cloth, with a crown of thorns resting on it. The thorns are light brown and sharp, contrasting with the soft, draped texture of the purple fabric. The lighting is soft, creating gentle shadows and highlights on the fabric's folds.

INTRODUCTION

The ancient hymns, poems, and prayers found in the Psalms teach us how to communicate with God. This year the Lenten devotions, prepared by writers at Westminster Church, are based on the Psalms. Here you will find daily readings from people who took the ancient texts and connected them to their lives, inviting us to do the same.

We hope the readings will deepen your connection to God during this season of Lent.

Many thanks to the writers, the editors Barb Myers and Louise Rogers, Jeannie Schott who designs and formats the print and online devotions, and the Adult Spiritual Development Commission who provides support and encouragement.

WEEK ONE

Ash Wednesday – March 2

Marked by Ashes

by Walter Brueggemann

Ruler of the Night, Guarantor of the day...

This day – a gift from you.

This day – like none other you have ever given, or we have ever received.

This Wednesday dazzles us with gift and newness and possibility.

This Wednesday burdens us with the tasks of the day, for we are already halfway home

halfway back to committees and memos,

halfway back to calls and appointments,

halfway on to next Sunday,

halfway back, half frazzled, half expectant,

half turned toward you, half rather not.

This Wednesday is a long way from Ash Wednesday,

but all our Wednesdays are marked by ashes –

we begin this day with that taste of ash in our mouth:

of failed hope and broken promises,

of forgotten children and frightened women,

we ourselves are ashes to ashes, dust to dust;

we can taste our mortality as we roll the ash around on our tongues.

We are able to ponder our ashness with

some confidence, only because our every Wednesday of ashes

anticipates your Easter victory over that dry, flaky taste of death.

On this Wednesday, we submit our ashen way to you –

you Easter parade of newness.

Before the sun sets, take our Wednesday and Easter us,

Easter us to joy and energy and courage and freedom;

Easter us that we may be fearless for your truth.

Come here and Easter our Wednesday with

mercy and justice and peace and generosity.

We pray as we wait for the Risen One who comes soon.

Thursday, March 3

Psalm 91:1-6

*You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust."*

*For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence;*

*he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.*

*You will not fear the terror of the night,
or the arrow that flies by day,*

*or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.*

Reflection:

Refuge, Home, Safety, Protection. The Psalmist speaks to each of us as clearly today as all those ages ago. In our lives, during this pandemic, through illness and fear, and yet, all throughout history and throughout our lives, God is always our safe place, our refuge. This is true in my life and in yours. But, this comfort we find is not only for dire times, but for daily life, and sometimes that is difficult to grasp. We need our Father's care regardless of good times, bad times, joy, or despair. Our God is where we must consistently turn with faith – in great times and not-so-great times. He is the constant, always there. The Alpha and the Omega. Forever and ever. In trusting our faith in God always, even when we think we have things under control, we better prepare ourselves for those not good times, when our asks are urgent and frightening. We need to be constant to our Father – just as He is to us. Always.

Prayer:

Lord, as we examine our faith more closely during this Lenten season, cause us to know the shelter and steadfastness that God, our Father, always provides us, for only our asking and trust. Allow the peace of that knowledge to envelope us each, now and forever. Amen.

– Denise Rost

Friday, March 4

Psalm 91:9-13

*Because you have made the LORD your refuge, the Most High your dwelling place,
no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent.*

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.

*You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample
under foot.*

Reflection:

When I reflect on the most challenging experiences of my life, I can clearly see the hand of God at work. I imagine that for most people, as it has been for me, when in the depths of a difficult situation, we feel alone and sometimes even abandoned by God. However, as we make our way through and when we open our hearts, we find there is a light guiding us. As terrible as things may seem, we often realize we have been protected from a situation being even worse than it could have been. Other times, we are being guided to face something we have been neglecting or ignoring. For me, the most arduous of paths has always led me to a better place and I have emerged stronger, wiser and renewed in my faith.

Prayer:

God I thank you for guarding over me in all ways, in the most difficult of times as well in the small moments of everyday life. May I always turn to you as my refuge, especially in times of darkness, doubt and despair. I pray Lord for an open heart and the clarity to see that you are always with me. Amen.

- Amy Ranalli

Saturday, March 5

Psalm 91:14-16

*Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.*

*When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honor them.*

*With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.*

Devotion:

The psalms are for all the seasons and circumstances of life. These verses speak to us when we are oppressed. Many things can do that to us: COVID and its variants, uncertainties, perils, life-threatening medical conditions, losses, you name it. The message is that all these things are known by the Lord. He isn't blind or hard of hearing. He knows our oppressions as well as our prayers even before we do, and cares for us even more than we care for ourselves. These verses are saying "Don't worry. I've got you!"

Prayer:

Lord, I can't handle this. It's too much for me.
I can't fill in the blank alone. Please show me the way,
and give me the strength and energy I lack, to overcome fill in the blank.
In Jesus name. Amen.

- John Hayes

Sunday, March 6

Psalm 91:9-10

*Because you have made the LORD your refuge,
the Most High your dwelling place,
no evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your tent.*



WEEK TWO

Monday, March 7

Psalm 18:1-6

I love you, O Lord, my strength.

The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, so I shall be saved from my enemies.

The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of perdition assailed me; the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me.

In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help.

From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.

Reflection:

The psalmist paints the most “solid” experience we have is with God. How has prayer strengthened and solidified your relationship with God?

