



# SPU Lenten Devotional 2018

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## Lent 2018 – An Invitation to Journey with Christ

### **What is Lent?**

The season of Lent marks the period of 40 days leading up to the celebration of Easter. Starting with Ash Wednesday and culminating in Holy Week, Christians throughout history have utilized fasting, prayer, and other spiritual practices during Lent as a means of dying to self in order that we might rise with Christ. This intentional preparation for Easter is marked by postures such as humility, repentance, and self-examination.

### **Why Use this Devotional?**

The Campus Ministries staff at Seattle Pacific University curated this devotional as a means of helping our community grow during this Lenten season. Through reading scripture together throughout these 40 days, it is our deep prayer that our students, staff, and faculty might grow in their love of God and love of neighbor. It is one thing to observe a spiritual practice on your own, but another thing altogether to journey *together* as we pursue Christ, allowing the reflections of our sisters and brothers to shape our engagement with scripture and pursuit of discipleship.

### **Practical Steps**

Starting with Ash Wednesday (February 14, 2018), there is an assigned passage of scripture and a subsequent reflection written by a member of the Seattle Pacific community. You'll notice that there are no readings for Sundays, as Lenten fasting is set aside for these mini-celebrations of Christ's resurrection each week. We would urge you to set aside time each day to read both the text and the reflection, while also carving out space for your own prayer and reflection. No need for guilt or shame if you miss a reading; simply find the appropriate day and start again.

*Sisters and brothers, may we be met by the living God as we make our way to the Easter morning. And in the company of one another, may we perceive the Spirit's movement, hear the calls of faith, and remain steadfast in accepting the loving guidance of God.*

Image on front cover created by Courtney Rutzer

February 14, 2018 - Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Kelsey Rorem, Associate Director, Campus Ministries

Sleep and I used to be very good friends. Every night I would look forward to bedtime, blissfully resting for eight, nine, sometimes even ten hours before leisurely rising the following day. Though many struggle with insomnia or other ailments, for me sleep was a welcome companion, a place of respite.

Then, I became a mother.

As a new parent I quickly realized there's nothing more jarring than being startled from a deep sleep by the cries of a newborn. Stumbling through our apartment I would struggle to find my bearings, upright but not yet lucid. Though I couldn't have strung together a coherent sentence, my son's distraught voice brought me out of sleep and into my present reality.

In many ways, Ash Wednesday is similarly jarring. The themes of our human mortality, the imagery of destruction, and the call to repentance are foreign to our daily conversations. "Blow the trumpet!" declares Joel—an attempt to startle us from our slumber. Far too often we sleepwalk our way through our days—going through the motions as we pursue love of God and neighbor.

And rather than continue in this sleepy stupor, Ash Wednesday rips off the covers, calling us to wake-up and contend with a life that is not all that God dreams for it to be. The good news? As we wake-up, we return to a God who is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.

Family of God, the season of Lent is upon us. May we shake off the slumber of the day to day, and return to a pursuit of God and God's Kingdom that is vibrant, alive, and growing.

*Blow the trumpet, Lord. Awaken us from our sleep that we might live for you. Amen.*

February 15, 2018

*Psalm 51:1-17*

Jonathan Moua, Master of Divinity, Class of 2018

When I first started to lead worship I searched the scriptures for passages that had to do with leading worship. I wanted to find a theology of worship for myself. I first stumbled upon this scripture passage, Psalm 51, many years ago. It has shaped me from when I first read it and continues to shape me today.

In this passage, the psalmist wrestles with human brokenness and the inability to measure up to God's standards. The psalmist asks to be washed clean, whiter than snow, and for God to create in the psalmist a clean heart so that when they stand before God, they would be restored. The desire of the psalmist to be pure is admirable and is a desire that we should all strive for. However I know that my attempts to be sinless, like the psalmist, often end in an exasperating sigh. Sooner or later I realize that, no matter how genuine my attempts are at living righteously, I fail again and again. As glorious and as beautiful as my worship moments and sacrifices can be, they barely hit the mark for what God really deserves.

Instead of a burnt offering, or worship as we know it, the psalmist offers their broken spirit and contrite heart. What surprises me in this psalm is that this—a broken spirit and a contrite heart—is the only acceptable offering that God will take. Beyond perfection and beyond the worship we know, God wants our brokenness.

In this season of Lent as we reflect on the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ, may we come to know that what God desires from us is not perfect worship but humility in our brokenness. Let us be reminded that it is in this brokenness that Jesus meets us.

February 16, 2018

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Kathryn Baumheckel, Visual Communication Major, Class of 2018

What does it look like to be reconciled to God? On this campus the word reconciliation gets used in a lot of contexts and because of a strong conviction within our humanity to make right what has been wronged. While I would consider myself familiar with the concept of reconciliation coming out of my fourth year here on campus, this passage from the Lenten Devotional series helped me see it in a new, fresh perspective and that is my prayer for you as well as you read this. There is a sincere and genuine plea from the author that people may become reconciled to God (5:20) and my understanding of this is that through the action of reconciliation, we may draw closer to God and ultimately become the righteousness of God (5:21). And as the verses continue, there is a list of praises and afflictions that we as believers may face through this journey of reconciliation and those words really resonated with me. The list mentions the good with the bad but acknowledges that it all is to be commended (or praised) because of the grace of God. This list shows that the people who wrote this letter step into a very vulnerable and honest stance in hopes that their heart's intention would help those who have discord with them to put that aside and reconcile to God.

In what ways do you need to reconcile to God; within yourself or with other people? What places can you be vulnerable and honest in that would help others to reconcile to God?

*Lord, I pray that as this passage is read and reflected on that you would reveal to the people receiving it how to open their hearts and minds in new ways of reconciliation. Give them a vulnerable spirit and an honest heart to surrender to you and build bridges with one another. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

February 17, 2018

*Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21*

Yikhwan Dillard, Campus Program Coordinator

A few weeks ago, I watched a film called Kung Fu Panda 3. (I know, I know). The movie was entertaining and was full of wisdom-packed one liners. One of the most memorable lines I remember was near the end, when the main character's father was exposed for lying to his son. What we know is that the lie was purely out of love. By lying, he genuinely thought he could save his son from facing the powerful villain. Nevertheless, he was met with disappointment from his son, which left him with a sense of shame and sadness. In his broken state, his friend, knowing the full story, offered these words of comfort, "Sometimes, we do the wrong things for all the right reasons."

As true as this line is, I think the opposite is as true. Sometimes, we do the right things for all the wrong reasons. In the Scripture, we see the spiritual leaders fall into the trap of self-centeredness. Though their spiritual disciplines and pieties were presumably "right", their motives were wrong. In every season of Lent, I wonder about this paradigm. I attribute this to the age-old SPU question of, "what are you giving up for Lent?" Nothing. The point of Lent is not about giving up something nor is it about spiritual disciplines. It is about preparation. We pray, fast, confess, and repent in order to prepare for the resurrection of our Lord. Right intentions first, then the right acts. In this order, and probably with some prayer and the wisdom of our community, I believe we can do the right things for the right reasons this season.

