

Conversations with Jesus

Lent 2026
Study Guide

 **First Lutheran**
discover more : together

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How to Use This Study Guide

With Small Groups: The guide has a study for each week of the series. It is designed to be used for the week beginning with that Sunday. Use it as a way of going deeper. These study questions work whether you were able to attend worship or not.

Use at Home: Use this guidebook for conversation around your table. Pick and choose those questions that encourage conversation with children of all ages.

Pick the Questions that Interest You: You don't have to cover every question. Pick the questions that interest you. Also, you don't have to do it every week. If you miss a week or two, no problem! Pick up the study again and skip to the current week.

For personal individual devotion, take one question a day, focusing on Discover and Discover More Together questions. Journal your answers in the empty spaces.

Discover questions provide a fun way to enter the study, inviting you to share a personal story.

Discover More questions explore the scripture passage and invite deeper engagement with the passage.

Discover More Together questions bring a personal application home. These questions invite you to discover what this week is saying to you personally.

Notice the dialog shape for each week. The readings are formatted like the speaking lines of a play. The layout helps us to grasp the back and forth between Jesus and different people.

Introduction

In this Lenten season, we will listen in on important conversations Jesus had with people. These conversations will invite us to cultivate a heart that seeks God first, to serve our neighbors, and to embrace the transformative power of God's Spirit.



These conversations with Jesus turn our attention to Lent as a time of spiritual preparation for Easter. It is not about accomplishing more, but about noticing God's work in our lives and opening ourselves to transformation. By turning attention inward and upward, we encounter the Gospel of God that sustains us and empowers us to act with compassion toward others. Lent becomes a journey of awakening to God's presence in ordinary and extraordinary moments.

Each of these conversations happen against a background of conflict and hostility. The settings for each conversation are charged with an emotional intensity, so that what we gain from these conversations is not merely something interesting, but life changing. Much is at stake, for the people in the story and for each of us.

These stories raise a basic question for us: what is the character of our conversations with Jesus? Is my relationship with God a kind of surface faith? Nothing more than an exchange of nice words? How much am I willing to dare and risk in sharing with God what matters, and even more so, to hear and receive from God what matters to God.

Ash Wednesday begins the conversation with the call to turn away from all that separates us from God, all that blocks our hearing, and to turn toward God with a humble spirit to speak, to listen, to be changed.

Each conversation touches upon things that are core to what it means to be a human being, how we deal with temptation, the mystery of God, the surprise of grace, how faith happens, deep grief. We end our Lenten journey noting that the closer we get to the cross, the less Jesus has to say, until finally the cross ends all conversation and the world waits in silence.

The Easter resurrection begins a new conversation, and a new hope. Perhaps that is why we return to those earlier conversations in John, because we listen with ears attuned to the news that Jesus lives. We meet the risen Jesus even now in these weeks of Lent, which give us that perspective of life and hope to wrestle with the deep questions raised in each conversation.

Take your time. Listen in. Pay attention not just to the words on the page, but what your heart is saying. God is there, ready to listen, speaking that Gospel in Jesus we need to hear.



Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2026

How shall I enter the conversation?

Scriptures: Isaiah 58:1–12; Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21; Psalm 51:1–17

Devotional

Lent begins by calling us into honesty and humility. Isaiah reminds us that fasting and devotion are not about show or strict self-denial but about justice, mercy, and walking humbly with God. Matthew echoes this as Jesus warns against performing religious acts for human praise, inviting instead a private, trusting relationship with God. Ashes remind us that our lives are finite, yet God's grace is limitless, claiming us even as we acknowledge our shortcomings. Fasting, prayer, and acts of mercy become not a burden but a way to align our lives more closely with God's mission of justice and love.

Scripture:

Isaiah 58:1–3, 6–7

¹ Shout out; do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet!

Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.

² Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments;
they want God on their side.

³ “Why do we fast, but you do not see?
Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”

Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day
and oppress all your workers...

⁶ Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹ “Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them, for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

² “So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your alms may be done in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁵ “And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

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¹⁶ “And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they mark their faces to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Discussion Questions

Adults: What are ways your faith practices have become more about appearance than relationship with God? How can Lent redirect your focus?

Youth Mentors: How can you model authentic faith for youth, showing that God’s love is not earned by performance?

Families with Young Children: What are ways we can show God’s love to our neighbors? How can our family practice kindness together?