One of the defining moments of my life was the birth, life, and death of our first daughter Abbey. I remember during the short 14 days of her life that I had to make a choice to be angry and turn away from God or to allow Him to walk with me through that most difficult journey. It was a conscious choice. I remember the moment I made the choice to embrace God’s love and grace and that anger had no place within me. God’s grace was my fortification and reassurance that I will be with her again.

Like the song says, “The church is the people.” Coming together as a church community for worship has made a profound difference in my life.

Prayer:

Dear God, as your community we ask that you continue to be the eye of the hurricane that is our trials, troubles, tribulations we encounter in this world, knowing that you, through Jesus, were the one who calms water when we are in peril on the sea. Amen.

– Richard Ralston

Tuesday, March 8

Psalm 18:30-32, 36

*This God—his way is perfect;
the promise of the Lord proves true;
he is a shield for all who take refuge in him.*

For who is God except the Lord?

*And who is a rock besides our God? — the God who girded me with strength,
and made my way safe.*

You gave me a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip.



Wednesday, March 9

Psalm 130:5

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope...

Let Your God Love You

Edwina Gateley

Be silent.

Be still.

Alone.

Empty

Before your God.

Say nothing.

Ask nothing.

Be silent.

Be still.

Let your God look upon you.

That is all.

God knows.

God understands.

God loves you

With an enormous love,

And only wants

To look upon you

With that love.

Quiet.

Still.

Be.

Let your God—

Love you.



Thursday, March 10

Psalm 27:1-6

*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*

*When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes— they shall stumble and fall.*

*Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident.*

*One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.*

*For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will set me high on a rock.*

*Now my head is lifted up above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the Lord.*

Reflection:

As I reflect on this scripture, I am comforted by the author's confident prayer to the Lord. David realizes he cannot control his enemies; he fully gives control to God who sustains him. That is very difficult for most of us to do; fear grips us and controls us, or we try to control the situation. 2022 is trying to overcome us with fear – COVID, crime, Russian invasions, school safety... the list goes on.

The psalmist tells us to look to the Lord who is our light, our beacon in the darkness of fear. The Lord is our stronghold, and he dwells with us. With these assurances, David is able to rejoice with shouts of joy and singing. I pray that when I am overcome with fear I can shout to the Lord with joy and thanksgiving that he is here with me offering me safety and peace amidst the tumult that surrounds me.

Prayer:

Holy and gracious God, help me to fully rely on you as I try to overcome my fears. May I always rejoice in the promise of your steadfast love, care and grace. Amen.

– Sue Davis

Friday, March 11

Psalm 27:7-11

Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me!

"Come," my heart says, "seek his face!"

Your face, Lord, do I seek.

Do not hide your face from me.

Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help.

Do not cast me off, do not forsake me, O God of my salvation!

If my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up.

*Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.*

Reflection:

We all know what our faith tells us about service...Love our neighbor, What you've done the for the least of these you've done for me, and Where your heart is there your treasure will be. So God's message to us about serving others is clear.

Westminster serves the lives of more than 10,000 people outside our walls... in City Mission, SHIM, Haiti, India, Homewood, etc. And they are just the people Jesus told us to serve... the poor, the meek, and the hungry.

It's often said that joyful givers receive more than those they give to. I'm a good example; my involvement in Homewood over the last 13 years has totally changed my life, and it has brought far more joy to my life I ever knew was possible.

I pray that you participate in serving the least of these and experience the same joy of giving I've discovered in Homewood.

- Dan Paul

Saturday, March 12

Psalm 27:13-14

*I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.*

*Wait for the Lord;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord!*

Reflection:

When my boys were little, anytime we were in a doctor's waiting room we would play the game "I Spy." This game in which players guess which item is the color you "spied" can distract and comfort in that sterile and stressful setting. In no time, you've spied 10 beautiful colors that were hiding in that drab office. It's an active way to pass the time, to shift perspective and find beauty, despite static circumstances. What if "waiting for the Lord" is the prayer version of "I Spy." Prayer allows us to spy goodness in the land of the living even before we get our "answer" in a big picture we can't fully understand here and now. Prayer relaxes us into the humility of knowing things will happen on God's time instead of our time. That, my friends, feels like it's worth the wait.

Prayer:

Loving God, help us to turn toward you in our waiting. Make our waiting a way to "spy" your work in our lives and build our trust in your ultimate goodness. Amen.

- Megan Exley

Sunday, March 13

Psalm 27:14

*Wait for the LORD;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the LORD!*

God's Love For Us *Juliana of Norwich*

The love of God most High for our soul
Is so wonderful that it surpasses all
knowledge. No created being can fully know
the greatness, the sweetness, the
tenderness, of the love that our Maker has
for us. By his Grace and help therefore let
us in spirit stand in awe and gaze, eternally
marvelling at the supreme, surpassing,
single-minded, incalculable love that God,
Who is all goodness, has for us.

WEEK THREE

Monday, March 14

Psalm 105:1-3

*O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.*

*Sing to him, sing praises to him;
tell of all his wonderful works.*

*Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.*

Reflection:

Sometimes, life here on earth can be complicated, demanding, and busy. When the demands of life leave us rushing from place to place with scarcely a moment to spare, we may fail to pause and say a word of thanks for all the good things we received. But when we fail to count our blessings, we rob ourselves the happiness, the peace, and gratitude that should rightfully be ours.

Today, even if you're busily engaged in life, slow down long enough to start counting your blessings. Then, give thanks to our God, the Giver of all good things.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Your gifts are greater than what I can imagine. May I live each day with thanksgiving in my heart and praise on my lips. Let me share the joyous news of Your Son and let my life be a testimony to Your love and grace. Amen.

