

Lenten Devotional Series

Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church
Buffalo, MN

This Lenten Devotional series is intended to be encourage individual and family reflection during Lent.

The series is focused on the daily lectionary readings. The calendar boxes on each page link to each day's readings. The weeks will be divided into one reflection from the readings assigned for Sunday - Wednesday, and the second from those assigned to Thursday - Saturday. (Though we begin with two readings from the half-week of beginning with Ash Wednesday.)

The scriptures are all linked here for convenience, but consider reading the scripture from your own Bible--holding the story of faith in your hands--so you can explore the larger contexts of the stories.

Blessings on your Lenten journey!

[Link to the readings calendar](#)

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Ash Wednesday



Click on the calendar box to link to the other assigned readings.

Psalm 51 begins, **“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love.”** The Psalm is David’s response after the prophet Nathan confronted David for David’s sins of adultery and murder. David was intimate with Bathsheba, and had Bathsheba’s husband killed. (2 Samuel 11 & 12) Psalm 51 is a prayer of repentance, which we include in our worship service: **“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.”**

The effect of David’s egregious sin will never disappear. Still, David has the faith and courage to ask for God’s forgiveness. He asks God to *erase* the sin, to replace his sinful spirit with a right one. Martin Luther wrote about this Psalm, saying, “David simply lived in grace. He didn’t even think about satisfying God with his works.”

We might wonder if David should even ask God for forgiveness. The answer comes from the first verse. God can have mercy on us because **God’s mercy is according to God’s steadfast love.** God’s grace and mercy are not doled out based on *our* worthiness. We are loved and forgiven because God loves and forgives. That is the good news of our merciful God.

Week 1 Feb. 18 - Sat. Feb. 20

[I John 1:3-10](#)

18	19	20
Preparing for the First	Preparing for the First	Preparing for the First
Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent



Click on the calendar boxes to link to the other assigned readings.

The reading from I John is another passage of scripture included in our worship service: **“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**

This passage sounds almost like a trick or a riddle:

- If we say we're without sin, it's a lie, which we'd have to admit is a sin.
- If we say we sin, we will be made righteous, which means to be without sin.

How could that possibly work?

First, our identity as righteous or unrighteous does not depend on what we say or think or declare about ourselves. It depends on how God names us, and on how God actively cleanses us from sin.

Second, it is easy to fall into the belief that we have to work hard to be faithful to God. We try to do the right things so we are worthy of God's love. This passage reminds us that *God is faithful to us*. God's commitment to justice brings God's forgiveness of our sins. In Christ, the God has achieved our forgiveness and salvation. The forgiveness of sins we receive from God is what we deserve, not because of what we have done, but because of who God is and what God has done.

Week 2 Sunday - Wednesday 2/21-2/24

21	22	23	24
The First	Reflecting on the First	Reflecting on the First	Reflecting on the First
Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent



Click on the calendar boxes to link to the other assigned readings.

Mark 1:9-15

Mark is a gospel of immediacy and action, so every word is important. The sermon on Sunday focused on how the heavens were **torn** at Jesus' baptism and how the Spirit **drove** Jesus into the wilderness. This reading includes two other strong words when Jesus says, "**Repent** and **believe** in the good news." (v. 15)

We may first think of **repent** as confessing sins, and it is. But a larger definition means a *turning* of our mind, a change in perspective. One definition says, "to change one's mind for the better." It is an active word requiring reflection about who we are and how to align our actions and thoughts. One of the readings from Ash Wednesday from the prophet Joel shares a similar command: "**Return** to the Lord your God, for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love." (Joel 2:13)

In this short reading from Mark, God has torn open the heavens to announce Jesus' as God's Beloved Son. God's way of being in the world has changed; that changes us. Responding with repentance means turning our lives and our hearts. Jesus proclaims, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has drawn near." Repenting and believing are intentional actions that show who--and whose--we are.

Week 2 Thursday - Saturday 2/25-2/27

25	26	27
Preparing for the Second	Preparing for the Second	Preparing for the Second
Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent



Click on the calendar boxes to link to the other assigned readings.

Mark 8:27-30

“Who do people say that I am?” Jesus asks his disciples. Perhaps Jesus is looking for the local gossip, knowing the disciples will be in the know. This two questions in this reading can inspire several other questions and reflections.

Consider how you’d answer that question, based on what you see and “overhear” in the world. Is Jesus viewed as an important figure in daily living? Is he viewed as a distant, historical figure? Is Jesus’ name used to support good and compassion in the world? Does it ever stir up discord or division? Do groups or individuals ever evoke the name of Christ in a way that conflicts with your understanding? Where and when do we see acts of love and faith performed in Jesus’ name? How is goodness inspired by Christ? These ideas represent how the world sees and defines Jesus.

