



2025
LENTEN
Devotional



Written by Churches of
Los Alamos, New Mexico



Welcome!

Dear friend in Christ:

We commend this book of Lenten Meditations as one guide for your journey with Christ this season. We know that many of you already follow a daily devotional practice, and we encourage you to continue with that discipline. What makes this booklet special is that these daily devotions were created by folks in our six churches, people we know, those with whom we work, worship, and serve. As you read the scripture passage for each day, and meditation drawn from it, also reflect on the person who wrote it. This year our devotion writers have selected a reading from the Revised Common Lectionary readings from each Sunday in Lent. Therefore, each week will offer us four to five reading. Readings during Holy Week will be different each day.

Thank you to our writers for sharing their prayerful thoughts and experiences that will help guide and strengthen us throughout Lent. We invite you to read the passage

presented each day before reading the devotions. In whatever way you open God's word, let the Holy Spirit guide your thoughts in this time of reflection, that you would be open to Christ's leading during these days of Lent and Holy Week.

In Christ's Love,

Deacon Cynthia Biddlecomb
Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church

The Rev. David Elton
The United Church of Los Alamos

The Rev. Mary Ann Hill
Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church

The Rev. John Nash
First United Methodist Church

Deacon Amy Schmuck
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

March 5 – Ash Wednesday	6
March 6	7
March 7	8
March 8	9
March 9 – First Sunday in Lent	10
March 10	11
March 11	12
March 12	13
March 13	14
March 14	15
March 15	16
March 16 – Second Sunday in Lent	17
March 17	18
March 18	19
March 19	20
March 20	21
March 21	22
March 22	23
March 23 – Third Sunday in Lent	24
March 24	25
March 25	26
March 26	27
March 27	28
March 28	29
March 29	30

March 30 – Fourth Sunday in Lent31

March 3132

April 133

April 234

April 335

April 436

April 537

April 6 – Fifth Sunday in Lent38

April 739

April 840

April 941

April 1042

April 1143

April 1244

April 13 – Palm Sunday45

April 1446

April 1547

April 1648

April 17 – Maundy Thursday49

April 18 – Good Friday50

April 19 – Holy Saturday51

April 20 – Easter52

Food Shelter Information54

Acknowledgments55

And when you fast, do not put on a sad face like the hypocrites.

When I was in seminary, I went to the Ash Wednesday service at the university chapel, and the message was given by one of the professors. He went through the reasons for Ash Wednesday, then said it was a holiday, that once you separated it from medieval theology, had largely lost its meaning, and so was looking for a new purpose. Basically, he gave lots of reasons why Ash Wednesday didn't really need to be celebrated, and then called for everyone to come forward to receive the ashes. Or, to do the very thing he just said we didn't need to do.

I often think of the same thing when I read the passage from Matthew every year at Ash Wednesday. Jesus says not to make a public display of what we are doing, and then we call people forward to have the ashes in the sign of a cross marked on our foreheads so that people will see we've been to church and are journeying into lent. How does that make any sense?

And I think the reasoning is about intentionality. Why are we doing this thing? Are we getting ashes to show how religious we are, or is it an outward sign of an inward intentionality? Are we taking on a Lenten practice so we can brag to others about what we are doing, or are we doing it to deepen our faith and relationship with Christ?

As we begin this Lenten journey, I encourage all of us to be intentional in what we do and why we do it, so that we can truly celebrate come Easter with a changed heart and deeper walk of faith.

Prayer: *O God of our Lenten journey, help us to hear again your call on our lives and to humble ourselves in this season of repentance and preparation so that we can enter into the Easter season filled with your joy for our continued journey.*

Rev. John W. Nash
First United Methodist Church

Thursday, March 6th

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Message of Reconciliation

God's reconciliation is what the world needs now more than ever as the future looks uncertain. The only thing that is certain is that God is in control even when things seem out of control. We can be assured that His love and mercy and forgiveness will be our comfort and help.

Reconcile in the dictionary means to restore to friendship, to resolve differences. The word makes me think of other verbs like repent, redeem, renew, refresh, rekindle, redo, receive, rejoice! All action words that relate to how God revealed Himself to me and reconciled me to Himself through Jesus Christ and what He did on the cross for me, for all. Now God is appealing to me to be Christ's ambassador. As a recipient of His reconciliation, I can now be a messenger of His plan of redemption that can bring hope, peace and love to our troubled hearts in this confused world. For you are the only truth we can believe.

Prayer: *God reconcile us to you through Christ. Change our hearts to make us new creations filled with your love so we can share your message of reconciliation. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Irene Powell
United Church of Los Alamos

No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.

The Kind of Fasting God Wants

Many of us have the practice of giving up something for Lent. We might “fast” from chocolate, or alcohol, or meat. Some of these deprivations are likely good for our bodies and our souls, reminding us of our need to repent and prepare our hearts for Good Friday, and then Easter. But in our Old Testament readings this week God is emphasizing that it is not so much what we give up that counts – but what we give. “Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts.” Joel 2:12 “You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it... My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.” Psalm 51:16-17

This Lenten season let’s pay attention to the fasting that God wants – working for justice, freeing the oppressed, sharing our food with the hungry, giving shelter to the homeless, giving clothes to those who need them, and making ourselves available to help our relatives. We have many opportunities to do this in Los Alamos. These actions reflect hearts that align with God’s heart for the world. Now, more than ever, we have an opportunity to step into the gap and choose the fast that pleases God by sharing with those in need.

Prayer: *Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me. Show me how I can choose the kind of fasting you want by sharing with those in need. Amen.*

Julie Shimer

Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

Saturday, March 8th

Psalm 91:11-12

For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot upon a stone.

Angel Security Guard

This first Sunday of Lent finds us in a frightened world with new worries overwhelming us each day. But God gives us Psalm 91 as an answer to our prayers. He is sending his angels to guard us in all our ways. He promises no evil will befall us. This is such good news that it is repeated over 300 times in the Bible. When things are going poorly, we tend to think that it is our job to fix this messed-up world. But God tells us that he will take care of us. However, he asks that we follow in the path taught by his Son, that we love each other.

Our theme for this year's Lenten devotionals is a message from the prophet Micah, telling us that the Lord wants us "to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God". Sadly, the news of today's world doesn't sound as if we'd listened to any of this advice. As we consider what we might "give up" for Lent, let's try to "take up" God's requests to follow his Son and his prophets. Walking in His Way can help lead to a better world.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, help us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God. Amen*

Joan Moore

Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church

“...If you are the Son of God...”(v.3)

Temptation and Liberation

To celebrate Jesus’ baptism and the moment he is declared by God to be “My son in whom I’m well pleased” the Spirit drives him into the wilderness alone with no food for forty days. Sounds like a great time...for the devil to show up! Temptation to make stones into bread must have been absolute agony for the Son of God. Nevertheless, Jesus declines the use of power, knowing who he belongs to is enough to sustain him. The devil uses the words “If you are the Son of God” to appeal to one of our most basic human desires- to proclaim our identity. The devil surely does not understand what he’s dealing with here. Jesus has been fed and nourished by the Holy Spirit, and God’s holy Word is inscribed on his heart. He is here on earth to do the unthinkable- to save humanity from the temptations of the devil for greed, power, dominion, fame, and shift us into radical love that can only come from God’s heart. He came to die a horrific and humiliating death on a cross for the ultimate victory over our sin. The Son of God reigns over our hearts with the ultimate power of love.

Prayer: *God and gracious God. Thank you for sending your son our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ to show us the power of love in our lives. May we always seek your will, seek your Word, and follow Jesus’ example of the ultimate love. Amen.*

Deacon Amy Schmuck
Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

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

Where is God?

Many years ago, I started making Spirit Lifter cards for friends who are going through trying times. Each of the 30 cards has a Bible verse, words that encourage, comfort, and assure the recipient that God is with them and upholding them through their difficulties.