- Missy DalBon

Tuesday, March 15

Psalm 105:4-7

*Seek the Lord and his strength;
seek his presence continually.*

*Remember the wonderful works he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he has uttered,*

*O offspring of his servant Abraham,
children of Jacob, his chosen ones.*

*He is the Lord our God;
his judgments are in all the earth.*

Reflection:

Worship on Sunday helps us begin our week with an awareness of God's presence in our lives. Outside of worship, I 'remember the wonderful works of God when I'm outdoors – playing with grandchildren at the local park, weeding and watering my flower beds, walking my dog Millie, watching the sunrise/sunset, stargazing, walking the beach, touring our national parks. Being in nature changes me and I am more mindful and receptive of God as I reconnect with His creation and surrender myself to Him.

Prayer:

Lord teach me to be still in your presence, if only for a few minutes. Train my heart and soul to hear your voice. Open my spiritual eyes and give me a glimpse of Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

– Deborah Waller

Wednesday, March 16

Coming to a City Near You

Carol Penner

Jesus comes to Jerusalem, the city nearest you.
Jesus comes to the gate, to the synagogue,
to houses prepared for wedding parties,
to the pools where people wait to be healed,
to the temple where lambs are sold,
to gardens, beautiful in the moonlight.
He comes to the governor's palace.

Jesus comes to Jerusalem, the city nearest you,
to new subdivisions and trailer parks,
to penthouses and basement apartments,
to the factory, the hospital and the Cineplex,
to the big box outlet centre and to churches,
with the same old same old message,
unchanged from the beginning of time.

Jesus comes to Jerusalem, the city nearest you
with his Good News and...

Hope erupts! Joy springs forth!

The very stones cry out,
"Hosanna in the highest,
blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

The crowds jostle and push,
they can't get close enough!

People running alongside flinging down their coats before him!

Jesus, the parade marshal, waving, smiling.

The paparazzi elbow for room,
looking for that perfect picture for the headline,
"The Man Who Would Be King."



Thursday, March 17

Psalm 63:1-4

*O God, you are my God, I seek you,
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*

*So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.*

*Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.*

*So I will bless you as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands and call on your name.*

Reflection:

In my house are many house plants, most of them gifts from family and friends. Especially during the dry winter months, they do not get watered as often as necessary. Their leaves curl, brown spots appear, they are overall droopy. Fortunately, with a good watering they come to life again!

This is the image I think of when I read Psalm 46. At times, in the dry seasons of our lives, we too thirst for God. We feel parched, irritable, and forgotten. What a relief when we are lifted up to once again see the goodness of God through worship, the scriptures, and caring for others. The Lord continually showers us with love. This allows us to share love with others, particularly the children in our lives. Thanks be to God for all the blessing we receive.

Prayer:

Dear God, when we are in a dry season in our life, thank you for being there to shower us with your love and bring us to bloom in that love. Amen.

- Debb Egli

Friday, March 18

Psalm 63: 5-8

*My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast,
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips
when I think of you on my bed,
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;
for you have been my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.
My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me.*

Reflection:

The title of this psalm is “A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah.” We can only imagine the isolation and affliction that David felt. Even though it was a time of adversity, grief, and loneliness, he never lost faith. He sought out God’s love and praised him. “For you have been my help.” This reminds me that no matter the heartache, challenges, and despair we face in our own lives, God never leaves us. In those moments of pain, lean into God’s grace and his love will be light that leads us through the darkness.

Prayer:

I lift my hands to praise you. Thank you for all the blessings you have given me. My soul is filled with your unconditional love. Continue to be with me always and be my strength. Amen.

– Alecia Klonicke

Saturday, March 19

Psalm 145:8-13

The Lord is gracious and merciful; slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.

All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your faithful shall bless you.

*They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power,
to make known to all people your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.*

*Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout
all generations.*

The Lord is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds.

Reflection:

Where have you recognized the purpose and design of God's work?

Does this recognition encourage you to add a little human praise to the chorus?

Prayer:

Lord in heaven, help me to hear the praise that comes from rolling hills, starry skies, crashing waves and the warmth of the sun. May I find ways to add my own human praise to show my love for You.

Sunday, March 20

The Journey

Mary Oliver

One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began,
though the voices around you
kept shouting their bad advice —
though the whole house
began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
at your ankles.
“Mend my life!”
each voice cried.
But you didn’t stop.
You knew what you had to do,
though the wind pried
with its stiff fingers
at the very foundations,
though their melancholy
was terrible.
It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road full of fallen
branches and stones.

But little by little,
as you left their voices behind,
the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice
which you slowly
recognized as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do —
determined to save
the only life you could save.

from Mary Oliver, *Dream Work* (1994).

WEEK FOUR

Monday, March 21

Psalm 107:1-3

[Thanksgiving for Deliverance from Many Troubles]

*O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever.*

*Let the redeemed of the Lord say so,
those he redeemed from trouble*

*and gathered in from the lands,
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.*

Reflection:

The Hebrews have been restored back together by God's grace after their dispersion. Now was the time to return thanks back to God for the steadfast love received and promises fulfilled. This passage felt a bit distant and hard to embrace. However, after reflecting on Westminster's financial troubles from a couple years ago I can see a direct link to this passage today. The same fulfilled promises, the same redeeming love from God have delivered us from being separated from each other and from God. I witnessed the Holy Spirit working through so many people to create healing amongst each other and a commitment to overcoming that setback. We are truly blessed by that leadership and that is why we sing praises back to God for he is still at work here at Westminster.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father we come to you with endless needs, forgive us when we look past the gifts right in front of us. We give thanks for your promises to be with us at all times and offer in return our steadfast love.