February 19, 2018

*Genesis 9:8-17*

Rusty McKee, Master of Divinity, Class of 2019

In today's passage God makes a far-reaching covenant. Though the covenant is told to Noah and his family, this covenant is not with a single person or a specific people group. This passage shows God making a covenant with all creation. This "Noahic Covenant" is God's promise to not destroy with flood, and is represented by a symbol - the rainbow in the sky. Symbols are powerful things, and they have the power to move the brain without us realizing. Do you remember the feeling of unboxing that first smartphone, with that simple apple on the box? Or was there a time in your life when a large, golden "M" on the side of the road mean that you were almost home, or that it was almost time for dinner?

I remember sitting with our confirmation students at my church a few months ago, talking about Christian worship. In our sanctuary there is a large cross at the front of the room, and we were discussing why we gather around the symbol of the cross each Sunday morning. The cross of Jesus stands as a symbol of the promise of God, just like the rainbow stood as a symbol in our passage today. It stands as a reminder that God will not abandon us or forsake us - a symbol that not only reminds us of God's promise, but calls us into relationship! During this season of Lent, think about the symbols that surround you on a daily basis. Take some time today to reflect on the symbols you see, and think about the awesome power of symbols like the rainbow from Genesis 9 and the cross of Christ.



February 20, 2018

*Psalm 27*

Deb Nondorf, Minister of Discipleship

*I am sure I shall see  
the goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living.  
Yes I shall see  
the goodness of our God,  
hold firm, trust in the Lord.*

*Song 127-Taize from Psalm 27:13,14*

As I read through Psalm 27, I was inspired to share a reflection on verse after verse. "Oh, yes! This one!" or, "Wait! Maybe this one?" And so it went until I reached the final two verses.

While reading these lines I was flooded with memories of experiencing them in different Taize worship services. Have you been to a Taize service? (If not, move quickly to St James Cathedral on Friday evenings.) If you have, it is highly likely you have sung Song 127 which is based on Psalm 27. You will find the space filled and surrounded by sounds of the music, often leading singers and listeners alike into a deep awareness of the presence of God.

For me, it is a meaningful experience filled with gratitude for this assurance that I am not alone. God is with me. Right here. Right now. In the midst of the chaos of our world, as well as the tasks that fill my days. Yes, I shall see the goodness of God, even here as I wash my dishes. Yes, even there as I learn of personal and global tragedies in the ever-present news feeds.

Today, and every day, the invitation is before us to see and know the goodness of our God. Does this come naturally for you? Or, do you have to work at being mindful of God's presence? Take time today to make note of the ways God is showing up. I am sure you will see the goodness of the Lord.

February 21, 2018

*1 Peter 3:18-22*

Annabell DuMez-Matheson, Assistant Director, Disability Support Services

To suffer for someone else's mistake...

I remember being a kid and making many mistakes, sometimes unintentional, but sometimes they were things that I knew even before I was doing them that they were not okay. Unfortunately, even as an adult I still do that and still have a hard time taking responsibility for my own mistakes. So this idea of someone else doing something wrong and then me standing up and saying, "punish me, I will take the consequence so they don't have to," likely would rarely cross my mind.

Christ did that. Christ stood up said, "yes, you did something that was ugly, but I am going to take the burden of responsibility so you do not have to. Just remember, trust me, believe in me, and rely on ME for life." I am grateful for this truth, but often, I take what I know for granted. In this passage it says how Christ proclaimed this truth to the "imprisoned spirits, to those who were disobedient long ago," so the promises set forth during the time when they were alive would be proven. I sometimes feel like an imprisoned spirit. Imprisoned to my own views, or carelessness, or moments of taking something so profound for granted. To know that Christ proclaims the truth of love and sacrifice to those who were not interested in hearing and even made fun of those who believed means to me that even in their death they are still deeply cherished and loved. This is both inspiring and humbling.

February 22, 2018

*Mark 1:9-15*

Debra Sequeira, Dean, Division of Arts and Humanities

Mark's version of this familiar passage differs from the other Gospels. Note the strong language: the heavens are "torn apart," and Jesus is "driven out into the wilderness" with the wild beasts. And yet there is gentleness, too. The Spirit descends upon Jesus like a dove, and the angels wait upon him. I was immediately struck by the contrast in these descriptions. What is Mark trying to convey by the striking juxtaposition between these word choices?

In my life, sometimes the Holy Spirit whispers to me. I feel a gentle urging—a tug to move forward. This can be as simple as going ahead and buying that sandwich for the homeless woman outside my church, rather than rushing into the church and ignoring her. Other times, the Spirit tells me something strong and clear—something I cannot miss or ignore because the words are not coming from me.

While I was in graduate school, another doctoral student took a few sections of my dissertation and never credited the passages. When I pointed this out to those above me, it did not seem to matter; she had her own fan base. Each time I prayed about the situation, I would get more enraged. I was not praying but complaining: "Dear God, I can't pray for my enemy; I'm too infuriated; this is righteous indignation." During one of those prayers, I said that I hated her. Then I received a clear, strong message: "But I love her." I was humbled and in tears. It was obvious that the message did not come from me. I was too consumed with my own emotions to love my enemy.

Lent is for listening to what God wants to tell us, if only we stop long enough, are quiet enough to hear.

February 23, 2018

Romans 5:12-19

Laura Shigeta, Theology (Educational Ministry) Major, Class of 2020

My second night living here at SPU, I set off the smoke detector at midnight in my dorm room (in Hill Hall). Apparently, there's a sensor on the smoke detector that goes off if it senses pressure change. I had asked my RA if it was okay to set up a mini basketball net in my room, and she said it was fine. I accidentally hit the fire alarm with a ball; it thought I was trying to take it down, so it went off. This was not how I imagined I'd be starting off my college career. My parents are never going to stop reminding me about it. A year later, I was reading through the student handbook, and it says that basketball is prohibited in dorm rooms under the section: Inappropriate Activities. I don't think it was there the year before. Because of me, this rule now has to be enforced. Even if you didn't do anything, you still can't play basketball in your dorm room (I'm so sorry about that). In the same way, Romans 5:12-19 explains how Adam broke a command and we received the after effects. Adam's sin affects the entire world, just like how my silly mistake creates a new rule to be enforced at SPU. I don't know who might be our savior in taking back that dorm rule, but I do know the one person who can redeem us all from sin and that's Jesus. If one man can bring the world to condemnation, then one man (that's Jesus) can also bring justification.

*Dear God, thank you for giving us Jesus, the one Man who can redeem us all from Adam's disobedience. Amen.*

February 24, 2018

*Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16*

Samantha Krejcik, Administrative Assistant, The John Perkins Center

One of the biggest concerns I have when considering faith is the ultimate uncertainty of it. I, as I'm sure most people do, like to be sure. When thinking of my future, I don't find calm in what some say to be endless possibilities. I would prefer to see a clear map of where and when my next steps are, rather than an off-shoot of a million different choices and unknown endings. And yes, I understand this is not how life works.

This is often how I see God. Or rather, don't see. Psalm 91 is overwhelmed with the action, "will." God will be with you in trouble, God will rescue you, God will satisfy you and show you salvation. This is troubling and confusing for me. I find myself frustrated in the certainty of this passage, rather than calmed by the conviction of God's promises.

"Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place... no evil shall befall you," says Psalm 91:9 & 10. This dwelling place is not defined (at least, to those who may not have the time nor energy to delve into the traditional Hebrew). The preceding verse (v.1) refers to the "shelter," or "secret place." It is as if the Word calls us to dwell deeply in the uncertainty, in the inability to truly conceptualize the void we understand God to exist in.