Also think about how you’d answer the next question Jesus asks: “But who do YOU say that I am?” Peter responds with a moving and decisive confession of faith: “You are the Messiah.” Remember, Peter says this *before* he knows the rest of the story--before he knows what Easter is. We have the story of Christ’s death and resurrection to guide our response. We know the risen Christ. We can understand Jesus in the context of the entire scripture, and in these two thousand years since. Who do we say Jesus is? And how can we live that out as faithful witnesses?

Week 3 Sunday - Wednesday 2/28-3/3

28	1	2	3
The Second	Reflecting on the Second	Reflecting on the Second	Reflecting on the Second
Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent



Click on the calendar boxes to link to the other assigned readings.

Mark 8:31-38

In the gospel today, Jesus is teaching a hard truth--that he will suffer and die. Peter wants nothing to do with that. After all, not long ago, Peter was a fisherman who left his nets “immediately” and followed Jesus. When Peter rebukes Jesus, maybe Peter is thinking, *This isn't what I signed up for!* Maybe he's worried about looking foolish for following someone who will suffer and die. Peter gets a strong rebuke right back when Jesus says, “Get behind me, Satan.”

I wonder what Peter thought as Jesus said followers of Jesus must take up their crosses. All that talk of losing one's life to save it--it's a tough message. Taking up our crosses means joining Christ in sharing God's radical love; it could mean serving the “undeserving” and loving the “unlovable.” “Losing our lives” for Christ means seeing the world through Christ's eyes and acting accordingly. We do not need to “rebuke” this call because we are strengthened by God to fulfill it. God freely loves and forgives us, strengthening us to love and serve others.

Week 3 Thursday - Saturday 3/4-3/6

4	5	6
Preparing for the Third	Preparing for the Third	Preparing for the Third
Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent



Click on the calendar boxes to link to the other assigned readings.

1 Peter 2:4-10

This scripture uses the masonry term “cornerstone” to illustrate the strong foundation Christ is for our lives. It’s the first stone, and from it come all other measurements. The cornerstone must be strong, level, and trusted. A strong and stable building must center on the cornerstone as a point of reference.

The reading urges, **“Let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.”** With a cornerstone that is Christ, we are reminded of our identity in Christ: **“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people”** We are also told what it means to be chosen: **“in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”**

Living in this marvelous light transforms us: **“Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”** We are God’s forgiven people. This is not something we have had to earn, but something God chooses to make us. There is no greater news than this good news. Thanks be to God!

Week 3 Sunday - Wednesday 3/7-3/10

7	8	9	10
The Third	Reflecting on the Third	Reflecting on the Third	Reflecting on the Third
Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent



Click on the calendar boxes to link to the other assigned readings.

On Sunday, the scripture is about Jesus casting out the money-makers from the temple. This is a hard story to read if our ideas of Jesus are limited to the sweet baby Jesus or gentle Jesus in the lovely field with children, Here, Jesus makes a whip! He drives both animals and cattle away, knocking over tables and making a huge mess. Jesus says the temple of the Lord must be cleansed. Though we can agree God's house should not be misused, we also don't want it to be a big mess.

This story reminds us of the real conflicts Christ encounters in his life. The temple marketplace existed to sell the animals to be sacrificed in the temple in worship. But that had become corrupt amidst human selfishness and greed. Christ uses the moment to speak boldly and firmly about actions that demean or use God for selfish gains.

The readings for Monday focus on the temple--the dwelling place of God. Psalm 84 says, "Happy are those who live in your house, O Lord." 1 Kings reflects on the extravagant temple Solomon built. John reminds us that Jesus spoke of the temple as his own body. May the focus on the temple remind us of the holy spaces we inhabit and of the holy people we are, because God has made us so. May continued to glorify God in all of these spaces and in our lives.

Week 3 Thursday - Saturday, 3/11-3/13

11	12	13
Preparing for the Fourth	Preparing for the Fourth	Preparing for the Fourth
Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent	Sunday in Lent

Ephesians 1:7-14

The reading on Friday, Ephesians 1:7-14, is an extensive list of the grace God shows us. It's a great passage to remind us of who and whose we are. Nearly every sentence names another extravagant gift.

Here are a few of the gifts: We have been created and called God's children. Because of Christ, we have redemption and forgiveness. We have an inheritance as part of God's family. We've done nothing to deserve God's love and forgiveness, nor can it be changed or removed from us. Our identity is as children of God!

The language is packed with words we use to make things official. We are marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit. the "pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's holy people." We are destined for inclusion into God's family because God has made it so.

There are a lot of times in life when we want to have choices about who we are and what we're involved in, but this reminds us that God has decided through Christ to love and claim us. Thanks be to God!