– Jay Galbreath

Tuesday, March 22

Psalm 107:4-9

*Some wandered in desert wastes,
finding no way to an inhabited town;*

*hungry and thirsty,
their soul fainted within them.*

*Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress;*

*he led them by a straight way,
until they reached an inhabited town.*

*Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.*

*For he satisfies the thirsty,
and the hungry he fills with good things.*

Reflection:

This part of the long Psalm 107 (150 verses) is about the Exiles who were released from the Babylonian captivity in around 539 BCE trying to find their way back home. Here's their story: They were utterly lost, starving and thirsty. They cried out to God, and He led them to safety.

It reminds both them and us today that God's love never fails, and we should always go to Him for help. And we must always remember to thank Him for his goodness and love for us.

So long ago, but true across the ages and true now. We may feel lost in the desert of the pandemic and world situation, lives disrupted and future unsure, but we must pray to God to help us solve these problems. He loves us and will help us. We must thank him for his unfailing love.

Prayer:

Dear God, we thank you for your enduring love. In hard times, we get anxious and forget to come to you for help first. You never forget us, and we are so grateful that we can ask and receive your help. Amen.

- Flo Sheap

Wednesday, March 23

The Opening

Shirley Gupton Lynn

Alone, O Lord, alone with thee,
Where none could speak nor hear nor see,
The bar I've placed across my heart
I'd lift, and bid the doors to part -
On rusty hinges open wide
And let just once your love inside;
And when I'd turn to close the door
And put the bar in place once more,
My heart so filled with thee I'd find
The doors could not be closed behind.

in *For Everything There Is a Season*
compiled by Karen Greenwaldt



Thursday, March 24

Psalm 32:1-5

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

*Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.*

While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long.

*For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by
the heat of summer.*

*Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess
my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*

Reflection:

When I read this passage one thing comes to mind, guilt. I certainly have had my share of guilt. I would venture to say we all have, maybe as a child, but we've all had it. The psalmist equated guilt as his body wasting away. My take on guilt is feeling like I am carrying a heavy weight on my shoulders making me feel sluggish and unhappy. When I confess my guilt in words and in my heart to God and who ever I feel like I committed the act or sin toward, then that weight is lifted. I feel light and happiness returns. What a wonderful feeling that is.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for forgiving my sins and for your perfect son you sent to take them for me. Amen.

- Sara Locke

Friday, March 25

Psalm 32:6-11

*Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress,
the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.*

*You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me
with glad cries of deliverance.*

*I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye
upon you.*

*Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed
with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.*

*Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust
in the LORD.*

Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

Reflection:

God protects us and guides us, but we are often stubborn like a mule and do not listen. I am reminded of the cartoon which shows the devil on one shoulder and the angel on the other. In my younger days, I recall asking my aunt who was a devout Christian, "How will I know if it is God guiding me or Satan?" She explained to me that was why reading the Bible daily was so important. She reassured me that by studying the Bible regularly I would learn God's will. As I grew older, I realized that learning God's will was the easy part. The difficulty is following God's will instead of my own. These verses in Psalms align with my favorite Bible verse; "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." (Proverbs 3:5)

Prayer:

Lord, please help us to follow your guidance instead of our own will.

– Sandy Thompson

Saturday, March 26

Psalm 40:1-4

I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

*He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.*

*He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.*

*Happy are those who make the Lord their trust,
who do not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after false gods.*

Reflection:

This is a Psalm describing a desolate time in David's life. Yet, David believed that God knew his distress and was with him. In spite of hardship, God gave David a "new song" – a realization that God is the one we must trust. That knowledge brings joy and is the way of truth.

We all experience moments of fear, trouble, sorrow, or uncertainty. When we do, we need to remember God's care for us. His presence is with us, no matter the circumstance. That knowledge will keep our focus on the One who is our guide and our security. We may not know how our circumstance will change, but we can remember who God is and what He promises to us. Trusting in His care will bring us confidence that God will guide us on a good path.

Prayer:

Most gracious and loving God, we wait patiently for you to come and rescue us. We put our trust in you, our Rock and our Redeemer.

– Barbara and Hetz Marsh

Sunday, March 27

Psalm 32:5

*Then I acknowledged my sin to you, And I did not hide my iniquity:
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," And you forgave the guilt of my sin.*

If Prayer Would Do It

Stephen Levine

If prayer would do it

I'd pray.

If reading esteemed thinkers would do it

I'd be halfway through the Patriarchs.

If discourse would do it

I'd be sitting with His Holiness

every moment he was free.

If contemplation would do it

I'd have translated the Periodic Table

to hermit poems, converting
matter to spirit.

If even fighting would do it

I'd already be a black belt.

If anything other than love could do it

I'd have done it already

and left the hardest for last.



WEEK FIVE

Monday, March 28

Psalm 53:1-3

*Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they commit abominable acts;
there is no one who does good.*

*God looks down from heaven on humankind
to see if there are any who are wise,
who seek after God.*

*Everyone has turned away,
they have together become corrupt;
there is no one who does good, not even one.*

Reflection:

In this Psalm David laments that those who do not believe in God are fools, and that God has judged all humanity as corrupt and unbelieving. Thoughts about God and man do not get much darker than this. When we consider the world to be filled with corruption and desperation, feelings of smallness and estrangement from God and neighbor are inevitable.

But God's love through Jesus and the Holy Spirit is immense beyond measure – able to lift all of humanity out of the depths of despair.

Prayer:

Dear God, when I feel panic, joylessness, selfishness, or despair, remind me once again that out of your immeasurable love for us you sent Jesus to redeem our countless sins. Remind me that his loving spirit rests in me. Inspire me once again to share his love with everyone. Amen.