When they go through hard times, many people feel God has abandoned them. That God should have kept them from going through this. “Where is God?” they shout. What they don’t realize is that God is right there going through their difficulties with them. Always there. This verse from Psalm 91, “When they call to me, I will answer them. I will be with them in trouble,” is only one of many verses that gives us that reassurance. Romans 8 says nothing can separate us from God’s love. Ezra 7:8, “And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord God was upon me.”

One day, I had my preschool Sunday school kids paste everyday activities, such as playing on the playground or, for example, on a path. At each stop on the path, we said that God is with me when I’m _____. A few weeks later, one of the moms told me that her child had been in an uncomfortable situation and had said that God was always with him. I hope he remembers that in the years to come.

I’ve gotten out of the habit of making Spirit Lifters. It’s time I started again.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, Thank you for always being with us, in hard times as well as good times. Amen.*

Carol Mead
First United Methodist Church

It is written, "One does not live by bread alone."

It is Written

My Dad enjoyed some blueberry muffins my mom had bought for breakfast over several days. When they were gone, my mom instead bought cinnamon raisin toast. After breakfast the next day, my dad asked her if the store was out of the blueberry muffins. My mom told him that she thought she would switch it up a bit and he would enjoy the variety. She asked him, "Don't you like cinnamon raisin toast?" He replied, "I cannot live on bread alone." My mom smiled and got the hint. She made a special trip to the store to get him blueberry muffins for the next morning! Of course, this is not what the bible verse means. In Luke 4:1-4, Jesus is famished after fasting for forty days in the wilderness yet when tempted by the devil to turn the stone into bread Jesus replies, "One does not live by bread alone." This is a reference back to Deuteronomy 8:3 where Moses reminds the people of Israel how God made them go hungry and then gave them manna to eat. "He did this to teach you that man must not depend on bread alone to sustain him, but on everything that the Lord says." God was with the people of Israel during their wanderings in the desert and God was with Jesus during his lifetime here on Earth. God is with us now and every day, we must remember to look to God in all aspects of our lives. Earthly possessions are not enough, we need to listen, learn, and remember God's words. May this Lenten season help us to remember to be loyal and obedient to God.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank you for walking with us and help us look to you for sustenance in times of need and in times of blessing. Amen*

Susan Oldham
White Rock United Methodist Church

Jesus told his disciples to “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with ...the worries of this life...”

Anxious?

Jesus told his disciples to: “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with ...the worries of this life...”

Giving up anxiety is so much easier said than done. How can we put worries aside and live into hope?

Certainly, a man who was seen to have cause to be anxious was Job. However, in the story of Job’s reaction to overwhelming and undeserved suffering, we learn that Job “did not sin or charge God with wrongdoing” - something he might have been expected to do after loosing his property and all his children. Instead he responded with”...the Lord gave and the lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” He is definitely an example of hanging on to hope - that is trusting in God.

The psalmist encourages us to remember God’s faithfulness: “I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God: incline your ear to me, hear my words.”

We should work to release the worries that threaten to overwhelm us and respond to life focusing on our love for God. That love should be the basis for our peace and for the trust and joy that we offer to God.

Prayer: *Gracious God, Please grant that being tested, our hope may be strengthened.*

Selma Reinovsky
White Rock Presbyterian Church

Thursday, March 13th

Romans 10:12b

The same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him

We Are Saved to Love Other Now

Deuteronomy 26 and Romans 10 both speak of God's saving grace, the first, saving the Israelites from Egyptian oppressors. Yet, Paul's message of salvation, is for the Romans, the oppressors, who also could believe and be saved by Christ.

When the Israelites were settled in the Promised land, a tenth of their first fruits were to feed Levites, aliens, the fatherless and the widows because the Lord is Lord of all. Jesus expanded that truth and said the religious of his time still gave a tenth, yet they neglected justice and the love of God. (Lk 11:42)

Jesus said he spoke through the Father's living in him, doing His work. (John 14:10) Jesus did not come to get rid of the law, but he fulfilled it. He spoke of good laws and then added, "*But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,*" "*Be merciful just as your Father is merciful,*" --- concepts that went beyond the law. (Lk 6:27,36)

Being able to Celebrate the resurrection is amazing, as one Sign of God's ultimate love. A modern question, "Are you saved?", focuses on an *individual* getting a ticket to paradise. Yet, Jesus' life showed us how to be a sign of God's Love now for all people. As we celebrate God's saving Grace during Easter may we share our first fruits and then go to the next step – mercy and justice for all.

Prayer: *Thank you that your love is greater than we imagine and is available for all. Help us to not only spread Good News but also be Good News in this hurting world.*

Betty Smith
United Church of Los Alamos

For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

Are Your Heart and Tongue Connected?

As human beings we are well aware of the importance of food. We are bombarded by talk shows and the news to be alert of the effects of fried foods and processed foods. Many foods and diets are touted as being especially healthy. Some are usually urged for certain parts of your body. God heard His people's prayers for food in the desert after they left Egypt, and He sent manna. We pray for our daily bread in the Lord's prayer. Even the devil tempted Jesus with food in the desert after the baptism.

The scripture tells of the close spiritual connection between our hearts and tongues. What is food for this special part of us? Just as it is so important physically to be in healthy surroundings it is also important to surround ourselves in a healthy spiritually environment. Where is this? With good positive friends, being kind, noticing our blessings, listening to Christian music, Bible studies, generous sharing with those who have needs. And how do we share this heart-filled faith? With our tongues we speak of our faith and how God has blessed us. Connect your heart and mouth in telling others.

When was the last time you added more faith in your heart? When was the last time you tasted something very good, physically and spiritually?

Prayer: *Lord, help me be physically and spiritually strong with the food you so generously give.*

Thelma Hahn
Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

Saturday, March 15th

Romans 10:11-13

No one who believes in him will be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Praying in Times of Trouble

I have been a follower of Jesus for 60+ years. I have prayed to the Lord for my family, friends, and those whom I do not know. Praying ceaselessly has seemed not like a burden but the right thing to do. Now, however, beyond praying for family and friends, those experiencing grief and sickness, and those experiencing joy, I'm having trouble praying more generally. I know I should be praying for the leaders of our nation and the world, but my inclination is to ignore the anger and hatred, the harsh treatment of many brothers and sisters, and simply hope for salvation.

In today's reading from Romans, Paul says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

So clearly, I must, we all must, call on Jesus' name and believe in His saving power, and we shall all get through this time of trial together.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, hear the prayers of all your children and answer them in the way you have promised for each of us. Amen.*

Margaret Odell
Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church

The Second Sunday in Lent, March 16th Psalm 27:1

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

Eighty years ago today, on March 16, 1945, between 9:21 and 9:40 p.m., my mother's hometown of Würzburg sustained the worst firebombing of any German city in WWII. When the bombing raid was over, the small city was 90% destroyed, and thousands were dead. Most of the victims suffocated when the conflagration pulled oxygen out of the bomb shelters and cellars. Among the survivors of the bombing were my great uncle and a cousin. Because my cousin was confined to a wheelchair, the pair weren't able to reach the cellar. The rest of the family perished.

God willing, most of us will never face anything that horrifying, but none of us gets out of this life unscathed. No matter how fortunate we are, the possibility of things beyond our control is always there. But, despite everything, we are never alone in our struggles. We have a Savior who has trampled down sin and death for us. He is with us in all our joy and suffering and, at the end of everything, he is waiting to rescue us and bring us home.