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, meet us in our honesty and our longing. Shape us with your mercy, guide us in your ways, and fill us with your Spirit, that we may walk in love and justice all the days of our lives. Amen.

First Sunday in Lent, February 22, 2026



Conversations that Lead away from God

Scriptures: Matthew 4:1–11; Psalm 32

Devotional

The Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness immediately after his baptism—not as punishment, but as preparation. The temptations of Jesus happen in a conversation with Satan. The temptations Jesus faces are not about moral failure so much as misplaced trust. Each temptation is a challenge for Jesus to secure his own future apart from God: to turn stones to bread, to force God's protection, or to claim power without the cross.

How does Jesus participate in the conversation? What does he say? Jesus responds by resting in God's word and promise. He does not argue with the devil; he clings to the speech of scripture that names God as the source of life and trust.

This conversation reveals how faith is not heroic willpower to overcome but reliance on God's promise to endure. The wilderness seasons of life are not signs of abandonment. They are places where God sustains us, often quietly, teaching us again who we are: beloved, held, and never alone.

This conversation of Jesus comes back on each of us. Like Jesus, we are invited to consider what tempts us away from God's care and what brings life. Fasting, prayer, and reflection help us identify these patterns, allowing us to reorient toward grace and compassion for ourselves and others.

Matthew 4:1-11

¹ Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. ² He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was famished. ³

Temptation #1

The tempter came and said to him,

“If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”

⁴ But he answered,

“It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ”

Temptation #2

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple,
⁶ saying to him,

“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,
‘He will command his angels concerning you,’
and ‘On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’ ”

⁷ Jesus said to him,

“Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ”

Temptation #3

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory,⁹ and he said to him,

“All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”

Then Jesus said to him,

“Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him.’ ”

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Discussion Questions

Adults: What temptations challenge your faith? How do you rely on God in times of trial?

Youth Mentors: How can you encourage youth to trust God when life feels uncertain?

Families with Young Children: What helps your family stay close to God? How can you support each other through hard choices?

Closing Prayer

Spirit of God, guide us through the wilderness of our lives. Strengthen our trust, renew our hope, and help us walk faithfully with Jesus each day. Amen.

Weekly Bible Study Questions

Discover

1. What do you like to indulge? Your guilty pleasure?

Discover More

Each of the three temptations has both a physical aspect and a spiritual dimension. Look again at each temptation.

1. Temptation #1: Bread
 - a. What is the physical aspect? What good could happen if Jesus did it?
 - b. What is the spiritual dimension? What would be lost if Jesus did it?
 - c. What is Jesus' argument for not doing it? What does this choice cost Jesus?
2. Temptation #2: Will God Act?
 - a. What is the physical aspect? What good could happen if Jesus did it?
 - b. What is the spiritual dimension? What would be lost if Jesus did it?
 - c. What is Jesus' argument for not doing it? What does this choice cost Jesus?
3. Temptation #3: Another Way to Be Savior
 - a. What is the physical aspect? What good could happen if Jesus did it?
 - b. What is the spiritual dimension? What would be lost if Jesus did it?
 - c. What is Jesus' argument for not doing it? What does this choice cost Jesus?

Discover More Together

4. In the first temptation, Satan attacks Jesus' hunger and identify: "If you are the Son of God..." Where does temptation most often press on your own "hunger" (needs, desires, fears) and your sense of being a baptized child of God? How does Jesus' response comfort you?
5. In the second temptation, Jesus is tempted to test if God really cares or will provide. When do you find yourself testing God, checking to see if God really cares. Or when bad things happen, how is our faith in God tested?
6. In the third temptation, Jesus is tempted to find the easy way to be Savior. When or how are you tempted not to pick up a cross?
7. When you think of temptations in your life, do you tend to focus on physical temptations or spiritual ones? How do temptations work to draw you away from God?
8. Luther described the Christian life as ongoing assaults on faith, conscience and assurance. Which temptation in Matthew 4 best captures the kinds of challenges you experience? How does Jesus' victory over temptation help you in yours?
 - a. Doubting God's daily care
 - b. Demanding spectacular proof of God and God's love.
 - c. Avoiding the challenges of faith, seeking a life of faith without the cross.

Second Sunday in Lent, March 1, 2026

Conversations about things you cannot see but feel.