– Sandy Conley

Tuesday, March 29

Psalm 55:4-8

*My heart is in anguish within me,
the terrors of death have fallen upon me.*

*Fear and trembling come upon me,
and horror overwhelms me.*

*And I say, "O that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest; truly, I would flee far away;
I would lodge in the wilderness;
I would hurry to find a shelter for myself
from the raging wind and tempest."*

Reflection:

Think about some of the things that can be considered stressors in your everyday life. For some, it is finishing that huge project you've been putting off for weeks, or the stress of trying to support a family. I think we can all admit that we've had those times where we get tired, and we simply feel lost. As the passage says, it's tempting to just fly away to our shelter. This can manifest for each of us in many ways. We might dive into a book or the newest television program to calm our anxieties. However, some fall into worldly temptations such as alcohol or other addiction to quell their struggles. It is in these times that we are reminded of God's longing for us to grow closer to him, in spite of our efforts to find comfort in worldly desires. What would it look like to have God be your shelter?

Prayer:

Lord, we thank you for being our ever-lasting shelter. Your love and comfort is so much greater than any fear or anxiety. We pray that, in times of trial and stress, you guide us away from our temptations and provide a place of rest for our anguished hearts. Amen.

- Harrison Burgess

Wednesday, March 30

Psalm 55:22

*Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you;
he will never permit the righteous to be moved.*

Welcoming Arms

The welcome of the Father's arms be yours
The welcome of the Savior's heart be yours
The welcome of the Spirit's call be yours.

Deep peace of this earth to you
Deep peace of this sky to you
Deep peace of this place to you.

The kindly eye of the Three be upon you
To Aid you and Guard you
To cherish and enrich you.

May God take you in the clasp of his own
two hands.



Thursday, March 31

Psalm 126:1-3

*When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.*

*Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;*

*then it was said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”*

*The Lord has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.*

Reflection:

In our present-day world, living a satisfying and happy life is becoming exceedingly difficult. What with the pandemic, increasing mental anguish and illness, inflation, job insecurity, gun violence in the streets and in schools, and just dealing with each and every one's life in general, it is hard to see the “why?” are we here and the “what?” should we do. How can we push forward with hope and joy? The only answer I have come up with is... ask our Lord, Jesus Christ. He is the way to salvation and has the answers to those questions and more.

Prayer:

Dear Lord... just when I think it's time for despair, You bring to light wonderful news about a friend or family member or just show that a simple smile from a stranger can ignite hope and happiness when sadness was prevailing. Thank you for always being on my side and showing me the way through your unwavering love.

– Yvonne Bly

Friday, April 1

Psalm 126:4-6

*Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.*

*May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.*

*Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,*

*shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.*

Reflection:

Pandemic, discrimination, political conflict, civility, health challenges, and catastrophic events etc. all present challenges for our modern society and the world. Is there no better time for a dialogue with God?

We all request help and solutions for these issues affecting our psyche and collective well-being. Where is God? Does He hear our cries? Does He care? Can God do anything to help resolve these calamities and restore our faith and love for one another, and enrich our relationship with God? In Psalms, David had many of these same challenges.

I believe the solutions are within us. Through prayer and having that dialogue with God, He will lead us to discover solutions and contentment.

Recently our daughter Lindsay and Tom in Las Vegas had contracted COVID, were home alone, and struggling to exist and recover. They have recovered. Sandy and I prayed for Gods healing oversight and we have reasons for singing gods praises.

Prayer:

Lord you have done great things. A dialogue with you will always lift our spirits, renew our soul and help us to find contentment in our heart. Thank you for being there with us, and continue to inspire us to sing your praises. Amen.

- Doug Shuck

Saturday, April 2

Psalm 30:1-5

*I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up,
and did not let my foes rejoice over me.*

*O Lord my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.*

*O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol,
restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.*

*Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones,
and give thanks to his holy name.*

*For his anger is but for a moment;
his favor is for a lifetime.*

*Weeping may linger for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.*

Reflection:

While reading this Psalm, I couldn't help but hear The Beatles tune "Here Comes the Sun." If you've ever made it through a cold night of camping to awake to the warmth of the first rays of sunrise, you know what a sense of relief and gratefulness that can bring. We take that same warmth for granted mid-day, but in comparison to the dark, cold night, those first rays feel especially sweet. While I personally don't believe that God "gives us" trials in life, I do believe that he remains with us in our struggles and is miraculously able to make beauty out of brokenness. If we are open to it, some of the greatest moments of joy in our lives can come from being seen through the dark nights to the warmth of morning by a God who never lets us down.

Prayer:

Gracious God, Thank you for the joy that comes on the other side of hard times. Help us to share our joy with you, fully knowing that you've steadfastly shared our burdens. Amen.

– Megan Exley

Sunday, April 3

Fragrance Prayer

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Dear Jesus, help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go.
Flood our souls with your spirit and life.
Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly,
that our lives may only be a radiance of yours.

Shine through us, and be so in us,
that every person we should come in contact with
may feel your presence in our soul.
Let them look up and see no longer us, but only Jesus.

Stay with us, and then we shall begin to shine as you shine;
so to shine as to be a light to others;
the light, Jesus, will be all from you.
None of it will be ours.
It will be you shining on others through us.

Let us thus praise you in the way you love best,
by shining on those around us.
Let us preach you without preaching:
not by words, but by our example,
by the catching force,
the sympathetic influence of what we do,
the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear for you.
Amen.