Tonight, every church bell in Würzburg will ring between 9:21 and 9:40 p.m. It will begin and end with the tolling of the largest bell: the nine-ton "Savior" bell in the Cathedral. Eight feet in diameter, it was cast in 1965 as a replacement for one of the many bells lost in the fire. And, following the centuries' old custom of bell makers, it is inscribed with a prayer:

Prayer: *Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, bring us peace.*

The Rev. Mary Ann Hill, Rector
Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church

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

Wait on the Lord

Don was in the hospital. All his work on our almost finished new house had almost finished him with a bad back. On my morning walk lamenting to God about this problem I heard a call from the sky above; it was an eagle bringing to my mind Isaiah 40:31, a verse about “Waiting on the Lord”. I was sure God had given me an answer; I could hardly wait to tell Don. Then I happened to see a wild orchid, the 1st wildflower of the spring, a second gift, another sign that God would give us a beautiful healing! I told Don he would be healed when we discovered what “Wait on the Lord” meant.

Don had built a firewood shed on the backside of the garage, but it had no shingles! How would my children and I accomplish something we had no idea of how to even start? The three of us did our best to follow Don’s detailed instructions as we managed to finish putting on the shingles. We spent time together, outdoors gathering wood, splitting it and learning new ways to be together as a family.

Don usually drove the truck to his job at the University and parked some distance away so had to walk several blocks partly by Mercy Hospital. A doctor friend who worked there had seen him walking and noticed he was no longer limping. We had a physical healing, and, like the second gift of the orchid, we also had a stronger, more vibrant family.

Prayer: *Thank you, my awesome God, for healing and many things in our lives, and giving us insights into who you are. I praise you, Amen.*

Shiela Enemark
First United Methodist Church

*The Lord is slow to anger,
and abounding in steadfast love,
forgiving iniquity and transgression,
but by no means clearing the guilty,
visiting the iniquity of the parents
upon the children
to the third and the fourth generation.*

Abounding in Steadfast Love

Moses quotes back to God his own words about his goodness and mercy at a time that God has decided to end his relationship with Israel. God relents but not without consequences. The original generation will not see the promised land because of their sinfulness. There are consequences for the following generations that did not see the miracles of God in Egypt or at the Reed Sea, they get to wander the wilderness for forty years awaiting the death of their parents. This is tough going for the Israelites and this time changes who they are and how they respond to God. We can see similar consequences playing out with our own children when we saddle them with our inequities and transgressions. Out of his steadfast love and mercy, God realized that more needed to be done so he sent Jesus to show us the way to live rightly with God. Thanks to the example of Jesus, we can now humbly walk with God, loving kindness and doing justice.

Prayer: *Dear Heavenly Father,*

Your steadfast love and mercy give us hope in a world full of inequity and trouble. Thank you for life of Jesus as a guide, for your steadfast love in spite of our transgressions and for your mercy in light of our weakness to sinning.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Mark Prokop

White Rock United Methodist Church

Cognizance

“Cognizance” is a fancy word for “awareness.” One of the things I have become increasingly aware of is how, most of the time, I am not aware of God’s presence. I just go about my life as if God was off on a cloud somewhere or dealing with some great emergency in a far off galaxy. Somehow it doesn’t seem that my life can be very important to God. It seems more realistic to think that God has bigger things to do than to deal with little old me. And so, I drive my car or eat my lunch as if God isn’t there.

But Jesus promised to be with us always. And the Psalmist proclaims, “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.”

Hmm... could this mean that God is with me, even though I am unaware of God’s presence? Could it be that my life actually matters to God? And that I can tell others about God’s wonderful works? Could it be that being aware of God’s presence adds a new dimension to life?

I am working on how to be more aware of God’s presence in my life. In the big things and the little things. When I’m happy. When I’m sad. When I’m busy. When I’m bored.

And I’m doing some better at this, but I have a long way to go. When I look at the distant mountains or gaze at the stars at night, I say a little prayer of thanks. When I’m driving home, I ask God to protect me. When I’m struggling with a difficult decision, I ask God for wisdom. But there are still gaps. There are still times when I am totally unaware that God is with me.

So how are you doing? Can you take a little moment to thank God for the gift of life? And can you pause in the middle of a busy day to recognize that God is with you?

Rev. Jerry Kuyk
White Rock Presbyterian Church

While Peter was still speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them with its shadow; and the disciples were afraid.

Afraid?

Jesus took disciples Peter, John, and James with him up a mountain to pray. Nodding off, the disciples became fully awake as a super-natural astounding sight and conversation was unfolding before them. Their mountain top experience of Jesus' Transfiguration left the disciples speechless and afraid, or terrified (NRSV).

The word "afraid" captures my attention. "What!?" I want to say, "How could anyone witness such power of God and be afraid?" Relying on our own devices, we should be afraid. However, many times throughout the Bible, God reassures us as we try to live in God's right-ness, "do not be afraid", "I am with you", and "you are mine". Can I truly believe and dwell in that knowledge? Practice.

Dr. Martin Luther King demonstrated exemplary faith in God. Speaking in a campaign-weary voice late in his ministry of peaceful (but stressful) resistance for Civil Rights, he stated, "I have been to the mountaintop, and I have seen the Promised Land... I am not afraid...", referring to Moses being allowed a view of the Land that Moses would not himself enter after 40 trying years faithfully developing God's new nation on a wilderness journey.

The arc is long but bending toward right-ness, Dr. King firmly believed. Love wins.

Prayer: *Thank you, God, for your precious, embracing, amazing love. Help us to have the courage to live-in your love, practicing not being afraid.*

Georgia Strickfaden
United Church of Los Alamos

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

I Shall See the Goodness of the Lord

We are living in bewildering times. Cruelty to our immigrants and violations of our constitution have me feeling insecure. This is Lent, a time when I want to feel secure in the presence of God's steadfast love and care for all His children. I am distracted by what is happening to the immigrants and the violations to the constitution.

Reading and rereading Psalm 27 has been helpful. David, the psalm writer, has addressed both my concerns. He has asked for some specific things such as "hide me in His shelter" and "do not drag me away with the wicked."

With confidence, David has stated what God will do for them. "I shall see the goodness of the Lord." Reading the psalm makes me think of ways we strengthen our faith. We read the scriptures more diligently. We pray more often. We shore up our strength by participating in corporate worship and other church events, and by doing what we can to let our representatives in Washington know what we expect from them. I am no model for this, but I can at least with the help of the Holy Spirit, write letters and emails or make telephone calls to legislators and judges to remind them of the obligations of their office and to tell them what our desires for their choices in voting. I have hope that if I tend to my privileges as a Christian and a citizen, God will help me conquer my fears.

Prayer: *Gracious Lord, help me show my love for you and your children. Help me believe how much you care for us all. Thank you, Lord, for your grace and goodness. Keep me close to you. Amen.*

Lyn Olson
Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

34 Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. 35 Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'

Jesus' Sorrow for Jerusalem

Ah! This brings to mind a painting by Greg Olson, which shows Jesus sitting on a rock and looking over Jerusalem and lamenting, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing." In this poignant lament over Jerusalem, Jesus expresses deep grief for a city long resistant to God's messengers. His deep grief was mixed with anger knowing the destruction that would befall Jerusalem. Jesus' mourning over the destruction of Jerusalem is a reminder of the consequences of rejecting God's saving work. How many of us have seen people we love tread a path that we know will lead to destruction? The agony of the heart for the ones you love, and the anger felt because of their foolishness, is ever present. What do we do? As Jesus said, "I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow..." For us, we mourn, feel anger and despair but, like Jesus who had more people to heal, we must continue in God's work. Finding ways to help those we love and helping others by being friendly, kind, generous, considerate, and bringing the good news of Jesus's redeeming act of salvation whenever we can.

Prayer: *Dear God, create in us a strength to carry on and do the work you have given us to do; to see and love each other as children of God even those who are difficult to love. Amen.*

Susan Sprake

Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

You're Invited

When I worked at the Loews Anatole Hotel in Dallas my first year in college, we were invited to eat an employee meal every afternoon at 4 p.m. It was back in the restaurant's large kitchen, where we'd grab a plate and serve ourselves from the banquet trays filled with food for our meal. The first time I ate there I couldn't believe how delicious it was! When I commented about that to one of my co-workers, he said, "Oh, I forgot to tell you...". And what he forgot to tell me was that the meal we ate at those employee early dinners, was prepared by none other than 2-time James Beard Award winner, who became known around the country as the "Father of Southwest Cuisine", Chef Dean Fearing! And it was all free.