Scriptures: John 3:1–17; Psalm 121

Devotional

Nicodemus approaches Jesus under cover of darkness, carrying sincere questions shaped by certainty and religious authority. Jesus invites him into mystery, explaining that being “born from above” is not a human achievement but a divine gift through water and the Spirit.

John 3:16 reminds us that God’s love initiates before any human action. Salvation is offered freely, not earned through performance or obedience. Lent calls us to trust God’s work within us and to release the illusion that our actions alone determine our standing before God.

This season invites reflection on how we receive and share God’s grace. By embracing this gift, we can approach others with patience, love, and humility, modeling the Spirit’s work in our families, communities, and mentoring relationships.

John 3:1-17

¹ Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews.

² He came to Jesus by night and said to him,

“Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person.”

³ Jesus answered him,

“Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

⁴ Nicodemus said to him,

“How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?”

⁵ Jesus answered,

“Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

⁹ Nicodemus said to him,

“How can these things be?”

¹⁰ Jesus answered him,

“Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

¹ “Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷ “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

Discussion Questions

Adults: How do you experience God’s gift of grace in your daily life?

Youth Mentors: How can you support young people in trusting God’s promises, even when things are confusing?

Families with Young Children: How can we show God’s love at home? What does it mean to be born of the Spirit?

Closing Prayer

God of love, open our hearts to your gift of new life. Help us trust your Spirit, follow your ways, and share your grace with the world. Amen.

Weekly Bible Study Questions

Discover

1. Reread the passage and note that the conversation happens at night. Imagine you were a film director putting the scene together. How light or dark is it? How would you place Jesus and Nicodemus: facing, side by side, other? What is the tone of voice? How loud or quiet? How do these choices shape your understanding of the questions Nicodemus brings? Why would Nicodemus come at night?

Discover More

2. Jesus describes the Spirit as the wind, you cannot see it, but you can feel it. You are not in control of the wind, but the wind can make things happen. How is that descriptive of your experience of God’s Spirit?

3. Jesus says, “Unless one is born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God. How does that confront the idea that we can somehow climb” into God’s kingdom by effort or religious achievement? Why does Nicodemus think in physical terms, as in re-entering a mother’s womb? As if faith is about self-improvement or taking action instead of God giving new birth. Is faith something we do? Or a gift that God gives?
4. Being restored to a place of faith and well-being is not a human achievement, but comes to us by God’s action, like the wind, or the gift of birth. Nicodemus asks how can I do such a thing? Jesus responds—that’s not the question, ask how God can do such a thing? What role do you see God taking in bringing about faith?
5. When have you heard John 3:16? Settings, occasions, experiences. How has that shaped your understanding of the verse either positively or negatively?
6. Luther said John 3:16 is like a summary of the essence of the Gospel. How is that for you?
7. How does John 3:16-17 restore value to a person. What was lost that needed restoration? What is at stake? What is gained? Why is this important for you?
8. The notion “the cure is to look directly at what is killing them, rather than avoid it” almost sounds like a description for a vaccine. The counter intuitive move of a vaccine is to use what kills people to protect and heal them. So—when you look at the cross, what do you see of the world or yourself that is killing you? What needs healing?
9. Another way of seeing a parallel for today is not avoiding or discounting what is wrong, as in confronting addiction, or abuse. An honest account is the pathway to healing. How do you see that?

Discover More Together

10. What is your story of faith? How has God been a part of your life? How do you identify with Nicodemus or not? What would you say to someone like Nicodemus



Third Sunday in Lent, March 8, 2026

Conversation at the well.

Scriptures: John 4:5–42; Psalm 95

Devotional

Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at the well, breaking social and religious boundaries. He talks to her. He listens to her. He offers her living water—eternal life and abundant grace. This conversation with this woman demonstrates that God’s love reaches beyond barriers and expectations. The conversation does not stop there.

The woman returns to the village and speaks to her neighbors of her conversation with Jesus. Her testimony leads many to faith, showing that grace transforms not just individuals but communities. Lent reminds us that God works through relationships, invitations, and dialogue rather than coercion.

Faith filled conversations help us notice thirsts around us—physical, emotional, spiritual—and to participate in God’s mission by bringing life and hope wherever we go. By listening, learning, and acting in love, we live more fully into the reality of God’s kingdom now.