From *Words to Love* by Mother Teresa

WEEK SIX

Monday, April 4

Psalm 20:1,9

*The Lord answer you in the day of trouble!
The name of the God of Jacob protect you!*

*Give victory to the king, O Lord;
answer us when we call.*

Reflection:

How does the Lord answer us when we call? When does He answer our call?

I was diagnosed with a serious illness a couple of years ago. I had to make a major decision on how to treat the illness. Being relatively young to have been diagnosed I had to lean on my family heavily for support and advice. I also knew God was there for me. He was there to support all of us through the challenge. Strength for me came in the form of a quiet prayer when I needed comfort and reinforcement from God.

Faith can be challenging. Bad things can happen. People can behave intolerably. News can be devastating. How can we cope through these tough times? God. God is always with us even when it doesn't feel that way. Watching, comforting, protecting. No matter how bleak, good will prevail, and to me God is good. He will answer you when you call!

Prayer:

Dear Lord, watch over us, protect us and give us strength when we struggle. Give us all comfort. Listen to our call.

- Ian Thomas

Tuesday, April 5

Psalm 20:2-5

*May he send you help from the sanctuary,
and give you support from Zion.*

*May he remember all your offerings,
and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices.*

*May he grant you your heart's desire,
and fulfill all your plans.*

*May we shout for joy over your victory,
and in the name of our God set up our banners.*

May the Lord fulfill all your petitions.

Reflection:

These verses are a blessing, a wish that God will do as you might want Him to and fulfill everything that you might ask of Him. That scares me. That seems like too much power. Don't get me wrong, like most people I do want the things that I want, but I'm a lot more comfortable with Jesus' line "not as I will, but as Thy will." Take the decision off of my shoulders, then if it's the wrong one, it isn't my fault. This seems like a better blessing for the planners, for the ones who have it all figured out ahead of time, now it just has to work out like they want it to. But these verses are just a hope- whether it comforts us or terrifies us, we can trust that God is the one guiding this ship, deciding what petitions and desires will be granted.

Prayer:

Lord, your thoughts are above our thoughts and your ways are above our ways. We don't always understand why the desires of our hearts go unfulfilled, or when it feels like our requests have gone unanswered. We pray that we would have the faith to trust in You and Your plan. Amen.

- Cassandra Mills

Wednesday, April 6

Psalm 20:1

The Lord answer you in the day of trouble. The name of the God of Jacob protect you!

The Journey Prayer

Anonymous

God, bless to me this day,
God, bless to me this night;
Bless, O bless, Thou God of grace,
Each day and hour of my life;
Bless, O bless, Thou God of grace,
Each day and hour of my life.
God, bless the pathway on which I go,
God, bless the earth that is beneath my sole;
Bless, O God, and give to me Thy love,
O God of gods, bless my rest and my repose;
Bless, O God, and give to me Thy love,
And bless, O God of gods, my repose.



Thursday, April 7

Psalm 31:1-5

*In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me.*

Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily.

Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me.

*You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me,
take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge.*

Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.

Reflection:

I am inspired to imagine God as assuredly as the psalmist does with metaphors of rock and fortress. The writer knows exactly what God can do in his life.

In my morning prayer I ask for God to guide me through the day, and ask for help in turning my will over to my Higher Power. But by nightfall, I am asking God to forgive the times I have allowed self-will to run riot, when I have fallen into 'the net that is hidden...', and I am reminded to seek refuge in God's mercy through Jesus Christ.

It isn't easy navigating life's expectations and demands but this psalm takes the guesswork out of knowing God and seeking refuge and help in God's fortress.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, it is a comfort to look to you as my rock of refuge. Please help me to truly understand Your power to guide my life and lead me thru this day. Amen

– Barbara Myers

Friday, April 8

Psalm 31:14-16

*But I trust in you, O Lord;
I say, "You are my God."*

*My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.*

*Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.*

Reflection:

Those of us old enough to remember the TV sitcom *Cheers*, likely would recognize the chorus from the *Cheers* theme song. It referenced the desire we all have to go where everybody knows our name and they're always glad we came; a place where we can see that our troubles are all the same. As we move through Lent in anticipation of Easter, Westminster continues to be a beacon in the community.

Lent gives us a chance to reflect on all God's blessings in our life and an opportunity to share those blessings with others. By making the doors of our church open and welcoming to all, we can continue to be a faith home to those searching for a church where they feel appreciated. Hopefully they will see others struggling with some of the same concerns and imperfections that they have and will have found a place where "everybody knows their name."

Prayer:

Lord we thank you for our blessings, our strengths and our imperfections. May we always use them to help others and to grow closer to you. Easter is a time of rebirth. May we be receptive to the new doors you lead us through and use them as opportunities to serve others and to serve you. Amen.

- Jerry Malarkey

Saturday, April 9

Psalm 31:21-24

*Blessed be the Lord, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me
when I was beset as a city under siege.*

I had said in my alarm, "I am driven far from your sight."

But you heard my supplications when I cried out to you for help.

Love the Lord, all you his saints.

The Lord preserves the faithful, but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily.

Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord.

Reflection:

In Henri Nouwen's devotional "Bread for the Journey" the thought for today is about forgiveness. Forgiveness often seems impossible. It's hard to forgive little hurts let alone the big ones. How do we just forget, forgive and move on? I don't think it's possible to do without God's help and much prayer.

In Nouwen's words, "The God who lives within us will give us the grace to go beyond our wounded selves and say - In the name of God you are forgiven. Let's pray for that grace."

Prayer:

Lord help me to understand that forgiveness is the great lesson that you taught us through Jesus. Help me to forgive others as you have forgiven me.