This 3rd Sunday of Lent reading from Isaiah 55 begins with an incredible invitation for anyone who was thirsty and hungry to come, buy, eat, and drink "without money and without cost". This was proclaimed as God speaking to Israel after they returned from exile as a reversal of judgment (that had been promised before they were free) and as an expanded promise about an everlasting covenant with all of God's people. Water, milk, wine, and food are symbolic of forgiveness, wisdom through the word, and God's sustaining provision and care.

This first verse may remind us of other words in scripture that were spoken by Jesus, "Come to me, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). May this day of worship and rest, and this season of Lent, inspire us in our lives of faith to hear and heed this invitation. For each of us is invited to come, listen, and spend time with God's word in scripture; to follow Jesus' teachings and ways more fully; and trust in God's provision and care each day.

Prayer: *Lord, as we accept your invitation to come and partake in your goodness and truth, come and help us to do so. Amen.*

The Rev. David Elton, United Church of Los Alamos

Monday, March 24th

Psalm 63:1

*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.*

My Soul Thirsts for You

I don't follow the news because I can't handle reading about the hard things people are dealing with when there is little I can do about it. I'm quickly overwhelmed. However, I know it's important to keep up with what is happening, so the other day I caught up.

Whew! I spiraled between anger, tears, and fear for hours. I knew I needed to focus on something else, but I was struggling to find what would pull me out of this harmful cycle. Like a still, small voice, I heard snippets of songs running through my head.

“That's who I praise, That's who I praise. He is the lion of Judah, He is the lamb that was slain...” That's Who I Praise, by Brandon Lake.

Thank God! The Holy Spirit spoke to me and encouraged me through the songs I heard recently. Then, I saw encouragement through Facebook on how to avoid becoming overwhelmed when following the news: pick an issue, focus on one thing, and take action. God knows that, for me, taking action is like water in a dry and weary land. The lion of Judah! Through Jesus' strength, I can move forward!

Prayer: *Dear God, Thank you for speaking to me through music and the wise people around me. You know what I need when I'm feeling dry, worn out, and hopeless. You know me better than anyone. I'm thankful for your love and care. In Jesus name,
Amen.*

Camille Wescott
First United Methodist Church

Tuesday, March 25th

Isaiah 55:1-9

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Let God's Will Prevail

Approaching the main entrance to our church along the sidewalk from the street, one encounters a large stone jar topped with a sculpture of a cross. As one passes that jar and looks at it from the side, the cross becomes a vertical Ichthus. Same sculpture. Different image. Different perspective.

Perspective is important. Our human perspective of life and of the world is very limited because our human knowledge and understanding is not only limited, it is sometimes very myopic. Our worldviews are based on our personal life experiences. My worldview is much different than yours, and our collective worldviews are much different from that of those on the other side of the globe.

But God sees it all. God's perspective is not limited by geography or what can be seen. God sees deeper. God sees our hearts and knows our motives, and, as today's key verse reminds us, God sees them in a way we can never comprehend. God's ways are far higher than our ways!

Lent is an ideal time to reflect on the personal motives behind our passionate ideals, the things that guide what we think, do and say. Are we keeping things in proper perspective with respect to God's will for God's people? Let us listen for what God may be trying to say to us about God's perspective of our motives and our passions. Are they for God's glory or our own? We may be surprised at what we hear. We should pray for guidance; but above all, we should pray that God's will ultimately prevails, in our lives and in our world.

Prayer: *O God, we pray that your will be done in us and in our world. Help us to be kinder and gentler to all people. Amen.*

Gary Read
White Rock United Methodist Church

Doors

“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’ Luke 13:24-25

The narrow door of Luke 13:24-31 seems really hard to get through. Like 7th graders chaotically trying to leave my portable classroom last period on a Friday, “there will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth.” And, when my last nerve teacher-self steps in, “the last will be first and the first will be last.”

What is on the other side of the door that Luke refers to? Where is everyone frantically going? In verse 29 he says it is “The Kingdom of God.” And as we know, from later in Luke at 17:21 “The Kingdom of God is within you.”

We all feel that oxymoronic feeling of trying to “seek peace and pursue it.” (Psalm 34:14) Where is that peace? The pursuit of it has caused me much weeping and gnashing of teeth. It’s so hard.

Well, as everyone’s mom used to say, “life is hard, sweetheart, get used to it.”

What is hard is change. Richard Rohr says that “change can force a transformation..., helping people find a new meaning or close down and slowly turn bitter.”

And as we approach the door of change, remember:

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Matt 7:7-8

Prayer: *Lord, help us to seek the door of transformation and to knock on your heart when we find ourselves resistant.er:)*

Jennifer Holmes
White Rock Presbyterian Church

Thursday, March 27th

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.

He Gets Us!

The world has gone crazy and asking God for help has never been so important. How great then that for the third year, one of the most prominent Superbowl commercials was about Jesus! The *He Gets Us* campaign.

It shares that greatness welcomes the unwelcomed, sees the unseen, lifts up others, and expects nothing in return. Read that again. The website reminds us Jesus showed the greatest thing we could be is in humble service to others. When his own reputation was at stake, he advocated for others, never letting fear keep him from speaking out against the hypocrisy of those in power.

Recently, a local Facebook post said the town did not feel very welcoming to them. I tried to say something nice and later saw a diatribe of comments blaming the community member. I wanted to post, Jesus Christ, you guys! I was not using the name in vain; I was trying to bring him into the conversation. How could someone that needed compassion be told to get thicker skin, or work harder?

Today, some people need help, yet so many spew hate. This is indeed a form of temptation, wanting to do what is right to make you more important or being afraid to stop bullying! We are witnessing as a nation, a bully making bad choices and too many afraid to stand up for those not welcome at the table.

Prayer: *Gracious God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference. May God grant us additional courage when we see or know something is wrong.*

Bernadette Lauritzen
United Church of Los Alamos

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.

Eat, Drink, and Be Merry

At first, I heard the whining voice of the SNL character Roseann Rosannadanna in my head: "I've been searchin' for you, God! I'm thirsty, I'm hungry, it's dry and terrible here, and there's no WATER! If it's not ONE thing, it's another... It's always something!"

With all due respect, the psalmist (believed to be David) has not been a happy camper. Why would anyone choose to traipse across hot, dry deserts, and then forget to bring their Stanley water tumbler and a few protein bars?!? By v:2, he's pulled himself together, though, and the psalmist changes his 'tune.'

Finding the sanctuary, he feels God's power and glory. Then, believing that God's "steadfast love is better than life," the praises and feasting begin. Many readings echo verses about coming to the waters, eating and drinking. It goes further in Isaiah 55: that you should "eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food." (I'll bring a Junior's cheesecake!)

But it's spiritual food and drink we share in our relationship with God. It's there that our souls are satisfied. We yearn for a deeper communion with our Lord.

We want and need God's presence in our lives. Growing and maintaining that relationship enhances joy and helps us navigate troubled waters. It's all in God's hands, and we need to honor that to grow in that relationship.

Prayer: *Gracious and merciful God, please help us to see that we'll move beyond the scorched earth and into your cooling, restorative waters.*

Kate Klose, Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

*Everyone who thirsts come to the waters; come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.*

The Best Things in Life Are Free

Well, this is interesting. Many of us view the God of the Old Testament as mean and vengeful and the God of the New Testament as loving and forgiving. The readings I had to choose from are the opposite: Luke 13:3 “Unless you repent you will all perish.” 1 Corinthians 10:5 “Yet with most of these God was not pleased for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” Psalm 63:3 “Because thy steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise thee.” Isaiah 55:3 “I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast sure love for David.”