John 4:5-42 (selections)

⁷ A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her,
“Give me a drink.” ⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)

⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him,
“How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?”
(Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her,
“If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you
would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”

¹¹ The woman said to him,
“Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?
¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well and with his sons
and his flocks drank from it?”

¹³ Jesus said to her,
“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but those who drink of
the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will
become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

¹⁵ The woman said to him,
“Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”...

¹⁶ Jesus said to her,
“Go, call your husband, and come back.”

¹⁷ The woman answered him,
“I have no husband.”

Jesus said to her,
“You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband,’ ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!”

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²⁵ The woman said to Jesus,
“I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.”

²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that city believed in Jesus because of the woman’s testimony,
“He told me everything I have ever done.”

⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”

Discussion Questions

Adults: Where do you see spiritual thirst in your community? How can you respond?

Youth Mentors: How can you model listening and caring as expressions of faith?

Families with Young Children: How can we help others and show God’s love together?

Closing Prayer

Living God, open our eyes and hearts to your presence. May we share your living water with all we meet, bringing hope and grace into every corner of our lives. Amen.

Weekly Bible Study Questions

Discover

1. Growing up, where was the watering hole in your life, where people went to hang out?

Discover More

2. List the barriers between Jesus and the woman—ethnic, gender, religious, moral. Which of these would have been the most shocking then? Most challenging today? Can you imagine a parallel kind of situation today?
3. Jesus begins with a request, not an accusation, (Give me a drink). What does that reveal about the way God approaches people?
4. Jesus offers “living water” that becomes “a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” How does that image help you imagine grace as God’s ongoing gift, not a one-time spiritual high that you must then maintain on your own?
5. Some argue that the situation for the woman may have been tragic, by abandonment, death or exploitation. She might not have done anything wrong, but events still meant she was an outcast. How does that nuance affect your understanding of the woman?
6. This is the first time Jesus publicly says, “I am the Messiah.” Why to this woman?
7. Before, she came to the well alone. Now she returns to the town in a spirit of freedom and witness. (Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did). How does this illustrate the effect of forgiveness and how it frees a person?

Discover More Together

8. Where have you experienced Jesus dealing with you in this pattern: Patiently engaging, then putting His finger on a deeply personal issue, not to crush you, but to bring you to a deeper faith and thirst for God?



Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 15, 2026

Conversations that lead to seeing

Scriptures: John 9:1–41; Psalm 27

Devotional

Jesus heals a man blind from birth, challenging assumptions about sin, suffering, and judgment. The story is a series of conversations that move the man born blind to the sight of faith. The man's journey from darkness to sight illustrates how grace opens understanding, transforming not just physical sight but perception and insight. Lent calls us to recognize areas in our own lives where clarity, humility, and trust are needed that we might see the truth of God with the eyes of faith.

As we reflect on this miracle, we see that God invites us to participate in the work of restoration, to confront our own biases, and to celebrate God's work in unexpected places. Our faith grows through openness, observation, and compassion.

John 9:1-41 (selections)

¹ As [Jesus] walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

³ Jesus answered,

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

⁶ When Jesus had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, ⁷ saying to him,

"Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent).

Then the blind man went and washed and came back able to see. ⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask,

"Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?"

⁹ Some were saying,

"It is he."

Others were saying,

"No, but it is someone like him."

He kept saying,

"I am he."

¹⁰ But they kept asking him,

"Then how were your eyes opened?"

¹¹ He answered,

"The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight."

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³⁵ Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him he said,
“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

³⁶ He answered,
“And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.”

³⁷ Jesus said to him,
“You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.”

³⁸ He said,
“Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him.

³⁹ Jesus said,
“I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind.”

⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him,
“Surely we are not blind, are we?”

⁴¹ Jesus said to them,
“If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say,
‘We see,’ your sin remains.”

Discussion Questions

Adults: Where does God invite you to trust without seeing? How does this change your perspective?

Youth Mentors: How can you encourage young people to grow in understanding and compassion?

Families with Young Children: How does Jesus help people see? How can we help others?

Closing Prayer

God of light, open our eyes and hearts. Lead us in your ways, so we may walk in your truth and share your love. Amen.