- Debby Underwood

April 10 – Palm Sunday

Psalm 118

I know how it must have been for those people long ago
who rejoiced when Jesus came to their city
and cried “Hosanna!”

I know how their hearts swelled with good will
and how happily they threw their hats in the air.

I know, too, when I look within,
how the good will faded,

And the rancorous ill will grew into the cry,
“Crucify him!”

For I, too, am capable of swinging from praise to denial,
from singing to cursing.

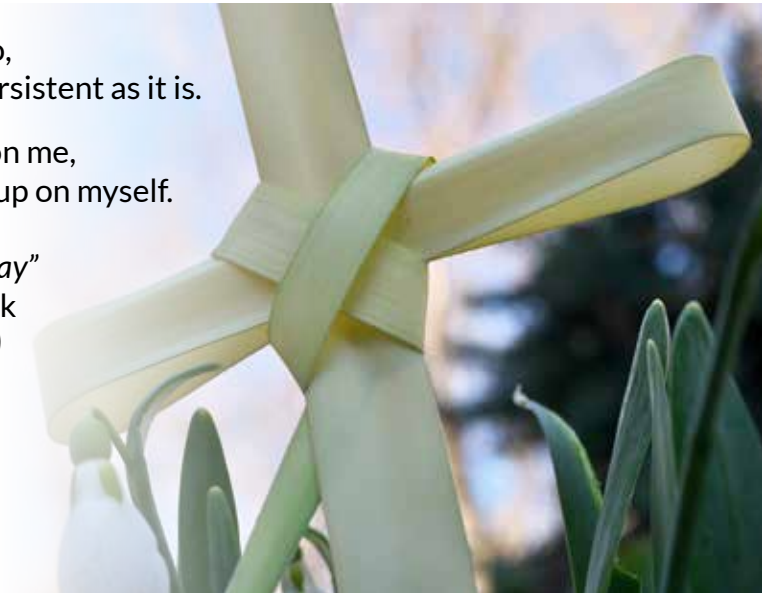
I am not always steady and sure in what I want,
in my loves and loyalties.

O Lord, I wish you did not have to haul me back so often
from my erring ways.

But I am grateful that you do,
and that your love is as persistent as it is.

Since you refuse to give up on me,
Help me to refuse to give up on myself.

*(adapted from “On Palm Sunday”
by Kenneth G. Phifer in A Book
of Uncommon Prayer, 1981)*



HOLY WEEK

Monday, April 11

Psalm 118:5-9

*Out of my distress I called on the Lord;
the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.*

*With the Lord on my side I do not fear.
What can mortals do to me?*

*The Lord is on my side to help me;
I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.*

*It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to put confidence in mortals.*

*It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to put confidence in princes.*

Reflection:

Finally, at this point in my life, I've developed more "muscle memory" for turning to God first with my problems. In earlier days I tried to work it all out for myself. Looking back, that mostly generated more anxiety than solutions. Later in life, I have often sought council from dear friends. I value their perspective. Now, I am finding clarity from seeking God's direction about some weighty questions. I am comforted that no matter what "The Lord is on my side to help me." So, I bring my questions to Him and try, I try to wait in confidence for His answers.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, may we fall deeply into the habit of turning to you in our distress and in our joy. Let us have that confidence in you. Whatever comes, we know you are at our side and let us take comfort and trust in you. Amen.

- Allison McGee

Tuesday, April 12

Psalm 71:1-3,12-14

In you, O Lord, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame.

In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me and save me.

Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.

O God, do not be far from me; O my God, make haste to help me!

Let my accusers be put to shame and consumed; let those who seek to hurt me be covered with scorn and disgrace.

But I will hope continually, and will praise you yet more and more.

Reflection:

As I read Psalm 71 I thought of the times in my life God has served as my fortress and refuge. I have taken refuge in God through prayer at times when I have felt lost; when mourning the loss of family or friends I have taken refuge in prayer with God serving as a rock on which I can rely knowing that He has saved a place for them in his Kingdom. In times of setbacks in my life, the loss of a job or estrangement from friends I have taken refuge in prayer in the knowledge that God will protect me and open other opportunities or provide chances for reconciliation.

God has helped me overcome the anxiety brought about by this pandemic with his church serving as one unchanging, constant refuge. When everything else in our lives was uncertain God continued to serve as a centering rock, supporting me with his assurance of unconditional love and hope.

Prayer:

God, thank you for being my refuge and rock in times of loss, despair and anxiety through your faithful love and hope. Amen.

- Dave Heilman

Wednesday, April 13

Psalm 70:1-5

Be pleased, O God, to deliver me. O LORD, make haste to help me!

Let those be put to shame and confusion who seek my life.

Let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire to hurt me.

Let those who say, "Aha, Aha!" turn back because of their shame.

Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you.

Let those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is great!"

But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God!

You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay!

Christ Has No Body

Teresa of Avila

Christ has no body but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks

Compassion on this world,

Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,

Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,

Yours are the eyes, you are his body.

Christ has no body now but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks

compassion on this world.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) was born in Spain. She entered a Carmelite convent when she was eighteen, and across her long life earned a reputation as a mystic, reformer, and writer who experienced divine visions. She founded a convent and authored many books including The Interior Castle.

April 14 – Maundy Thursday

Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my supplications.

Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

What shall I return to the LORD for all his bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD,

I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful ones.

O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the child of your serving girl. You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of the LORD.

I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!

Reflection:

This Psalm speaks of our gratitude toward God for hearing our prayers and freeing us from our fears and sorrows. It speaks of our confidence in God's help. And it promises God that we will show the same mercy and compassion toward others that He has shown to us.