That makes me uncomfortable. It makes me squirm, in bewilderment, border lining awe, that the Spirit seems lost in translation. We have limited language to describe God, their nature, character, and intentions, and I'm wrestling with there being purpose behind this.

This season of Lent, my prayer and hope is this: to dwell in this secret place/shelter, to grow comfortable in it, to dream in it and create in it.

February 26, 2018

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Kristi Holt, Physiology Major, Class of 2018

*And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.*

Enough. The unreachable bar, the unattainable goal, do any of us ever reach enough? In the goal-oriented, triumphalist narrative of western culture, we strive for enough. I've grown in this society to believe I must be smart enough, kind enough, strong enough, educated enough - all with the goal of making enough. But I'm not enough, never enough; consistent only in my imperfections. What does God offer to a weak creature such as myself?

Abraham is likewise marked by imperfection, but in him God sets a covenant—a relational promise—between Godself, Abraham and all his descendants, generation after generation. God promises to be God to Abraham, Sarah, and eventually—by their descendants—all people. Perhaps at first glance, that doesn't sound like much of a promise. Unpacked, this marks God's everlasting promise of presence. It is in God's promise to be that all the hope and joy of this covenant lie. This promise is entirely sufficient, more than enough. What God is is what God shall be to us. The Creator and Sustainer offers perfect wisdom, comfort, power, grace and love to us. And we who are receiving God's eternal promise find ourselves with more than enough. We are but rusty vessels incapable of containing God's grace and yet tasked to live into this covenant and, as did Abraham, live out the right response.

*Mother of the Earth, thank you for your everlasting promise to be ours and to call us yours. In you, our Protector and Provider, we find safety and belonging as your children. Remain patient and merciful with us as we seek to move in right response to your everlasting promises. Amen.*

February 27, 2018

*Psalm 22:23-31*

Eric Long, Professor of Biology

Psalm 22 is a tale of two Psalms. Picking up in verse 23, this Psalm is all about praise. But, read the beginning; things are not going well for David. Now, I'm a wildlife biologist and have been charged by bear, kicked by deer, and bitten by a cardinal (don't laugh, they hurt). But, I've never been threatened by lions, surrounded by wild dogs, or encircled by the bulls of Bashan. Granted, I don't know what bulls of Bashan are, but they don't sound cuddly. Add to this mockery and scorn, fear and weakness, thirst and hunger. In fact, Psalm 22 begins with the cry "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" the very lament our crucified Savior uttered as he experienced the unfathomable agony of capital-D Death. So, how can David agonize for half the Psalm, then suddenly shift to praise? Simply put, David has hope. This is not some wishful-thinking rosy optimism, but the steadfast confidence that our faithful God will never "disdain the suffering of the afflicted one." Jesus, too, has hope, even on the cross. As N.T. Wright reminds us, these Psalms were the songs that Jesus daily sang, and when Jesus quotes David's first verse, crying "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani!" it was certainly a cry of agony, but it was not a cry of despair. Rather, here was victory in the making, for Jesus surely knew the end of Psalm 22 as well, wherein David, Israel, and "all the ends of the earth" are rescued from evil. In what may be the most hope-filled example of foreshadowing in all of literature, Psalm 22 culminates with these tantalizing words: "For he has done it." Indeed, Jesus is risen, Death is conquered, and those bulls of Bashan don't look so scary anymore. Hallelujah!

February 28, 2018

*Romans 4:13-25*

Brent Watson, Master of Divinity, Class of 2018

I remember my “crisis of faith” really well. It involved a lot of Google. As I sat in my car before work or as I laid in bed or even as I went to a basketball game with my friends, I would Google the things that I had been taught to believe to be essential to my faith. These were matters of history and science that, as you might know, don’t always line up cleanly with a literal reading of the Bible. But I had been told that “faith” was equal to “intellectually believing a set of facts to be true,” and some of the things that, in my mind at the time, absolutely needed to be true for me to keep my faith in Christianity simply didn’t seem to be so. In many ways, I lost my faith for a time, or what I knew to be faith, and because it was so tied to my identity I felt like I lost track of myself too.

Since then, I have regained my faith, but it has changed a lot. I believe many different things than I used to, but I’ve also learned that faith doesn’t have as much to do with what I think I know to be true in my mind as it does with the sense of trust I have in God and what God is doing. Frankly, by going through that crisis of faith I was able to strip away an old, rusty faith for a new, much more robust and rich faith.

God isn’t asking me to pick up everything I own and move away from all that I’ve ever known. I don’t have a promise from God to become the parent of a great nation that will bring salvation to all. But like Abraham, sometimes I can look around my world and my life and wonder if anything good is going to come from what is happening. I am graduating in June, after all, so some of the biggest questions on my mind these days are: “What does the future hold?” and “Will this all be worth it?”

This is what faith is to me now: the understanding that God has promised to be present throughout all of our lives, and even the slightest willingness to trust that God is telling the truth.



**March 1, 2018**

*Mark 8:31-38*

Sandy Mayo, Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

*The Audacity of the Cross*

For our sake, Jesus made the excruciating journey to Golgotha carrying the cross upon which he would be crucified (John 19:17). Yet the physical weight of the cross could not compare to the weight of sin Jesus bore that we might be reconciled to God. As believers we are called to be imitators of Christ and in divine solidarity are asked to pick up our cross daily. At times we respond to this call with a doubting heart, rebellious inclination, or cry of lament. Often it feels as though the cross we are asked to bear is too heavy for our spiritual muscles to endure. Even if we find capacity to will ourselves toward obedience, we discover that picking up our cross in our own strength leaves us depleted and discouraged. Yet the crucifixion cross of Jesus is intended to do just the opposite. Rather than wielding a crushing blow, it reminds us that the weight of sin has already been lifted, that a life of faithfulness is less about powering our muscles toward flexion and more about relaxing in complete surrender. The audacity of the cross is that it demands all that we have at the same time that it shelters us in a grace that fully restores. We are asked to pick up our cross not to demonstrate our strength, but to strengthen our faith by “growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord” (2 Peter 3:18). Ultimately, the invitation to the cross is God’s loving reminder that we are among the called and forgiven. It is in this invitation, with the ability to respond, that we learn to replace our self-will with a heart reconciled to Christ’s audacious call. The result is fullness in grace.

*Reflection: How has the cross helped you understand grace?*

March 2, 2018

*Psalm 34:18*

Nathan Samayo, Mathematics and Education Major, Class of 2019

This verse was definitely something I needed to hear as I was coming to SPU. Many know that I came here to SPU as a transfer sophomore, but unaware of the circumstances around it. The first day of my junior year of high school, my mother woke up blind due to her diabetes. Since then, my family hit a huge financial deficit that led to lots of hard experiences such as losing health insurance, no access to doctor's appointments, etc. Although, I received a four-year-full-ride scholarship to Trinity Lutheran College my senior year, which was not only a relief for my family, but a blessing from God.

Half-way through my first year at Trinity Lutheran College, the school announced that it will be ceasing instruction, and that I will no longer have a full-ride scholarship. A month after that, my mother did not wake up out of her sleep, and passed away in the hospital four days later. I ultimately felt brokenhearted and that my spirit was crushed.