Weekly Bible Study Questions

Discover

1. As a kid, when did you have fun with mud?

Discover More

2. The story begins with a kind of seeing. The disciples begin with trying to see blame: Who did wrong that blindness came? What assumption about sin and suffering are held in that question?
3. Jesus skips that question and simply shows compassion and helps the man. Do you think of the Christian faith as about first assigning blame—who is at fault? Or focusing instead on responding with love and compassion?
4. Jesus uses ordinary mud for grace. What might this earthy, physical act suggest about how God chooses to work through humble, material means (word, soter, bread and wine) to convey grace?
5. Sight functions on two levels in the story. On one level it is about physical sight: a blind man sees. Though others who knew him only blind had a hard time recognizing him now that he sees. When have you missed seeing something “in plain sight.”
6. Sight is also about seeing with the eyes of faith. The blind man comes to see Jesus is Lord and recognize how God’s grace is found in Jesus. Others do not see Jesus this way, they are blind to this kind of seeing. This story is contemporary for us, because it describes the gap between seeing with the eyes of faith and not seeing. The man does not try to explain how, he simply gives testimony—I was blind, now I see. It’s like verse 2 of the hymn “Amazing Grace”: I once was blind but now I see. To someone outside of faith, faith in Jesus does not make sense. To someone within faith, faith is a given experience of God. Think about conversations or interactions you have had with someone who does not see the truth of God in Jesus that you see. The Gospel of John would say, you can’t prove faith, you can only bear witness, “This is who Jesus is for me, and why it matters.” How is that for you?

Discover More Together

7. What helps you see God more clearly?
8. When you need encouragement, what Bible verse or Bible story do you go to so you can see God’s love and grace more clearly?



Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 22, 2026

Conversation in time of deep loss

Scriptures: John 11:1–45; Psalm 130

Devotional

Jesus talks to Mary at the grave of Lazarus. Jesus encounters grief and death in the story of Lazarus. He shares in the sorrow before revealing resurrection power, showing that God enters fully into our pain and suffering.

This story demonstrates that hope and life emerge from God's presence even in the darkest moments. Lent encourages us to hold sorrow and hope together, trusting that God's promises are steadfast.

As followers of Christ, we are called to walk alongside others in grief, to embody God's love, and to participate in the renewal God brings. Our witness becomes a reflection of God's faithfulness and compassion.

John 11:1-45

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother.

²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home.

²¹ Martha said to Jesus,

“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.”

²³ Jesus said to her,

“Your brother will rise again.”

²⁴ Martha said to him,

“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”

²⁵ Jesus said to her,

“I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

²⁷ She said to him,

“Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

* * * *

³² When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴ He said, “Where have you laid him?”

They said to him, “Lord, come and see.”

³⁵ Jesus began to weep.

³⁶ So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, “Take away the stone.”

Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.”

⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.”

⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!”

⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them,

“Unbind him, and let him go.”

Discussion Questions

Adults: How do you experience God's hope in times of loss?

Youth Mentors: How can you help youth navigate grief while seeing God's presence?

Families with Young Children: How can we comfort others and trust God's love?

Closing Prayer

God of resurrection, comfort us in sorrow, strengthen us in hope, and guide us to share your love and life with others. Amen.

Weekly Bible Study Questions

Discover

1. What is the saddest funeral you have been to? How did you feel?

Discover More

2. What signs of grief do you see in this story? How is that captured in the questions of Mary and Martha? How is captured by what people are doing?
3. Jesus waited several days after hearing of Lazarus' illness. How do the questions of Mary and Martha suggest Jesus waited too long? Was too slow to act? What do you imagine Mary and Martha feeling in their question?
4. Why do you think Jesus wept? Why weep if Jesus knows he will raise Lazarus?
5. How does this scene challenge the idea that strong faith should not feel or express deep sorrow?
6. How is the statement "I am the resurrection and the life" differ from saying "I can raise the dead" or "I can give eternal life"? What does it mean that resurrection and life are found in a person, in Jesus? What's the difference?

Discover More Together

7. Jesus involves others: Take away the stone, Unbind him, Let him go. What might this teach us about how Jesus calls his church to participate in his life-giving work today?
8. What stone needs to be rolled away in your life?
9. How do you handle grief? What helps you to be unbound in some measure?

Holy Week

The Conversation Changes



Devotional

Holy Week begins on the Sunday Jesus rode in on a donkey to the shouts of hosanna, recalls the increasing tensions in the Temple as Jesus encounters those who oppose him, joins Jesus and the disciples as they gather on Thursday for what will be their Last Supper with him, follows the events of his arrest later that night, then trial, leading to his crucifixion on Good Friday, ending in the silence of Saturday.