Prayer:

Thank you, Lord, for all the wonderful things You have done for me. How can I respond other than to be as merciful and caring toward others as you have been to me? I would be lost without you. I know I'm not alone, and that others also need mercy and care. Please show me what I can do, and open my heart to the opportunities for mercy and caring around me that I have not been seeing. In Jesus' name. Amen.

– John Hayes

April 15 – Good Friday

Psalm 22:1-5, 23-24

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me,
from the words of my groaning?*

O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.

Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

*In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried,
and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.*

*You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe
of him, all you offspring of Israel!*

*For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face
from me, but heard when I cried to him.*

Reflection:

Perhaps it's a sign of the time, but as I think about Jesus time right before His crucifixion, the main idea that has jumped out to me is His loneliness. In the garden, Jesus just wants His friends to stay up with Him as He struggles with what is about to happen, but they fall short time after time. Peter denies ever knowing Jesus, and in His last moment before His death, (at least in Matthew and Mark), Jesus quotes this Psalm which in the Hebrew literally says "My God, my God, why did you leave me?" He feels utterly alone. But Psalm 22 soon shifts focus – not only will God help the afflicted, but to trust in this deliverance we can look to the stories of the faithful who demonstrate that nothing has to be faced alone.

Prayer:

Gracious Lord, please grant us your comfort when we feel alone in this scary, uncertain world of Yours. Surround us with not only Your support but the support of our church and friends so we may be reminded of Your provisions throughout time. Convince us that just as Good Friday was not the end of Jesus' story, loneliness is not the end of ours. Amen.

– Cassandra Mills

Saturday, April 16

Psalm 46:10

Be still and know that I am God.

Reflection:

As a pastor, I have been with many families during times of loss. Even if a death is expected, the death brings sadness. Immediately after a loved one's death, arrangements begin. Calling the funeral home, notifying relatives, planning the service, coordinating travel plans. The list goes on.

During the funeral, prayers are offered, hymns sung and the eulogy, celebrating the life of the loved one is given. Finally, the service ends, and the family is led out of the church. No more plans to be made. Their loved one has been committed to Almighty God. All is finished. The reality of death sets in.

On this Saturday, following Good Friday, all the frightening events of Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion are over. He is buried, all is finished. Death has spoken.

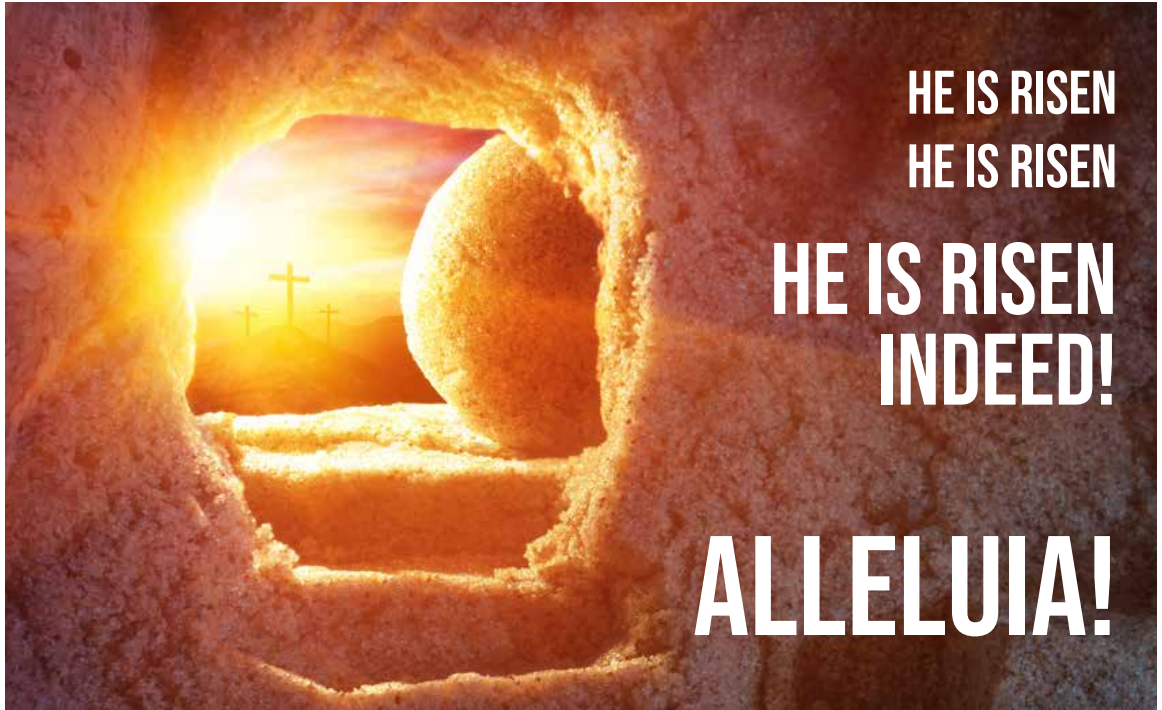
And yet, for us, we know death has not had the final word. On this day, God is still in control.

Prayer:

Jesus, you have given your life so that we may have life everlasting. Even in times of sadness and loss, may we look to you and trust in this amazing promise. Amen.

- Louise Rogers

Easter Sunday – April 17



HE IS RISEN
HE IS RISEN

HE IS RISEN
INDEED!

ALLELUIA!

The Resurrection

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in gleaming clothing; and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why are you seeking the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise from the dead.” And they remembered His words, and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest. Now these women were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe the women. Nevertheless, Peter got up and ran to the tomb; and when he stooped and looked in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.

- Luke 24:1-12

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever. Amen.



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