It awes me that after everything that I have been through, I am now thriving here at SPU. The Lord allowed me one last, beautiful night alone with my mother, before she was left to be with God. During that night, my mother and I shared our last moment together, giving and receiving the love and joy that our relationship was filled with. The Lord blessed me with such a selfless, caring, and passionate mother whose legacy I now get to lead with here at SPU, also being fully supported by this awesome community.

**March 3, 2018**

*Matthew 17:1-9*

Deb Nondorf, Minister of Discipleship

Anyone who knows me, knows that I have to continually work on being silent, having patience, and letting go. My guess is that these may be familiar challenges for some of you as well. Today's reading weaves the story of the Transfiguration, the ultimate mountain top experience. As I sit with these images and words, I am especially struck by Christ's instructions to the disciples to: "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

Excuse me, what? After a dazzling encounter, my first mind always is to share with anyone who will listen, all that I experienced and learned. Yet, Christ encourages silence. Is this so the disciple's, so that I, will take the time to ponder the experience? So that when words are put to it, consideration has been given to the ways in which others will be blessed in the telling? Do I consider who is being blessed when I share? Can I offer images of an encounter with the mystery of the holy? Is this mine to do?

In this case, the demand for silence takes great patience. And, a letting go of my desire to share, or to be in the know, or to build a container for Christ with which I am comfortable. Once more, I find myself being asked to let go of my preconceived notions, my certainty, and my ego.

It was easier before I was made aware of the glory of God in Christ. In you. In me.

My prayer for us all is that when glory comes we allow ourselves to see it without a need to contain it. That we then ponder it in our deepest part. And, finally, when the time is come to share, we bless others in the telling.

**March 5, 2018**

*Exodus 20:1-17*

Anna Nicles, Theology Major, Class of 2019

Today's passage is a familiar piece of scripture. It is situated within one of the most well-known biblical narratives and tells of when God gave the Ten Commandments to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. Because of its familiarity, it is easy to miss the significance of what is going on within the larger context. In our text, we see something similar happening with the Israelites. In the midst of their exodus into the wilderness, the Israelites are reminded to remember God's faithfulness in delivering them from oppression in Egypt. What precedes a call to obedience in pursuit of the Promise Land is a call to remembrance.

Today marks the halfway point of Lent. In these past twenty days we have journeyed together in this season of aligning ourselves with Christ through prayer, spiritual discipline, and fasting. Perhaps that discipline you've taken up or fast you've committed to is growing familiar, maybe even wearisome. Take some time to consider your own experience in the wilderness in light of the Israelites in our passage. What is God delivering you from?

As we approach Holy Week and pursue the promises of the resurrection, let us not forget where we have come from. In the midst of our call to obedience and our gaze toward Easter, may we recommit this Lenten season in remembrance of God's faithfulness.

March 6, 2018

*Psalm 19*

Priscilla Ozodo, Minister of Worship and Production

Does God still speak to us? If so, how? Do we hear a God-voice physically through our ears? How do we distinguish this God-voice from the voice of our mind or other voices in our heads? Psalm 19 provides two ways that God clearly speaks to us.

Without words or coherent speech, God has used creation to communicate the grandeur of God's self. The skies, the sun, the stars, the mountains, the oceans and the trees have pointed us to the beauty, creativity and complexity of the Creator throughout eternity. Too many times we ignore God's loud voice, calling out to us by simply forgetting to take a moment to look outside and listen to what God is speaking through nature

God has also revealed God's self to humanity through the written word. Our Christian scriptural canon serves as a guidebook, showing us how to navigate fallen creation. Insight and wisdom for our lives can be found in God's word. The Bible acts as an instruction manual and moral compass to keep us from sin. Too many times we seek God's direction for our future and pray for freedom from sinful patterns but forget to create space in our schedule to study the Bible.

The word of God exposes our sinfulness and calls us to repentance. Some call this our moral compass but the voice that calls us to repentance when we have done wrong is the voice of the Holy Spirit who still speaks today through the scriptures and through our conscience.

Therefore, as we continue in this Lenten season, may we commit to hearing the voice of our Mother and Father God, through the rain, the wind and the clouds; through the faces of the other, and various parts of creation. May we surrender ourselves to the discipline of reading and studying the bible, alone and with others. And when we hear the voice of the Holy Spirit convicting us of sin, may we be quick to repent and seek God's forgiveness so that the words of our mouths and the thoughts of our heart might be acceptable in the sight of God. Amen.

**March 7, 2018**

*1 Corinthians 1:18-25*

Luke Palmer, Business Major, Class of 2018

We often try to rationalize the Gospel. In our education, our preaching, our conversations, and into our beliefs has crept a presupposition that our faith must fit with the culture around us. In presenting the Gospel to the world, it is easy to water down the radical nature of our faith into a rational belief system, safe to associate with.

Have no doubts, the Gospel is not rational. In fact, the crux of our faith rests on the death of a man named Jesus. 1 Corinthians directly addresses this paradox by stating, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but it is God’s power to us who are saved.” Only a fool would place their trust in a message like that. Yet, we stake the entirety of our lives on the truth of this Gospel. Oh, what foolishness!

John Wimber used to say “Everyone is a fool. Whose fool are you?” Perhaps in this season of Lent, we simply need to embrace the incredible nature of the Gospel we believe. After all, God has hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to children. Let us renounce our own wisdom, embrace childlike faith, and cling to the foolishness of this Gospel: Jesus Christ, crucified and risen again!

March 8, 2018

*John 2:13-22*

Josh Anway, Program Coordinator, Seattle Pacific Seminary

As we think about Lent, a time in which we clear away distractions in the pursuit of genuine faith, looking at Jesus cleansing the temple can help us identify distractions motivated by convenience and how removing those distractions can sometimes be an act of justice.

It's Passover and traders are selling sacrificial animals and exchanging money in the temple at Jerusalem. At first glance, this might seem like a nice convenience for weary travelers who are unable to bring lambs in perfect condition on a long and winding journey to the temple. But Jesus, angered, makes a whip and drives out the animals and turns over tables, and says that the traders have made his Father's house a marketplace. What's wrong with a marketplace?

The temple was not made to be a marketplace. It was made to be a place of focused worship, a place in which God communes with the people. Before Caiaphas, the high priest of Jesus' time, sellers and money changers were not allowed in the temple, but Caiaphas invited them in. For the sake of this convenience, the temple lost its focus. And the traders, knowing they didn't have any competition, began to overcharge their customers. Jesus, in overturning the tables, drew attention to both this distraction from worship and the injustice.

So the questions for today are: what are you made to be? Are you focused, or are you doing what's convenient? Convenience can often lead to distraction from purpose, which can lead to idolatry. And idolatry always leads to injustice. Lent is a time of clearing and then planting new things. Take a moment to reflect on the connection between your participation in convenience and injustice, and ask God to help you start something new.

March 9, 2018

*Isaiah 55:1-9*

Bo Lim, University Chaplain

About six years ago I came out of “retirement” and began entering road races and triathlons after a 20 year hiatus from competition. Among other things, two things were a significant learning curve. 1) My recollection of the sport was that of a 20 year old, but I now had a 40 year old body. 2) Previously I had only competed in races that I could complete in under 2 hours, now I would enter races that would take 4, 6, even 9 hours to complete.