At any rate, I chose the Isaiah passage, which is a hymn of joy and triumph. I complain about the rising cost of everything these days. But the Lord reminds us that what will truly satisfy us is free! We only need to accept His gifts and seek Him. He has already paid the price for our sins through the sacrifice of his beloved son. If we return to Him, He will have mercy and abundantly pardon us. His amazing grace (God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense) cannot be purchased. God doesn’t have the same economy and values as we do. His thoughts and ways are much more spiritual than ours, just as the heavens are higher than the earth. And how comforting and satisfying is that?

Prayer: *Generous and omniscient God, help us to always trust in Your goodness and to allow You to satisfy the hunger in our hearts with Your peace and love. In Your merciful name, Amen.*

Cathy Walters

Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church

But when he came to his senses;

In Front of a Dirty Double Mirror

The parable of the prodigal son is perfect. *Chef's kiss.* Not only does it describe and teach the love offered by a forgiving God, but it is timelessly relatable. Especially if you are like me, a younger sibling. I have spent my time amongst the metaphorical pigs and “would gladly have filled (my) stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating.”

Glady. So, so gladly.

But the younger brother came to his senses, went home, asked for forgiveness, and was given it, and then some. I wish we could see what happened to him. I have this fear when I imagine it.

What if the younger brother spends his free time looking at other people who work with pigs and screams at them to pick themselves up by their bootstraps like he did? What if he takes the privilege of having somewhere to go, someone to ask for forgiveness from, and the ability to still work for his father and use it to deny the immigrant?

I look at people who think this way; my default is feeling like the older brother instead. Screaming at God, why do they get the fatted calf? How can you see these things and offer them forgiveness? What about me? I am doing what I am supposed to.

Then I look in that dirty double mirror, which is this story, and I am reminded I am the younger brother; if I want to make a difference, finger-wagging and judgment won't help. Compassion and forgiveness will.

Prayer: *Christ, help me see others how you see them. We are like the younger brother, even those I disagree with and fundamentally differ. All you ask of me is to follow in your footsteps. Help me focus on you. Amen.*

Phillip Ortega
First United Methodist Church

Reconciliation

Do we look at God's gifts as debts automatically owed to us? Do we expect that because we believe, He will reward us simply for being His children? Jesus is actually referring to the Pharisees when He talks about the oldest son in this parable. God loved them equally and was willing to forgive and welcome them, just as He did everyone else.

In Romans 1 we read that all people who follow God have free access to the riches of His grace. Through his own Son, God made a way for lost people to be restored to Him (Rom. 1:14). "God shows no partiality."

When the oldest son refuses to join the celebration for his younger brother, his father goes to him, offering reconciliation. His son, hurt and angry, perhaps feeling betrayed, lashes out at his father. "All these years I have worked like a slave to serve you, never disobeying your commands. Yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends."

His father replied, "Dear Special Son Teknon, you are always with me. All that is mine is yours. It is fitting to celebrate, for your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found. The older son will always be in his father's heart. When he is told "All that is mine is yours," he can believe that his inheritance is intact and he is greatly loved.

Many of our blessings go unnoticed. We don't earn them. They are freely given from our Father, who always loves us.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank You for looking beyond my faults and for loving me unconditionally. Thank you for meeting me where I am and for patiently leading me in my life's journey.*

Jeannie Hope Gibson
First United Methodist Church

Tuesday, April 1st

Joel 2:1-2

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near— a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness!

Days of Darkness

What a passage to describe our situation today!

Our dark days continue with no sign of abating. Maybe we should keep watching the news, our modern version of fasting and weeping and mourning, as we curl into fetal position and stress out over every single news item, each worse than the last. Our anxiety may serve as an offering to God, and, out of pity, we might be saved from this mess.

But we see a glimmer of hope in our Gospel passage for today, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” In these days, where it feels as though wickedness is rewarded and injustice is the law of the land, one day, righteousness will flow down like manna. One day, those who cry out for justice will be satisfied. One day.

While that day may not come soon, as long as we keep hungering for it, we call out to the unjust that their ways will not fill us, and that wickedness will not content us. Until we receive the true bread of righteousness, we will not be silent. And one day, we will receive it in full.

Prayer: *Where are you, God?*

In the midst of the darkness, we cannot see your light.

Help us to hold on to hope and to seek your will.

Give us the courage to stand against the unrighteous.

Strengthen our faith that one day, you will prevail.

Amen

Min Ro

White Rock Presbyterian Church

Something From Almost Nothing

⁵⁻⁶ She did what he said. She locked the door behind her and her sons; as they brought the containers to her, she filled them. When all the jugs and bowls were full, she said to one of her sons, "Another jug, please." He said, "That's it. There are no more jugs." Then the oil stopped.⁷ She went and told the story to the man of God. He said, "Go sell the oil and make good on your debts. Live, both you and your sons, on what's left."

When I think of a scripture lesson when something came from almost nothing, I think of *Luke 9:10-17*, where Jesus feeds the five thousand after blessings an offering of five loaves and two fish. This Old Testament scripture of the widow asking Elisha for help was a new lesson for me.

How many times have we felt that we don't have enough? We don't have enough food, time, funds, sanity! It is not easy to go and gather what is empty from those around you. It is not easy to gather in the empty, shut the door, and pray. Elisha told the widow to gather as many empty vessels as she could, shut the door, and begin to pour! And as she poured she was blessed with abundance.

Lyrics from the song "Through Heaven's Eyes" from the *Price of Egypt* movie come to mind.

*And that's why share all that we have with you
Though there's little to be found
When all you've got is
nothing
There's a lot to go around.*

Blessings.

Joyce Haven
White Rock Presbyterian Church

Thursday, April 3rd

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

One God, One Tribe

The visitation of the Word made flesh to earth flabbergasted people—from the Samaritan woman at the well to the Ethiopian in his chariot with Philip, from the centurion at the cross to Paul in the desert, from Peter to Cornelius. Now from the perspective of two thousand years, how might these verses in 2 Corinthians be written to describe faithfully the notion, one God, one tribe?

A 21st Century paraphrase:

Regard no one from a worldly point of view: Jew, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, none of the above. When the Word made flesh speaks to us, the new creation has come—the old has gone. All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through the Word made flesh and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. The Lord has committed us to the message of reconciliation. We are therefore God's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. Let us therefore be reconciled to God so that we ambassadors might become the righteousness of God.

We do not hurt God in our unbelief. We only hurt our collective selves. Let us therefore set aside petty differences and accept reconciliation for the greater good. We all belong to God. Let us be reconciled, for there is only one God and one tribe.

Prayer: *May it be so.*

Jim Cobble
United Church of Los Alamos

*So we are ambassadors for Christ,
God making his appeal through us.*

Be An Ambassador

"Hello Eeyore," said Pooh. "Hello Pooh. Hello Piglet," said Eeyore, in a glum Sounding Voice. "We just thought we'd check in on you," said Piglet. Eeyore was silent for a moment. "Am I okay?" he asked, eventually. "Well, I don't know, to be honest. Are any of us really okay? That's what I ask myself. All I can tell you, Pooh and Piglet, is that right now I feel rather Sad, and Alone, and Not Much Fun to Be Around at All." Pooh looked at Piglet, and Piglet looked at Pooh, and they both sat down, one on either side of Eeyore. Eeyore looked at them in surprise. "What are you doing?" "We're sitting here with you," said Pooh. "Oh," said Eeyore. "Oh." And the three of them sat there in silence, and while Pooh and Piglet said nothing at all, somehow, almost imperceptibly, Eeyore started to feel a very tiny little bit better. Because Pooh and Piglet were there.

