



# FOR US

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR LENT & EASTER

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Ash Wednesday and  
the Days Following

## Rending the Heart

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Read Joel 2:12–19

“Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “return to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.” (Joel 2:12–13)

**G**od is not interested in what is on the outside. Keeping up appearances only goes so far, after all. What matters is what is on the inside.

But this internal focus does not come easily to us. We live in an age of appearances, of image, of only letting people see things as you want them to be seen, regardless of how they really are.

Our Lord has a better way for you and me.

His way, which we may call the way of the cross, is to recognize that we are dust, and to dust we shall return. We have fallen from the way of life, so the only path we know is the way of death.

In recognizing that we are dust, God calls us also to see and know that He does His best work with dust, with nothing, with the chaos of this world. He can and will make us new, after the image of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. That is what it means to rend the heart.

Heavenly Father, we know You do everything for us and our good. Teach us to rend our hearts so that You may make us new by Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## Becoming the Righteousness of God

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Read 2 Corinthians 5:20–6:10

For our sake, He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Today's Scripture is both one of the easiest and the hardest verses in the Bible to understand. It is easy because the concept of the Great Exchange is easy. Jesus took what is bad in us and gave us all that is good in Himself. Simple. It is a straight-up trade, a sweet swap, and a deal like no other.

And yet it is the hardest verse in the Bible to understand. How can the eternal Son of God, holy and perfect in every way, *become sin* for us? How can He, who is righteous, holy, pure, and perfect, take on our filth, sorrow, hardship, pain, and death? It is incomprehensible. We cannot understand it, and we never will.

The answer lies in the word *incarnation*. The word means “to become flesh.” The mystery is that by taking on our flesh and blood, Christ takes on our very humanity. As we confess in the creed, “Who for us men and for our salvation . . . was made man.” This is the mystery of the ages for us.

Jesus, thank You for taking on our sin for us so that we may become the righteousness of God. Amen.

## The Treasure

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Read Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21

For where your treasure is, there your heart  
will be also. (Matthew 6:21)

**T**his verse always seems backward to me. Shouldn't it work the other way—where your heart is, there your treasure will be also? I mean, shouldn't our heart be what is driving things here?

No, Jesus has it right. Our external actions point to the internal reality. If we invest our earthly treasures in things that will rust and fade away, then we are saying earthly things are what are truly important.

The ancients might have called earthly things “the passions.” We might say our true desires. Consider the words from the Individual Confession and Absolution of sins in *Lutheran Service Book*: “My thoughts and desires have been soiled by sin” (p. 292).

Left to our own devices, our hearts will often lead us astray. But there is good news. Thank God that Jesus has given you a new heart! We pray in Psalm 51 that God would create in us a new heart, and He does so in Holy Baptism.

Because of your new heart, every day is a new beginning. Every day we drown the old, sinful desires and rise again to serve Him. That is why Jesus is our true, priceless treasure. He is the only one who can make all things new.

Jesus, You are our priceless treasure. Help us ever to keep our eyes fixed on You. Amen.

## Restored

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Read Psalm 51:1–13 (14–19)

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. (Psalm 51:12)

**I**t is incredible how quickly we can forget the joy of salvation. A bad day at work or school, a flare-up of anger—Satan loves nothing more than to rob the Christian of true joy in Christ.

It has been said that joy is happiness tempered by sorrow. Sorrow over sin leads, by God's Word and Spirit, to true joy in the salvation won for us by Jesus Christ.

We experience sadness and sorrow. We suffer because of our sins, but we also suffer because of the sins of others. In restoring the joy of your salvation, God takes all that sadness and suffering and leaves it at the foot of the cross. There, Jesus takes it into Himself. And in its place, He puts joy—true joy—in Him.

God gives you a willing spirit for this daily dying and rising, this continual restoration of joy. This spirit comes only by faith. It is a spirit that says amen to everything God has in store for you, even if you do not know the way. He will give this spirit to you.

Lord, break down the stubbornness of my heart and give me a willing spirit, so I may receive the holy joy that only comes from You. In Jesus' name. Amen.



**LENT  
WEEK ONE**

## By the Word Alone

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Read Matthew 4:1–4

It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)

Shortly after Jesus’ time on earth, the Roman poet Juvenal criticized Roman citizens for only wanting to be fed and entertained. Bread and circuses, he called it. You would think he was talking about today.

It certainly seems like our desire to think short-term, our want to satisfy our basest desires, is hardwired into our sinful flesh. Money, time, people—you name it. It all comes down to bread and circuses for the fallen sons and daughters of Adam.

Maybe Juvenal had heard of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. Satan tempted Jesus by commanding Him to turn stone into bread. While this may not seem like a big deal on the surface, it is indeed quite a big deal. Satan was asking Jesus to use His divine powers not to save us but to satisfy Himself. Satan tempts us with our human desires also, every day. So much so that we often forget how self-centered we truly are.

But it is not so with Jesus. In Christ, we glimpse a picture of humanity as God intended it. Jesus does not eat for Himself. His bread is not the bread that comes and is gone in a flash. His bread, which He gives to you and me, is His body and blood. Now that is real food for us.

Lord, teach me to live by Your Word alone. In Jesus’ name. Amen.