Easter begins a new week, and a new reality, of God's resurrecting power that reframes and give new understanding to all that happens on this holy week. We can follow the terrible events from of that week, knowing God's power for life is greater than our death, and God's power for forgiveness is greater than the worst of our actions.

Time slows down during Holy Week, until Thursday and Friday, events are described hour by hour, moment by moment. Where earlier in the Gospel, Jesus does most of the talking, now in this last week, as Jesus speaks less, human actors speak more, discuss more, plot more. A close look at our human conversations stand in stark contrast to everything Jesus had said or done before. We come to the end of holy week, where we began on Ash Wednesday, with an awareness of our brokenness, our need for something better, a Gospel word, that only God can speak. After all our conversations have exhausted themselves, the world is silent on Saturday.

The Easter resurrection begins a new conversation, a new encounter with God, informed by the words of Jesus: Peace be with you.



Passion Sunday, March 29, 2026

From Noise to Silence

Scriptures: Matthew 21:1–11; Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29

Devotional

Jesus enters Jerusalem humbly on a donkey, fulfilling prophecy and revealing the nature of God's kingdom as one of peace and service. The crowd waves palms and shouts praises, yet they do not fully grasp the journey ahead. This contrast invites us to reflect on our own understanding of faith and the ways we celebrate God's presence without always following through in obedience and love.

Palm Sunday challenges us to examine our expectations of God. True discipleship is rooted in humility, service, and attentiveness to God's guidance. The celebration of palms is not an endpoint; it is an invitation to embrace the path of Christ, even when it leads to suffering and sacrifice.

We are called to live faithfully, allowing our actions to match our praise. As we enter Holy Week, may our participation in God's kingdom be measured not by popularity or spectacle, but by love, service, and integrity.

To capture all of the conversations, take time to read Matthew 21–27. Focus especially on chapters 26 and 27, which covers the events and conversations from the Last Supper to the Cross. The Bible study questions will reference these last two days and the readings for Thursday and Good Friday.

Matthew 21:1–11 & Matthew 27:35–54

¹ When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, just say this, ‘The Lord needs them.’ And he will send them immediately.” ⁴ This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet:

⁵ “Tell the daughter of Zion,

Look, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷ they brought the donkey and the colt and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹⁰ When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?”

¹¹ The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

* * * * *

³⁵ And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; ³⁶ then they sat down there and kept watch over him. 37 Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”

³⁸ Then two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.

³⁹ Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰ and saying,

“You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

⁴¹ In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying,

⁴² “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to, for he said, ‘I am God’s Son.’ ”

⁴⁴ The rebels who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

⁴⁵ From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

⁴⁶ And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice,

“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?”

that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

⁴⁷ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said,

“This man is calling for Elijah.”

⁴⁸ At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹ But the others said,

“Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.”

⁵⁰ Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. ⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. ⁵² The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. ⁵³ After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴ Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”

Discussion Questions

Adults: How do your expectations of God shape your faith journey?

Youth Mentors: How can you help youth understand that true leadership and strength come through humility and service?

Families with Young Children: Why do people wave palms? How can our family follow Jesus in simple, everyday ways?

Closing Prayer

Humble King, guide our hearts in service and love. May we follow you faithfully, praising and acting according to your will. Amen.

Weekly Bible Study Questions

Discover

1. What do I like about a parade? What's the best parade you have attended?

Discover More

2. What emotions would you use to describe the scene in 21:1-11 (joyful, chaotic, hopeful, dangerous)?
3. Jesus carefully arranges the colt, the words the disciples should say, and the timing of his entrance. What does this intentional planning suggest about Jesus' control over the whole week that will end at the cross?
4. The crowd spreads cloaks and branches and shouts "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Hosanna means "save us now." What do you think they hoped Jesus would do? How would he save them?
5. The city is stirred by Jesus' entry on Sunday, and by Friday will surround Jesus and the cross in mockery and rejection. Why Hosanna on Sunday and Crucify on Friday? Why do you think the crowd turns on Jesus? resisting Him when He bears your sin or calls you to repentance?

Discover More Together

6. What remains a mystery to you about the death of Jesus?
(Why God let it happen? Why no one came to the rescue? Other?)
7. At what point in your life did you come to realize that Jesus died for you?
8. How would you describe the way the death of Jesus has impacted your life, lifestyle and system of values?