Many of you are aware of the Christian group called Stephen Ministers. It is people who have many hours of training to hear and listen to others who face difficulties. One of our scriptures talks of being an ambassador for Christ. We know that they are sent from their country to others with messages of information and reconciliation. As many years of being a Stephen Minister I have had multiple care receivers with various problems. God trusts us to give messages of hope to these special people.

If we are to be ambassadors as God has asked us to be, then we need to be open to where we will go. One of my care receivers lived only 2 blocks away, another was 25 miles. To whom shall we go? One person was a dear friend, the other a complete stranger. What do we do? We listen and express our faith. We trust God will guide us.

Prayer: *God, may I be an ambassador. Show me where to go, to whom and what I should do. Amen*

Thelma Hahn, Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

The Wrong Kind of Kindness

Whenever I read about Mary of Bethany – the “hero” of today’s Gospel - I cannot help thinking about Martha, her sister. Martha and Mary; chalk - cheese, practicality - spirituality.

The contrast shows in Luke 10. Jesus arrives: Mary sits at Jesus’ feet whilst Martha prepares a meal. Few realize, 2000 years on, what a feminist icon Mary is; she acts as a student learning at a rabbi’s feet, *a role reserved for men*. There would be profound horror among the people of the day; DEI meets the anti-woke brigade! But when Martha demands help with the meal, she receives a reprimand from Jesus.

It’s hard not to take Martha’s side. Churches could not exist without Marthas; people who sort clothes for the homeless, clean toilets, keep internet broadcasts running, etc.. Marthas do things we take for granted, but without which our community would die.

We also expect Jesus to sympathize. Often, Jesus tries to be alone with God. But needy people show up. Without fail, Jesus abandons meditation and offers assistance - healing, food, advice. Help eclipses prayer when there is need.

So what was wrong? I believe Martha shows Jesus the *wrong kind of kindness*. Jesus arrives, it’s a great occasion, Martha wants to celebrate. But that is precisely what Jesus does *not* want. He knows he will die; with betrayal, torture and cross to come, Jesus needs an oasis of calm. This is what Mary gives.... and what Martha, in all her kindness, does her best to destroy.

Prayer: *Lord, you call us to love others, to be kind to them. But often, we want to be kind in our own way. Forgive us. Help us to learn from Martha. Give us discernment to understand what is really needed, rather than imposing what we want to give. Amen.*

John Singleton, Associate Organist
Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church

*Do not remember the former things, Or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not
perceive it?*

So often when trials and tribulations overtake us, we allow them to drag us to the depths of despair. In times such as these, we may be tempted to turn away from even our most supportive friends - and even from God. Yet, God is there!

I suffered the loss of someone very close to me through the ravages of cancer. For many years we fought the disease, but to no avail. At the time, I thought I was tough, and through the grace of God, I could handle anything that came along. Not so fast Kemo Sabe! I went into a depression that even took me away from the church for some time. Then I heard the word of the Lord - not exactly the words of Isaiah 43, but very close. God spoke to me as he did to the Israelites, "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" I said, "No. I am not yet ready." But God does not take "No" for an answer very readily! He brought me back into the supportive community of the church and challenged me to walk the new path he had prepared for me.

And now, as I walk the pathway which the Lord has prepared for me, I am finding healing from my depression and loss, and even joy with a new and faithful companion along the way as we seek to follow Christ in doing a "new thing".

Prayer: *My prayer is that any of you who are suffering loss and despair of any type will place your trust in God this Season of Lent and see what God will do with You! Amen.*

Father Colin Kelly
Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church

Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus's feet, and wiped them with her hair.

Mary's Amazing Love

Have you ever been compelled to hug someone, to pat someone on the shoulder, to rumple a child's hair? Sometimes I react to those impulses; sometimes I hold back. Would I be overstepping my bounds? Would the recipient resent it? Indeed, would it even be proper?

These gestures pale in comparison to Mary's impulsive act. As a woman in Jesus's day, Mary lived a restricted life, with very different rules for men and women. Nard was extremely expensive so, of course, Mary's use of it was considered lavish, perhaps even exorbitant. But the fact she poured it on Jesus' feet instead of his hair, as was the custom, made this act even more unusual. However, what must have been considered truly outrageous was her drying His feet with her hair! Respectable women did not uncover their hair in public. What's more, foot-washing was considered a servant's task, so Mary humbled herself by performing it.

Many of the guests at the banquet must have been shocked at her behavior while Judas Iscariot pretended to care about the waste of something costly that could have been sold to buy things for the poor. Mary cared only about her Lord and Savior. Her love for Jesus was so pure, so all-encompassing she was willing to risk everything for Him.

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, please help us be more like Mary. Please compel us to love You and others with a pure heart and without counting the cost. Help us to humble ourselves to serve You, Lord. Amen.*

Patricia Buck
First United Methodist Church

Tuesday, April 8th

Isaiah 43:16

Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters.

Through The Waters

Water resists movement. This simple fact makes water a perfect image to take the place of circumstances that are intractable. If we are honest, we all face troubles that either are impossible to tackle or at the very least seem to be. Some of us struggle with addiction or with broken relationships that we would like to heal. Some of our churches are struggling with understanding our current role, and many of us are asking what our role as Christians should be within society.

When challenges confront us individually or communally that we cannot resist on our own, falling into despair comes naturally. Our capacity to imagine ways out are constricted and even a path forward may seem impossible. Isaiah speaks to Israelites in the same mental place and reminds us that God makes a way. When we as communities face difficulties that seem impossible, God makes a way. We are not alone.

When we anchor ourselves in the capacity of God to effect change, we can free ourselves to act. The mental scales that determine the worth of an action begin to tip in a different direction. Resistance to action gives way, and the sluice gates crack open. The trickle grows to a torrent.

Prayer: *Almighty God, remind us of your power, comfort us in your strength, and be our strong refuge. Help us to overcome the challenges us that have been placed before us. Help us to persevere when difficulties beset us. Help us to have eyes to see and ears to hear where our hands can be of use. Amen*

Rev. Sean Smith

White Rock United Methodist Church

Doing Nothing?

In Luke 18:31-34, Jesus sets his face toward Jerusalem and tells his disciples of a grim and unfathomable future: a future where chaos awaits him, and them as well, (his passion) and even more dire consequence will follow (His death, and their own ostracism.)

The disciples “understand nothing” and “what he said was hidden from them”. We have no direct narrative of what happened immediately after this exchange. But the disciples seem to react little, if at all... They do nothing, ...say nothing, ...and apparently start walking (mindlessly?) directly into the chaos.

I’ve wondered why they responded - not at all.

Was the impending chaos really “hidden from them”, thereby exonerating them?

Was it a sense of helplessness (what can we do? We’re in the minority)

Was it that they just, simply, “did not understand” what seems a clear promise of impending doom directly in Jesus own words?

Were they paralyzed by their own fear and grief and shock?

For whatever reason, they did nothing—and apparently just kept walking, right into the chaos.

John Stuart Mill in an address at the University of St Andrew in 1867 said,

“Let not anyone pacify his conscience by the delusion that he can do no harm if he takes no part, and forms no opinion. Bad men need do nothing more to compass their ends than that good men should look on, and do nothing.”

Should the disciples have made some protestation against the coming chaos, injustice and manifest evil? – would it have made any difference? Would their protests have altered God’s plan and Jesus’s obedient response to God’s plan? -- probably not. Would their own, subsequent, and at least temporary, period of cowardice (hiding in an upper room) been any different? -- Possibly... Their world, and ours, was/is certainly ambiguous.

Should they have reacted – reached out -- spoken up?

Should we?

Bob Reinovsky White Rock Presbyterian Church

Thursday, April 10th

John 12:1-8

“Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.”

A Gift's Value

During holy week, at a celebratory dinner in Jesus's honor in the home of Lazarus and his sisters, Martha was busy serving while Mary took both the time and an expensive perfume to anoint Jesus's feet.