For a race under 2 hours, you can get by just drinking water. But for a race that may last several hours, proper nutrition is essential. I’ve consumed all of the following during a race: sport drinks, gels, energy bars, honey, bananas, oranges, salt tablets, and Coke. At times I’ve eaten too much and felt bloated. Other times I’ve eaten too little and felt depleted. Plus I realized my metabolism is no longer that of a 20 year old. Just because I was putting in 2 hour workouts didn’t mean I could just eat anything and get away with it. What I needed to do was listen to my body better. Now it’s something I constantly do whether during a race, a workout, or when not exercising.

Just as I’ve learned to listen to my body, during Lent, I encourage you to listen to your soul. Our passage for today, Isa 55:1-9, presses in upon this question of what are you feeding your soul. On the one hand it invites us to eat and drink our fill in verse 1. Yet in the very next verse it asks the question, “Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?” Lent is a time to examine those things that we consume - physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually to see if they truly nourish us. I’ve learned that our spiritual diets need to be adjusted to the seasons of life we are in, as well as our level of spiritual activity.



March 10, 2018

Romans 5:1-11

Erin Rooney, Master of Arts in Reconciliation and Intercultural Studies, Class of 2018

In reading this passage, I felt hesitant – can we really find glory in our sufferings? Can we hope for things without shame? Whether the hope is for an ill loved one getting better, a fair trial for acts of injustice, or a health care system that takes care of the least of these, hope seems to feel foolish when it all goes wrong. What do we do in our times of despair, when hope seems shameful to hold?

John Swinton writes that the shared call of Christians is seeking God's providence. Providence in this context does not mean that God is predetermining every move we make and every loss we will suffer. Rather, God's providence narrates our lives in a broader context of God's hopeful arc above all time and creation – God reconciles us to Godself through Christ, and God continues this cycle over and over, bringing us into the greater vision of healing and belonging.

*“Providence provides a powerful narrative that ensures that in the midst of the fallenness, brokenness, and confusion of God's creation, God's story is not lost. If God's story is not lost, then there is hope for the human story.” – John Swinton, Becoming Friends of Time*

Perhaps this verse strikes me as providential because I do not find myself feeling like boasting hope in this season, as the passage describes. Still, however, I cling to hope (and perhaps you do too), that the story isn't quite over yet – and we can take heart that we have a God who will always keep us in the narrative, and never shame us for when we need to experience our moments of doubt. I hope, quite simply, for hope – and because God is always reconciling us to Godself, so I believe we can reconcile hope to our shame.

March 12, 2018

*Numbers 21:4-9*

Sara Koenig, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies

There are both strange things and familiar things in this story from Numbers. What is familiar is the basic plot: the Israelites get impatient and speak against God and Moses. God then punishes the people; they confess their wrong, and ask Moses to pray for them. Moses does so; God answers Moses' prayer, and brings relief to the people. This has happened repeatedly since the Israelites crossed through the sea on dry land.

What is strange in this account is the type of punishment and the type of intervention. God sends serpents who bite and kill the people. Some English versions translate the adjective for the serpents as "poisonous," or "venomous" (NIV, NRSV), but a more literal translation is "fiery" (ESV, NASB). The only other mention of "serpent" so far in the Old Testament is the infamous serpent of Gen 3, so this is a strange, harsh punishment, indeed. When Moses prays, God gives Moses instructions to make a serpent and place it on a pole. Moses obeys God, and from that point on, once someone is bitten, they only have to look at the bronze serpent, and they live.

It strikes me that God does not just remove the fiery—dragon like?—serpents whose bite causes death. Wouldn't that be simpler? Instead, Moses is given some odd, specific instructions, which do work. Certainly a lesson in this text is that good things happen when people follow God's instructions. But the deeper lesson I see is how that which looks like pain and death, that which brought about suffering, is something that will bring healing and life. At Lent, as in all times, we remember how the cross, on which Jesus' broken body was lifted up, paradoxically became the agent of the healing for the world.

March 13, 2018

*Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22*

Caenisha Warren, Coordinator for Events and Student Ministries, The John Perkins Center

Some find it surprising to know that I listen to country music. In reading this selected passage the song *Unanswered Prayers* by the great Garth Brooks came to mind where the chorus rings “Sometimes I thank God for unanswered prayers.”

The reason is that there have been a few seasons where I have felt imprisoned within an unplanned reality, finding myself where I never meant to be. It was a gradual existence and not so much unknown or unexplainable in how I arrived there, but it somehow resulted into a consolation of “this is just my life.” It may have held roots within the darkness of sin, or an enduring affliction; but all this flowed into my desperate call to a steadfast God.

I had seen my hopes wrapped up into a dream that ultimately failed me. A dream that chose differently and walked away right in front of me. But the pivotal release from what had become my reality surprised me. I had prayed for one thing and viewed that my Provider’s response was seemingly unanswered. However, in actuality it was a praise in disguise. The prayers of what I believed to be my heart’s desires were perhaps more damaging than my wandering need to be good.

Truth was that the answer to my prayers amounted to being drastically different than I hoped, perhaps even opposite of what I dreamed. Yet in these unanswered prayers, my being and becoming had been redeemed through the help and mercy of the Lord. I look back now at the situation and find relief in knowing exactly what I was saved from.

Therefore, I find that I can *give thanks to the Lord, for my Jehovah-Jireh is good!* And as Garth Brooks finishes in his refrain, “Some of God’s greatest gifts are unanswered prayers.”

March 14, 2018

*Ephesians 2:1-10*

Gabe Jacobsen, Director of Residence Life

How do you walk the earth? The writer begins today's text by reminding their readers that they once wandered the earth demonstrating their loyalty to a power in the world that corrupts and distorts and ultimately leads to death. They also remind their readers that they are now, solely by a creative and grace-filled act of God, made alive as members in the Messiah's new human family and set out into a new way of walking the earth. They have been retooled and refashioned to walk a path of good works with anticipation that in due time God will reveal the full implications of Jesus's resurrection on earth. And this new way of being in the present world gives hints and signs of the world that is to come.

If you listen carefully, you can hear echoes of the Exodus story and Jesus's 40 days of testing in the desert contrasted underneath this text and I wonder if there isn't something for us here as we take a moment to reflect on our observation of Lent. Lent is a time, in both individual and communal practice, to try on and act out the story of faithful wandering and testing in the dessert while waiting for our celebration of God's great work in Jesus's death and resurrection. It is this faithful wandering in anticipation of God's promise that God's people in the Exodus story abandoned and that Jesus fulfilled as his people's true representative before God. We can try on this story ourselves by engaging in exercises and reflection that strengthen and clarify our loyalty to God's way of being human in the world and serving as a hint, both to ourselves and others, of what a restored humanity might look like when God has made all things new.

March 15, 2018

*John 3:14-21*

Alexandria Renault, Biology Major, Class of 2018

I am not the first, nor the last to confess I have done wrong and hurt the people I love. I have held grudges already lasting an eternity. Instead of facing issues with forgiveness, I avoid them, holding them with bitterness. While doing so, I 'hide' from God, refusing to reach out with my struggles and take the tools given me to make amends. I struggle with why I do not take the offered hand.

The answer is simple. The deadly sin pride corrupts my heart. Prayer and praise come easily when the issue is not with myself, but praying about the abrasion on my heart and asking to lift ugly scars is to admit that there was evil there. It is a choice to let go and forgive that I have not yet made. I love my evil deeds so much I am willing to sacrifice the people I love most.