Maundy Thursday, April 2, 2026

Jesus Gives Final Instructions



Scriptures: John 13:1–17, 31b–35; Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19

Devotional

Jesus kneels to wash his disciples' feet, demonstrating that leadership is rooted in service and that love is expressed through action. By humbling himself, he teaches us that discipleship requires care for others, even when it is inconvenient or sacrificial.

Grace empowers us to serve without expectation of reward, reflecting God's love in tangible ways. Our acts of compassion and service are extensions of Christ's ministry, shaping communities and nurturing relationships within families and faith groups.

Maundy Thursday calls us to reflect on how we live our faith in everyday acts of love. By embracing humility and serving others, we prepare our hearts to witness the transformative power of God's love through the events of Good Friday and the hope of Easter.

John 13:1-17—Washing of Feet, Command to Love

¹ Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² The devil had already decided that Judas son of Simon Iscariot would betray Jesus. And during supper ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ got up from supper, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.

⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him,
"Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷ Jesus answered,

“You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”

⁸ Peter said to him,

“You will never wash my feet.”

Jesus answered,

“Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.”

⁹ Simon Peter said to him,

“Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”

¹⁰ Jesus said to him,

“One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean.

And you are clean, though not all of you.” ¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

12 After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had reclined again, he said to them,

“Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Very truly, I tell you, slaves are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

Discussion Questions

Adults: How can we serve others in ways that reflect Christ’s love?

Youth Mentors: How can you model humility and service for youth?

Families with Young Children: What are simple ways our family can care for and help others?

Closing Prayer

Servant Lord, teach us to love as you love. Help us serve with humility and compassion, living faithfully in your way. Amen.

Good Friday, April 3, 2026

What Jesus says from the Cross



Scriptures: John 18:1—19:42; Psalm 22

Devotional

On Good Friday, we witness Jesus' suffering and death, the ultimate act of God's solidarity with humanity. The cross embodies sacrificial love, showing that God remains present even in our deepest pain and darkest moments.

This solemn day reminds us that God's love is steadfast and transformative. Jesus' willingness to endure suffering reflects the depth of divine commitment, offering hope and redemption in a world marked by injustice and brokenness.

Lent and Holy Week invite us to stand with Christ in witness, acknowledging sorrow while embracing the promise of resurrection. Even amid grief, God's steadfast love sustains us and calls us to live faithfully.

Discussion Questions

Adults: How does the cross deepen your understanding of God's love?

Youth Mentors: How can you guide youth to reflect on sacrifice and hope?

Families with Young Children: How do we show love and care for others? How does Jesus' story help us understand God's love?

Closing Prayer

Crucified Christ, hold us near your cross. Keep us faithful, hopeful, and loving as we reflect on your sacrifice and live in your grace. Amen.



Easter Vigil, April 4, 2026

Waiting

Scriptures: Genesis 1:1–2:4a; Exodus 14:10–31; Isaiah 55:6–11; Romans 6:3–11; Matthew 28:1–10

Devotional

The Easter Vigil begins in the silence of waiting that happened between Good Friday and Easter. We know the outcome, and yet we wait. In our waiting, we look back at all the ways God has acted to save and give life. We wait and then we hear the news, Christ is risen.

The Easter Vigil celebrates God's creative and redeeming power, tracing God's work from creation through liberation and salvation. Fire, water, and proclamation remind us that God is continually bringing life from chaos, guiding us from darkness into the light of hope.

Through baptism, death, and resurrection, we are invited to participate in this new life. Lutherans understand that God claims us in grace, freeing us from sin and death, and empowers us to live faithfully as part of God's ongoing story of redemption.

Discussion Questions

Adults: How do you see God's creative and redemptive work in your life?

Youth Mentors: How can you help youth understand the meaning of baptism and new life?

Families with Young Children: How can we celebrate God's new life together at home?

Closing Prayer

God of new life, fill our hearts with joy and hope. As we celebrate resurrection, empower us to live boldly in your love and grace. Amen.

Easter, April 5, 2026

Conversation with the Risen Christ



Scriptures: John 20:1-11; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Devotional

On Easter morning, the empty tomb proclaims the triumph of life over death. The women who come to the tomb encounter angels and hear the good news: Jesus is risen! This moment transforms fear into joy and sorrow into hope.