Martha must have been fuming at her sister, Mary, for not helping her serve—wasting time. Judas, also a guest, notices the cost of Mary's perfume—a waste of money. But Jesus values Mary's gift and the act, and he rebukes Judas and by extension Martha, and perhaps us for the self-centered jealousy and possessiveness of things that are not ours.

Only our own time is ours to give and spend. Do we sit in judgement as to how others spend their time? If we had control of another's time to order to our will, might this be labeled imprisonment or slavery?

Judas says that the monetary value of the perfume would have been better spent on the poor. Judas's hypocrisy is noted as, in John's Gospel, he had a habit of helping himself to the communal purse. The poor, which Judas might have been most concerned, was himself. Do we sit in judgement as to how others use their own wealth and the value of their purchases? If we place ourselves in control of others' wealth, is this not theft?

The value of this gift was between Mary and Jesus. It was time well spent and an act of recognition which was of greater value than the price of any oil. Perhaps we should give more attention to how we use our own gifts of time and wealth, and less worry about how others are spending theirs.

Prayer: *Lord, help me recognize the needs around me and supply my time and wealth to the best use in serving your will.*

Ann Cooke, United Church of Los Alamos

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

I Am About to Do a New Thing

Humankind is wont to what is known. We like the comfortable, tried-and-true, “way we have always done it.” Tradition and nostalgia hold a special place in our hearts. As humans, we cling to the expected outcome because it holds no surprises, no disappointments, no risk. The known is dependable and safe.

But life doesn’t work that way. We cannot be safe and secure all the time. We have to experience the new, and it takes us out of our comfort zone. The first day of school or a new job, getting married or divorced, welcoming a child, moving, retiring, losing someone are all events that make life different. They are new things. Some of these new things are exhilarating and desired, while others are filled with fear and trepidation. A new mother, so excited to meet her new baby, worries if she will be a good mother and how will she provide for this little life that depends on her. A husband starts a new job filled with challenges and opportunities, but still wonders if he will be accepted or make enough money to cover his family’s expenses. A woman, after years of dedication to her career, decides to retire, and although the free time will allow her to travel, she sobs at the loss of part of her so ingrained she thought she would be at her position until she died. New, even when desired or good, can cause pain.

God knows His children. He knows how our hearts cling to the past. So when He tells Isaiah to forget the past and look to the future, He knows the prophet and His people may miss something important because they are set in the ways they have always followed. God reminds Isaiah to trust Him. God is speaking to us too. God knows our hopes and fears and anticipates what we need. He asks us to trust him, even when it is dark and the future is unknown. He is making a way for us. He is providing for our needs if we just put away our past preconceptions and follow His lead. God knows good comes when we do a new thing, and He tells us not to miss it.

Susan Giesler Reitzell
Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then they said among the heathen, the Lord has done great things for them.

Where Of We Are Glad

It can be hard to remember that laughter and singing are forms of worship and praise while we're in Lent, when we are spending time in the scriptures with the lead up to Good Friday, and in our worship with reflection and repentance. Our music is beautiful, but often sad. We're looking to the cross, and the incredible unfathomable sacrifice of our savior, and sometimes we can forget that just be on the cross is the empty tomb. Lunch is one of my favorite Church seasons. I cherish the time to refocus on my faith and on God. I adore the way we as a church family set time aside to come together in worship and fellowship. I love the music, even when it's sad, because so much passion and devotion has been poured by so many artists into this season. And yet, every year, I struggle with remaining joyful and lent. And then, we sing Psalm 126, and the Psalmist reminds me, just as Christ does, that "they that sow in tears share in Joy" and that it is through our laughter and singing that we show that the Lord has done great and wondrous things for us. Lunch is for repentance, for reflection on the greatest thing the Lord has done for us and for grieving what Jesus went through so that we may live. But it is also for remembering that, after everything he suffered, he rose again in glory, and because of him, we went for weeping, and will come again. Lent is for hope.

Prayer: *Lord of our mercy, help us always to look to you in both repentance and joy, with weeping and laughter, now and always. Amen.*

Isabella Stephens
Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church

The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed is the king of Israel!"

The Triumphal Entry

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday begins what we typically refer to as Holy Week. While all four gospels mention Christ's arrival into the city with great fanfare and shouts of "Hosanna," the Gospel of John is the only one that mentions palm branches. While there are many unique ways to view what we read here, a brief focus on the word *hosanna* is good for this day. For many of us who have waved palms and shouted this word, we typically think of it as a word of adoration, celebration or praise. However, it also is a plea for help "*Save us!*".

For me, this revelation in many ways puts an exclamation point on the craziness of Holy Week. We move from shouts of "*save us*" to "*release Barabbas*" in a few short days. How quickly the crowd turns and Christ finds himself nailed to the cross. Hopefully, this day causes us to pause and think of how we approach our faith journey and relationship with Jesus. Do we ask to be saved one day and turn to condemn in a few short days or do we commit to following Jesus with our whole heart and trust in his grace and mercy?

Prayer: *God of Mercy and Grace, walk with us during this Holy Week that we might understand more fully the gift of salvation that comes through the gift of Jesus Christ. Amen*

Rev. Keith Lewis
United Church of Los Alamos

They said, “The Lord needs it.”

The Lord Needs It

In the story of Jesus returning to Jerusalem, he told his disciples to steal a man's colt. Reasonably shocked at the disciples' audacity, the colt owner asked them what they thought they were doing. “The Lord needs it” was the response. And off they went, brand new donkey in hand. What would you do if somebody took your brand-new car and their response was “The Lord needs it?” I would call the cops and press charges.

However, the phrase “The Lord needs it” doesn't just immediately apply to the Lord, it can also apply to people in need. “The Lord needs” certain sacrifices to help those in need, and those sacrifices can include time, money, or necessary personal belongings that, while it would suck to give it away, you won't lose as much as somebody less fortunate than you would if they had to get it themselves.

What can you give up that will hurt to lose, but the Lord can give to those who can't afford it? Jesus doesn't just call us to provide what we don't need but to give up what hurts to lose. We are Los Alamos, a wealthy town in the middle of an impoverished region. Help us be the Light on the Hill, shining light down to the valley so that even in the darkest times, those in the valley can see hope and the love God provides.

Prayer: *Jesus, help us be like the owner of the colt, to give up what is necessary for us to you and your work. Help us know that even though this sacrifice will really hurt, the pain we feel at that loss is multiplied exponentially by the joy of those who receive the sacrifice. Amen.*

Joseph Dale
First United Methodist Church

“Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

Anointed

If we are looking for a quote that is ubiquitous in Christian communities it would likely be John 3:16. John 13:6 is perhaps less known, but it asks a question that reveals much about who the followers of Christ were and are. We are comforted to know that God loves the world. We are encouraged to take part in the mission of the incarnation and to know salvation is in the hands of the Lord.

Yet, we are reserved. We hold back for worries that are valid. We hold things in reverence that make us reluctant to believe in our capacity to be loved or to be part of the work of sharing the love of God. We are reserved with our time, our words, our sense of worth. Perhaps we are concerned that we do not understand the gospel or that there is still room to learn before we are ready to speak.

Peter knew that Christ was anointing his feet. This was an act of service and cleansing, but Jesus did not stop there. He was empowering Peter and the disciples to be sent forth. They were sent forth to show the world the Love of God. Peter still made mistakes, and so will we. But through those imperfections God’s love is made known.