I know I am not alone in the fear of being exposed to God, which is why I am going to be asking you these questions. How are you hiding from God? What tools has God offered to lead you back that you did not receive? What are you sacrificing for the separation between you and God? How are you working or not working to submit yourself fully to God?

I am still only at a stage of only admitting my pride, but it is a start. I know I have a long way to go, but some things take time. I know God has offered me opportunities and has planted people by my side who advise me and push me to reach out. I have determined the costs are too great for me to continue on the path I am on.

March 16, 2018

*Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32*

Kaitlin Prichard, Master of Divinity, Class of 2019

Ah, the Prodigal Son. As someone who grew up in the church, I have heard this one a few times. For me it easy to gloss through the details and claim I know this story by heart. Yet, as I read it this time I saw something I hadn't before.

The prodigal son goes out into the world, and he finds it is not as lovely as he hoped it would be. I imagine he expected a life of adventure and excitement, a trip full of the best life has to offer, and yet this is not what he finds. He ends up in a situation he never imagined, doing work I doubt he ever imagined he would do. It's here, in the middle of the muck and mire of a messy situation, that "he came to himself," as the NRSV translates, and decides he needs to go home to his father. Perhaps, like the prodigal son, we too do not always have revelation of what we need in the times that are good—maybe sometimes we learn the most in the midst of our darkest times and it is from those spaces that we feel God's call to come home.

And though it may not be your first time hearing this sentiment, I hope that at the least I can encourage you in this: In my life, I've heard this story hundreds of times. And yet, even now I noticed something I hadn't before. I've been hearing a lot about God's ability to speak into our lives and reinterpret and redefine the things that happen to us in our lives. I pray that in this season of Lent you are able to find God in your life and in Scripture in the unexpected, the muck, and the mundane.

**March 17, 2018**

*1 Samuel 16:1-13*

Gerdon Jones, Student and Gold Alumni Engagement Coordinator

There are times when I worry about what others think of my appearance. Though I worry at times, I am reminded that God does not look at our outward appearance. God sees the content of our hearts. In the scriptures we see that God chose David to be the king of Israel because he was faithful in the assignment that was appointed to him. Tending sheep does not sound like the most glamorous job; I am sure that David got dirty and felt alone at times. Because of David's integrity and commitment to his assignment, God chose to use him in an even bigger way. I am encouraged by David's story to stand strong where I am today and allow God to use me no matter the situation at hand. When our true desire is to glorify God with our lives, we need not worry about what others think.

*Please pray this prayer with me:*

*Lord, thank you for looking at the content of our hearts rather than our appearance. We pray that you would help us continually develop a worship-filled and obedient heart for you like David did. May we have the courage to be used by you in every stage of our lives remembering that we serve you for a greater purpose.*

March 19, 2018

*Jeremiah 31:31-34*

Julie Ann Harrington, Budget Manager and Assistant to the Dean, School of Health Sciences

I had lived with red walls in my home for the past 15 years; what was once in style had become dated and it was time for a change. As I painted those walls, I could not help but think about the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ. The red was so bold, dark, and heavy like the sin that we carry. As I covered the red wall with a white primer and then the beautiful light buttery pale yellow it was a vivid picture of how Jesus covers our sin and makes us whole again.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 proclaims hope for the future of Israel as the Lord declares that the time is coming when God will make a new covenant. This new covenant would fulfill all previous failed broken covenant relationships. This prophetic good news of a new relationship that would live in the minds and hearts of God's people must have been encouraging but at the same time perplexing. How would God do this? It was like that first coat of primer over the red walls, it was covering the color but there was a shadow effect coming through and the red was not completely gone. I was concerned if the new paint would be able to cover that dark color. God is so faithful even when we cannot see how God is working behind the scenes.

As we reflect during this Lenten season on these passages of the promise of hope for everyone "from the least of them to greatest," be encouraged. God did not give up on them. Even after the broken covenants God had a plan of restoration for them and provided a permanent solution in Jesus. With the fulfillment of those passages, we now have the living Holy Spirit in our hearts.



March 20, 2018

*Psalm 119:9-16*

Bryce Van Vleet, Psychology Major, Class of 2019

When I received this passage I was less than thrilled; I prefer my Bible verses comforting and consoling me, not reminding me of all the “rules” and “laws” of religion. Perhaps, like me, “rules” and “laws” conjure up childhoods of time-out corners and spankings. For me though, the sign that you were in real trouble, was when my mom got super quiet. To this day, nothing scares me more.

What struck me most the first time I read this was the word “delight.” Delight? I feel like the best part of following the rules is not getting in trouble (and the best part of *breaking* the rules is getting away with it). “Delight” doesn’t quite seem like the right word. “Relieved,” maybe, but “delight?” Eugene Peterson, in his translation, takes this concept further with the phrase “I ponder every morsel of wisdom from you.” “Morsel” like food – like sustenance, like life-giving. I mean, what is going on??

So, I wrestled with what a God of Love could teach me about consequence, especially in a Lenten season. Perhaps it’s not the translations that are wrong; perhaps it’s my context. My understanding of rule-following is incongruent, inoperable, at the foot of the cross. For even when we had already sinned, for even when you and I had *yet* to sin, Christ died for us.

Perhaps the reason the Psalmist can *delight* in the laws of God or that Peterson chews on it like bread, is because when we fall short, we know that we’re already covered. We can focus less on the rules, and more on the connection we have with our Creator *through* the giving of the law.

*What might it look like for you and I to pursue obedience with relish and delight, as though it makes us rich?*

March 21, 2018

Hebrews 5:5-10

Robyn Myers, Conference Services Manager, Camp Casey

Growing up on Whidbey Island, I longed to visit the beach as often as possible. Without fail, every time I would venture onto sand I would look for a rock, not just any rock, it had to be the largest rock I could lift. With my hands outstretched and my backside swung out and knees bent, I lifted with all my might to glimpse the surprises hidden underneath in the salty darkness. Sometimes results harvested a barren bedrock, with no living contents, others an exciting bevy of shore discoveries scurrying and writhing much to my enthusiasm. Carefully placing the rock back down to cover the treasure below, I could feel the gleam of excitement with this encounter, however, it did not change any of my time at the beach, rather it enhanced my joy.

In reading Hebrews 5:5-10 through the paraphrase of *The Message*, in verse 8, “Though he was God’s son, he learned trusting obedience by what he suffered, just as we do.” Just as we do. In reflecting on my beach visits and unearthed rock surprises, where do my daily surprises lead me? When I am drudging through barren times with my adult children forgetting to return phone calls, terrifying test results from the doctor or disheartening national news reports, where is my trusted obedience? When we lift up our rock of surprises, let us keep the heartfelt trusted obedience and salvation from Our Father. Do you remember to put one foot in front of the other in trusted obedience to Our Father?

March 22, 2018

John 12:20-33

Caroline Beresford-Wood, Theological Studies Major, Class of 2019

Today's Scripture reading is John 12:20-33, but for this devotional, I want to focus on verse 25. The Message version interprets the verse in this way:

"..anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, *reckless in your love*, you'll have it forever, real and eternal."

As Jesus is speaking, Jesus has every valid reason to be terrified, to give up, to choose indifference rather than to continue to care so intently about the people who are about to hurt him so deeply.