Lutheran faith emphasizes that resurrection is not only a past event but a present reality. God's power brings new life into our hearts and communities, calling us to live as Easter people who share hope and love in tangible ways.

Easter Morning invites us to step into the world renewed, carrying the message of resurrection in our actions, words, and relationships. We are called to be witnesses of God's transformative love and ambassadors of peace and joy.

John 20:1-18

¹ Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them,

“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus's head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed, ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb, ¹² and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet.

¹³ They said to her,

“Woman, why are you weeping?”

She said to them,

“They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

¹⁵Jesus said to her,

“Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?”

Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him,

“Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”

¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!”

She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her,

“Do not touch me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ ”

¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples,

“I have seen the Lord,” and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Discussion Questions

Adults: How does the resurrection inspire your faith and daily life?

Youth Mentors: How can you help youth live as Easter people, spreading hope and joy?

Families with Young Children: How can we celebrate and share the joy of Easter together?

Closing Prayer

Risen Christ, fill us with your joy and hope. May we live as witnesses of your love, carrying the good news into our homes, communities, and the world. Amen.

Weekly Bible Study Questions

Discover

1. When you are upset, who is the first one that you tell?

Discover More

2. How would you describe the initial emotional reaction in this story?
Panic, grief, confusion, hope?
3. John notes that Mary came to the tomb “while it was still dark”. How might the darkness mirror the spiritual/emotional darkness she is in after the crucifixion?
4. John describes in detail what the disciples saw: linen cloths lying there and the face cloth folded up by itself. John then says the beloved disciple saw and believed, but then did not understand the scriptures about the resurrection. How is it possible to both believe and still lack full understanding?
5. Mary sees Jesus, but still thinks he is the gardener. What does this say about how powerful grief and expectations can be in shaping what we see?
6. Have you experienced a time when the risen Christ was at work in your life, yet you did not recognize his presence or help?
7. Jesus says, “Mary,” and at once she recognizes Jesus. Luther often emphasized that the gospel is not just a general truth but a word “for you.” How does Jesus speaking Mary’s name illustrate the “for you” character of the gospel?
8. Where or how do you experience God’s “for you” in baptism, communion, preaching?
9. Mary makes a simple claim, “I have seen the Lord.” Not a dead Lord, but a living Lord. Not an invisible Lord, but a real Lord. Not a different Lord, but the crucified Lord. What difference does that make for Mary? For us?

Discover More Together

10. The first witness to the resurrection is a woman. What might that have to say about women as leaders in the church?
11. John describes both the all-at-once and the gradual nature of Easter. Jesus lives, but it is a gradual process for the disciples to believe or understand. How has your grasp of the resurrection changed over time? What does it mean for you to say, “I have seen the Lord?”



Lent Schedule

Discover More Together through Worship, Fellowship, & Devotion

Ash Wednesday **February 18**

Worship Services 12 Noon and 6:30 p.m.

Lent Pizza & Soup Supper 5:15-6:15 p.m.

Mentor meet-and-greet after worship

No Discovery Zone for kidz after worship

Wednesday Mid-day Lent Services **February 25 - March 25**

Traditional Worship at 12 noon

Spring Serenades Concerts 12:30 p.m. Feb. 25, March 11 & 25

Lunch to Go or Stay available weekly following worship/concert

Wednesday Evenings **February 25 - March 25**

Choirs as normal

Lent Pizza, Soup & Salad Bar Suppers 5-6:15 p.m.

ECHO Lent Worship at 6:30 p.m.

Youth / Mentoring pairs following worship

Discovery Zone for kidz following worship

Holy Week Schedule

Celebrate the Life, Sacrifice & Resurrection of Jesus

Passion of our Lord/Palm Sunday **March 29**

***NEW* Holy Week Wednesday Echo Worship.....** **April 1**

Maundy Thursday..... **April 2**

Worship at 12 noon

Lunch served by staff at 1 p.m.

Worship at 6:30 p.m.

Good Friday **April 3**

Service of Tenebrae at 7:30 p.m.

Easter Vigil Service Saturday at 5 p.m. **April 4**

Easter Sunday Worship Services **April 5**

Traditional Worship at 8:00 a.m. & 9:30 a.m.

Contemporary Worship at 11:15 a.m.



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