Prayer: *All loving God, give us the humility to accept your gift of love, let us show forth that love in our lives, grant us courage to overcome self-doubt and uncertainty, and may we never lose the resolve to grow in our understanding of your love and to grow in our capacity to be living witnesses of your love. Amen*

Rev. Sean Smith

White Rock United Methodist Church

Wednesday, April 16th

The Coming

A Poem by RS Thomas

And God held in his hand
A small globe. Look he said.
The son looked. Far off,
As through water, he saw
A scorched land of fierce
Colour. The light burned
There; crusted buildings
Cast their shadows: a bright
Serpent, A river
Uncoiled itself, radiant
With slime.
On a bare
Hill a bare tree saddened
The sky. many People
Held out their thin arms
To it, as though waiting
For a vanished April
To return to its crossed
Boughs. The son watched
Them. Let me go there, he said.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen.*

The Rev. Mary Ann Hill, Rector
Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church

Maundy Thursday, April 17th John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”

Love One Another

How often we miss the urgency of the Christ message! On this day, his last evening together with his disciples, Jesus in verse 13, “Knew that his hour had come to depart from this world.” With gentleness towards his beloved friends, and despite the urgency he knew was there, he took a basin of water and washed the feet of his disciples. The practice was usually attended to by a servant, making sure guests entering a home had the dust of the roads washed off their feet, their sandals probably left by the door. But on this night, Jesus takes on the role of that servant. Peter is incensed that his teacher should humble himself in such a way. But, Jesus tries to assuage Peter’s discomfort by saying, “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” With hindsight, we know Peter should trust his Lord in that moment, but we have learned from the gospels that Peter often gets it wrong. He says, “You will never wash my feet!” Peter is horrified that Jesus is debasing himself so. But the message is clear: we are to humble ourselves as servants to others, even in the simple, everyday tasks of service. Jesus tells them all (in verse 15), “...I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.” And he makes it clear, knowing that this might be the last lesson they have to learn from him: ³⁴“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”

Prayer: *Thank you, Lord Christ, for showing us, who are often slow to catch on, that now is the moment to serve and love one another. Help us to follow the example you have set for us, to love one another as you have loved, and do love, us. Amen*

Deacon Cynthia Biddlecomb, retired
Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church

*But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that
made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.*

Jesus is for Everyone

Jesus' passion is relived every Good Friday all around the world in worship settings, in passion plays, in movie theaters showing films about it, in homes where people read the story together, and in secret meetings where Christianity is forbidden by law. Jesus' story of betrayal, arrest, mock trial and execution on a cross by the Roman state is central to our faith story, central to our belief in God's power in our lives, and yet...we do not dwell here long in this death story filled with sorrow and devastation. We cannot fathom this love because it is God's pure love that shines through this saving act on the cross for our sake. Jesus didn't just die for the poor, he died for the rich too. Jesus didn't just die for the righteous living folks, he died for the sinners steeped in misery of their own making. Jesus didn't die for the ones he knew and liked, he died for the multitudes that we represent here that still may or may not know him. Jesus is for everyone. Thanks be to God that Jesus is forever with us.

Prayer: *Good and gracious God, thank you for showing us how much you love us, by giving us your beloved son, and showing us through his love what power your love holds in our lives. Help us to freely share that love with everyone. Amen.*

Deacon Amy Schmuck
Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

The end of all things is near; therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers.

During Covid closures I heard a word that I had never heard before: Liminal or liminality. Liminal refers to an in-between space. Where one thing has ended, but the new thing has not yet begun. A doorway is a liminal space, ending one room, or the outside/inside, but not yet fully being in the next space. Covid closures meant the end of one time, but what was to be had not yet begun, and it was hard to even speculate about what it was going to look like.

Holy Saturday is a liminal space. For the disciples and the women, all that they knew and had hoped for died on the cross. And the resurrection, which they weren't expecting, had not yet taken place. They were between realities. But, for us, we know how the story ends. We know what come next, and so perhaps its not as liminal for us. And yet, I believe it can be.

On this last day of Lent, our 40-day journey is ending, and tomorrow the season of Easter begins. But what that season, and beyond, has not actually yet been determined, because we can make it something different, something new. In my devotion for Ash Wednesday I asked us to be intentional about Lenten practices. So, why stop now? If you gave something up for Lent, more than likely its something bad for us. Why start back up? If you took up a spiritual practice, more than likely it's good for you. Why give it up?

May we use this liminal space to create a new reality for our discipleship that can change the world.

Prayer: *O God of new beginnings, we are an Easter people, and we are all made new in Christ Jesus. Help us not leave behind our Lenten journey but to use it as a springboard into a deeper and more meaningful existence with you and with each other. Amen.*

Rev. John W. Nash
First United Methodist Church

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay."

Easter Reflection

When our kids were young, they had the good fortune (or the burden) of being pastor's kids, x2, and often were conscripted to be in dramas performed in church at Christmas, Easter, and other high holy days. In my husband's church, a formidable, retired director of the community theater ruled the productions with an iron fist (actually, with a cane, which she waved wildly at the children for emphasis.) So, these productions were fairly sophisticated, with costumes, props and many rehearsals for both children and adult actors. One Easter, our son Peter had the part of the angel at the tomb. He had practiced his lines and was at the ready to deliver the good news of the resurrection when the women emerged from underneath the arch of the "tomb."

So, on Easter Sunday morning, he stood on the chancel steps, ready and radiant in white robes, anticipating the arrival of the women. As directed, the women came rushing from the empty tomb with method-acting-fervor, and in their haste, they brushed against the archway that had been constructed to portray the tomb's opening. That set in motion a veritable earthquake, and the top of the arch came tumbling down onto the head of one of the women, at which point Peter piped up in his best stentorian actor's voice: "Do not be afraid!" but the rest of the story was drowned out by the laughter of the congregation as they watched the stunned first witness to the resurrection cradling the stones of the tomb in her arms. Luckily, the stones were made of Styrofoam, and no disciples were hurt in

the production. But the whole congregation remembered the earnest shouts of the angel, “Do not be afraid!” for many years to come.

As we should remember it, too. The resurrection story should rock our world, too. We should be stunned by the empty tomb, the announcement of the angel, the good news of hope after a long wait in the darkness. And there should be some kind of eruption of joy—laughter, surprise, irony, the unexpected-- rolling from us collectively as the Easter People. And most of all, especially now when institutions are crumbling and norms are tumbling, we should have ears to hear the young angel dressed in white, shouting, “Do not be afraid!” For if we take anything away from angelic appearances in the Gospel, again and again, we hear these words. Take them home with you today. Carry these words like Styrofoam stones into the neighborhood, your workplace, school or community. Let the earthquake of your faith rumble and give you courage. May the good news of Easter tumble you into action to follow Jesus into Galilee, where the ministry of resurrection begins. Go in peace, and do not be afraid. Amen.

Prayer: *God, surprise us once again with the good news of Resurrection. Help us to hear the good news the angel brings us at the empty tomb. Now give us the courage to move beyond being stunned to following Jesus into Galilee where our ministry awaits. Amen.*

Pastor Laura Loving
United Church of Los Alamos

Food Donation Centers in Los Alamos:

Little Food Pantry at Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church

Outside Shop on the Corner; lower-level parking lot;
At Canyon and Diamond Dr.

Food Pantry at Unitarian Church

Sage near 15th St; Bear proof collection box.

LA Cares Food Distribution

Needs money and food donations.

Tel: 505-661-8015 for large pick-ups and messages.

Website: www.lacaresnm.org

PayPal Donations: lacaresnm@gmail.com

Donations of money: LA Cares, PO Box 248, Los Alamos, NM 87544

Donations of Food: Nonperishable canned goods (Large bottles of juice, canned vegetables, canned Meat, canned soups, healthy cereals, healthy snacks, Mac & Cheese, pasta other than spaghetti, 4lb bags of sugar, Tuna or Chicken Helpers, laundry detergent, personal care products (bars of soap, shampoo, deodorant), paper goods, cleaning supplies.

Not needed: rice, peanut butter, flour, bottled water, toothpaste.

Please No glass containers.

First United Methodist Church: Leave food donations in shopping basket inside front door or on bench outside door. Sends food to LA Cares.

United Church of Los Alamos: LA Cares donation bins in both Sanctuary and Christian Education Buildings.

Walkup Aquatic Center: Inside front door, leave food items in barrel for LA Cares.

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