When I'm faced with the tragedies of the world around me – war, natural disasters, refugee crises, apathy, so much else – my natural reaction is to pull back, to hold onto the comfortable life I live and stay as safe as possible. My instinct is to hold onto life "as it is". But Jesus, in the face of impending betrayal, facing death and humiliation, is choosing to lean into this pain, to be present, to not hide. Jesus is reckless in his love and asks us to be reckless, too.

*If you let go...* If you can find the courage to give up control, to be in the mess, to be with people in their mess,

*...reckless in your love...* If you can be in that mess and choose love over fear, community over isolation, peacemaking over indifference, justice over apathy and retribution,

*...you'll have life forever.* Abundant, full, beautiful, painful, our-cup-overflows-with-love kind of life. You'll have life that reaches beyond you to everyone around you.

May we choose to lean into hard conversations, to walk with those in dark times, to allow others to walk with us in ours. May we be brave. May we love recklessly.

March 23, 2018

*Psalm 126*

Courtney Rutzer, Illustration Major, Class of 2018

I found myself prompted to reflect on the analogy near the end of this psalm— on the connection between the seemingly cyclical trend of sorrow and joy, and the work of the field. It comes and goes, ebbs and flows— but, not without God.

I believe this passage suggests we make space for joy to appear on its own accord— on God's time. That making space in sorrow could look like faint trust; just enough to lead us out in vulnerability, to take feeble, bare-footed steps onto the open, dirt field to scatter seeds of hope again. Perhaps, it merely means to wait patiently— riding the wave of time— awaiting the presence of God to reappear in the seemingly barren place those seeds of hope were scattered. We need not manifest “joy” on our own time, which often I find myself doing, but risk to hope for God's restoration in despair.

There is time to wade between the sowing and reaping in every season, just as there is an invitation to sink into this measured period of sorrow during the season of Lent. In my experience, sorrow has a funny way of exposing me to my deepest seeded need for God, thus presenting fertile soil for a miraculous work to be conceived. Can we know the fullness of joy without the pangs of sorrow?

So, take the time — the space — you need to sink into the divine healing God offers, a timely healing that our culture so disdainfully rejects. It's a courageous act to wait upon a Greater Power in a culture that tells you that you are the greatest power to change your own life. Let us sink into the wading season that we may run out to the field when we hear the chime of the harvest bell, yelling all the way, “My God, my God! You've done it again! For you, my joy has been restored.”

March 24, 2018

*Ezekiel 37:1-14*

Jamie Coles Burnette, Instructor of Biblical Studies

*A Process of Restoration*

As we approach Passion Week, how timely that we consider this passage in Ezekiel that reminds us that God takes dead things and brings them to new life!

Maybe Israel's words ring true for you: "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely!" (v.11), as if you've been stripped of all of the good stuff, and you don't see your way forward. But I have good news for you: no matter how lifeless your current circumstances are, there is a new beginning on the horizon. To get us to that place of restoration and wholeness, God lovingly, gently walks us through a process. Consider Ezekiel's vision:

1. God brings the bones back together (v.7). The fact that the bones in Ezekiel's vision were in a valley and not buried indicates that they were just strewn about. Like these bones, God first deals with the things in our lives that are out of order. This Lenten season, trust God for the courage to set them right.
2. God covers the bones with what is flexible and soft (v.8). Often the hurts and disappointments of life can harden us, and we can inadvertently become callous and guarded in ways that we should not. Allow God to show you those places in your heart that need healing and softening, and begin to feel again.
3. God breathes new life (v.10). At times we can feel like life has knocked the wind out of us, but thankfully God can breathe new life back into us. Ezekiel reminds us that it is only God's Spirit that truly brings life. Allow the Holy Spirit to be a breath of fresh air, and breathe into you new vigor, passion, and perspective.

**March 25, 2018 - Palm Sunday**

*Mark 11:1-11*

Connor Gardner, Theology Major, Class of 2018

Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem displays his preeminence and authority. Jesus rides into the city on a colt that had never been ridden before, a sign that the animal was unyoked and set apart for a special purpose. The laying down of the cloaks and leafy branches on the road is reminiscent of royal and festive processions. The proclamation of those who went up the road before him shouting "Hosanna!" while literally means "Save now!" and they yell out that Jesus comes in the name of their ancestor King David whose name is synonymous with a messianic savior. Finally, Jesus entered right through the main streets of Jerusalem and into the temple, the religious and political center of Israel. Read through the story again paying special attention to the various ways that Jesus was lifted up as king and messiah.

The people watching Jesus' royal and triumphant entrance into the city would have probably expected him to take over and instate himself as the king of the city, but instead he left the city after simply surveying the state of the temple. Jesus frustrates the expectations of those around him by not proclaiming himself as king and continues to teach and do healing miracles. Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem is significant because this is a sign that Jesus will soon be brought to be crucified on the cross.

Take time on this Sunday to meditate over Jesus' royal authority and power, and how he knew his fate was crucifixion well before anyone else. In all Jesus' power as God and human Jesus chose to submit himself to the cross so that he could be raised back to life and conquer sin and death for us all. On this Palm Sunday consider the weight that Jesus bore for our sake, and the restraint it took to be faithful in ministry while being painfully aware of his distressing sacrifice. Think about how you are living and loving others despite the known or unknown difficulties that lie on the road ahead. How are you living in the tension between Jesus' nature as a king and as a criminal on the cross?

March 26, 2018

*John 12:1-11*

Michelle McFarland, Director of Executive Operations, Executive Assistant to the Provost

It is the week of Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus is reclining at the table with Lazarus, who he had raised from the dead not so long ago. The disciples are milling about, oblivious to what lies ahead later in the week. Outside, people have come from all around to see this Jesus who raises even the dead. The Pharisees are wanting this rabble-rouser, Jesus, dead. Per usual, Martha is serving, busy hosting all of the guests. Mary, sweet Mary, is sitting at the feet of Jesus. Did you catch that? Amid all that is going on, Mary chooses to sit in the presence of her Lord.

Mary then takes pure nard, an expensive spend-your-whole-year's salary-on-mere-ounces perfume, often used to prepare bodies for burial, and starts pouring it over Jesus' feet. Note that she doesn't just drop little amounts of this precious perfume. She lavishly pours it over his bare feet, letting it run all round, allowing the fragrance to fill the house, demonstrating to Jesus that she is willing to give everything she has to him.

Did Mary know what this next week would hold? Was she aware that she would be witnessing her Lord brutally beaten and left to die on a cross? Was she, indeed, preparing him for burial?

As we walk this Lenten road together, let us reflect on Mary's willingness to make space to be present – the sit-at-his-feet-and-give-all-that-she-has type of presence – with Jesus. Where can you sit at the feet of Jesus this week? What is the precious thing that you are holding onto or saving for something big, the pure nard, if you will, that you are willing to give to him? Find it. Do it. Now.

March 27, 2018

*John 12:20-36*

Adriel Gama-Reynoso, Psychology Major, Class of 2018

“He who loves his life will lose it and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” The dying that Jesus calls us to is not easy. It can only be accomplished by faith in Christ’s promises. By the help and empowerment of the Holy Spirit to walk in faith. By following Christ and taking up our cross. We trade in our sinful live for a righteous life. It is no longer about us but about Him. We live our lives by His commandments, His promises, by His intimate relationship with us. Our relationship with our Savior allows us to be at peace in the midst of chaos. Jesus ends by saying “walk while you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light”. Jesus has set before us an opportunity. He wants us to become children of light. Such an opportunity calls for us to act. To walk with the light. To walk in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

*What does it mean to become “Children of light”?*

*How does it mean to be a servant of Christ?*



**March 28, 2018**

*John 13:21-32*

Melissa Del Rio, Theology Major, Class of 2018

Each year I spend March 28th in an intentional time of reflection with God. March 28th is a significant day for myself and my family, because it's my birthday. I come from a family and culture that emphasizes celebrating birthdays as a big deal; especially with numerous experiences of cancer, chronic illness, and accidents within my family. They have this perspective that it's another year of life to celebrate. So, on this day I regularly focus on God's goodness, and how God has been my strength and rock through another year since my last birthday. Looking back at the passage, we are meant to reflect on what ways Jesus has been faithful to us, as well as what ways we have been faithful to Jesus. For some context, if we take a moment to recognize what's going on in the scripture passage, it shows us that Jesus is predicting who will betray him leading up to the resurrection. Also, this passage includes motifs of betrayal, truthfulness, faith, witness, and glorifying God. As a Reconciliation minor, I believe devotions are not meant just to be uplifting and encouraging, but also meant to challenge us often putting us in an uncomfortable place. So, in what ways have you been faithful to Jesus this past year? What areas have you left your focus away from Jesus? Are we being truthful in our Christian journey by welcoming the stranger, the queer person, the person of color, the disabled person, the poor and vulnerable, and fighting systemic injustices that act against societal norms, like Jesus would? Or, are we being too comfortable in our Christian walk, betraying the truth in Jesus' life and teaching, while ignoring the invisible, the vulnerable, and the oppressed in the long run? Who are we like? Are we actually a Judas?

**March 29, 2018 - Maundy Thursday**

*John 13:1-17, 31b-35*

Brent Watson, Graduate Assistant, Campus Ministries

Christianity asks a lot of us. It demands that we give of our time, our resources, and our energy. It asks that we give our power and privilege. It requires us to give up on our selfishness and live in sacrificial community with others. All of these things are true, and when Jesus washes the feet of his disciples he is initiating them into a new mode of life and giving them a very particular picture of what that life will be like. In the kingdom of God, even, and especially, those who are known as mentor, teacher, leader, and Lord will be servants.

However, Jesus also teaches Peter an important lesson here about the willingness and ability to receive. Too often, we overemphasize this message of servanthood so that we give and give and give until we have nothing left. Eventually, as unbalanced Christians we stop caring for ourselves and, as a result, stop caring about others.

But the inability to receive also makes us too dependable upon our own selves and can potentially cause us to block out the gifts of God presented to us from unexpected or underrepresented sources. When we keep on giving and never take a breath to look around and see who and what else is around us, we might miss a lot of what God is doing.

Learning to receive genuinely can be a hard thing. Our schools, churches, and jobs often doesn't give us the space to think that anything other than giving is okay. When we depend upon what we receive instead of what we give, we lose the complete control over our lives that we so desperately want to have.

So today, repent from your unwillingness to receive, not by overcorrecting and asking for a bath like Peter did, but simply by sitting back, taking a deep breath, and feeling the cool water and rough hands on the skin of your feet. Receive the gifts of the God, wherever they might be found.

March 30, 2018 - Good Friday

*John 18:1-19:42*

Kelsey Rorem, Associate Director, Campus Ministries

Today we sit with the reality of a crucified Jesus. Crucified out of love for a broken world marred by our individual and communal sinfulness. The weight of this reality makes it hard to know what to say in response to today's text. The drama of Good Friday spills out on the pages of John 18 and 19 with a mix of familiarity and strangeness. A dramatic story filled with confusion and betrayal; false accusations and a mockery of a trial; a public execution and a quiet burial. The movie reel plays in our heads as the action unfolds.

Who do we identify with in this story? Peter? Pilate? The women gathered the cross? On any given day I imagine that we might swing like a pendulum between these different archetypes—anywhere from denying that we know Jesus, to huddling near our Savior in moments of fear and disbelief.

Regardless of where we find ourselves in the story today, we are invited to journey in relationship with the suffering servant who chose to shoulder our burdens because of God's great love for humankind.

In response, may we fervently pray along with the community of Taizé:

*Jesus, remember me*

*When you come into your Kingdom.*

*Jesus, remember*

*When you come into your Kingdom.*

March 31, 2018 - Holy Saturday

*Matthew 27:57-66*

Priscilla Ozodo, Minister of Worship and Production

At the time of his greatest trial, the day of his arrest and crucifixion, Jesus had been abandoned by the ones who were closest to him. The night before, they swore their allegiance to him and promised even to die with him but when the real test came they could only follow from afar.

Now he was dead and his closest followers were nowhere in sight. What was going to happen to his body? The body of the beloved Jesus Christ was laying there in the evening. At this time when it was too dangerous to identify with the recently killed traitor called Jesus, "there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph." His name had never been mentioned as one of the followers of Christ but he was a disciple of Jesus. When others ran away and tried to hide their association with the accused, this man boldly stepped forward, giving his resources and time for the sake of the Christ! He did not only give up his brand new tomb for Jesus but he risked his reputation as a part of the Sanhedrin, allowing himself to become ritually unclean by touching a corpse.

Today as we remember Jesus's death and burial, we must glean a lesson from this rich man. Sometimes our commitment to Christ must go beyond mere words. Like the other disciples, some of us have been following Jesus for years. We stick with him when it's convenient and are in the front of the congregation with our arms stretched high, singing "Hosanna in the Highest" when he is riding in as a king on a donkey. But what do we do when things get tough? Where are we when it is no longer cool to associate with the Christ?

My friends, it is time we stop playing games and start BEING Christian. We must begin to give up our reputation, our time and resources for the sake of Christ. What does this look like for you? Perhaps you need to spend more time in that neighborhood you have been avoiding, have lunch with your annoying friend, give more of your resources towards the needs of others, fight against inequality and stand for justice, be a voice to the oppressed. Remember whatsoever you do to bring comfort to the least of these, you are doing for Jesus (Matt 25:37-46).

April 1, 2018 – Easter Sunday

*John 20:1-10*

**“Jesus Lives, and So Shall I”**

*Words:* Christian F. Gellert; *Music:* Johann Crüger

Jesus lives, and so shall I: death, where is your sting so threat'ning?  
Jesus for me chose to die, turned the grave to life unending.  
God shall raise me from the dust: Jesus is my hope and trust.

Jesus lives: his kingdom comes over earth as well as heaven.  
I shall rule with God's own Son through the grace that shall be given  
God shall raise me from the dust: Jesus is my hope and trust.

Jesus lives: his death atoned for my sin; I am forgiven.  
Rule my heart, O Lord enthroned: may my life be Spirit driven.  
God shall raise me from the dust: Jesus is my hope and trust.

Jesus lives: this truth is sure. What from Christ can separate me?  
Evil's pow'rs I shall endure; death nor hell can thwart my safety.  
God shall raise me from the dust: Jesus is my hope and trust.

Jesus lives: be not afraid! Take by faith God's promised surety.  
All our sins in Christ are paid: death is swallow'd up in vict'ry.  
God shall raise us from the dust: Jesus Christ, our hope and trust!

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**From the dust of Ash Wednesday  
to the glorious hope of Easter morn.**

**He is risen! He is risen indeed!**