

All In



Lent 2026

Daily Lenten Devotions



ALL IN: DAILY LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Week of February 18, 2026 (Ash Wednesday).....	2
Week of February 22, 2026	6
Week of March 1	13
Week of March 8, 2026.....	20
Week of March 15, 2026.....	27
Week of March 22, 2026	34
Week of March 29, 2026	41
Licensing and Use.....	49

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INTRODUCTION

In your life, have you ever decided to go all in for something?

Maybe it was when you chose a profession or a partner. Perhaps you made the exciting but terrifying decision to buy a home. Maybe it was even when you chose to join your current congregation or faith community, or, if you came to faith later in life, when you decided to get baptized.

In Matthew 4, Jesus fasts for forty days in the wilderness, then confronts the testing of the devil. Responding to each temptation, he demonstrates the kind of savior he will become: deeply connected to God's people and God's creation; committed to cosmic saving power, not flashy tricks; filled with love for God and everything God loves. Refusing easy food, power, and dominion, Jesus goes all in on salvation on our behalf. When his life ends, his commitment will be total, poured out in love dying on the cross and rising from the grave.

Jesus shows what it is like to be all in for the reign of God. It means being fully invested, deeply committed. There are no backup options. Everything is on the line.

As Christians, God calls us to a life of commitment and caring for our neighbors and our world, even when the cultures around us view our caring as naive and our commitment as pointless. The endless news cycle can be grim and optimism can be hard to find. It would be easier to just detach from the need around us, to go numb and to care less as we try to protect our hearts and our expectations. But God calls us to deep engagement instead, to care more in a world trying to protect itself by caring less.

God calls us to go all in, to be fully committed to the well-being of our planet and our neighbors. But God knows that this is a challenge, so God goes all in on our behalf first, showing us what it is like to bet it all on love. God invests in human beings, even though we have a track record of sin that stretches from Adam and Eve in the garden to the present day. God invests in creation, even when we are bent on harming it. God commits to the unknown and to wonder when we want certainty and limits. God tends broken relationships. God goes all in on all the highs and lows that life brings, from moments of transcendent beauty to the deepest hopelessness. And in Jesus, God pours out every last drop of love, all of it for the sake of a world that may never fully understand.

These daily devotions explore how God is all in for us and for our world. They also ponder what it might look like if we, too, were all in for one another and our created home, echoing the love of God with our own actions and prayers. Instead of viewing Lent as a season of withdrawal, they imagine it as a time of deep connection with God and with one another.

This Lent, God is all in for us. Let's go all in for God's love, too.

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 18, 2026 (ASH WEDNESDAY)

All In for Repentance

Emily Trubey-Weller

February 18, 2026: All In for Repentance

Reading: Joel 2:1-2, 12

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!... Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning...

Reflection

When you hear the word “repent,” what images come to mind? Something frightening like the picture of the future the prophet Joel paints? A red-faced preacher yelling at his congregation? Fire and brimstone?

Repentance is supremely out of fashion in our world and even in many religious circles. The pressures of the world call us to defend ourselves, asserting how we are right; to save face at all costs; to project only strength. At best, the Ash Wednesday call to repent is a call in opposition to the world’s ways, and at worst, irrelevant to them. For many, repentance is a church-y word meant only for those foolish enough to end up in church.

Yet on this day, those who rarely enter the sanctuary on Sunday morning will find a church for an Ash Wednesday service. Those who no longer warm a pew will find a pastor or priest on a street corner or at a train station and receive their ashes to go. Despite its countercultural nature, the call to repentance continues to captivate many, and not only those in the Christian tradition. There is something about confessing how you have messed up, and being assured that you can start clean, that is just plain rejuvenating to the human soul. This day of repentance is the beginning of our Lenten journey. It is, at its core, the beginning of a journey back to God.

Prayer

Gracious God, I’m showing up to repent today. I am sorry for all that I have done wrong. Let this moment be the beginning of a journey back to you. Amen.

February 19, 2026: Rend Your Hearts

Reading: Joel 2:13

...rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment.

Reflection

The prophet Joel and his people face dark days. Clues in this book help us to date Joel and his audience to around the time of the reconstruction of Jerusalem. Those who have been in exile are returning to face a changed landscape. The homes, synagogues, and businesses previous generations left behind have been destroyed or co-opted by conquest. The people are undeniably different, both those who have continued living in Judah under the reign of foreign empires and those who were taken away. This place is not quite like what they or their ancestors knew, and they face the daunting task of rebuilding homes, lives, and religion.

Joel prophesies a way through the gloom. For Joel, repentance is less fire and brimstone and more homecoming. Repentance is the interior journey that always leads us back to God, no matter what life's circumstances are. Even when the journey out of exile and back to home isn't what we imagined or hoped for, we can still go home to God.

Rending your heart is not an act that requires particular rituals, a temple or altar, or the right words. What matters most is not the outward act, but the recognition of God's grace. Repenting, confessing, and seeking forgiveness is an act of faith, trusting that God is good and has grace to offer you personally. The rending of your heart breaks open spaces within you for God's goodness to abide.

Prayer

God, let your grace be sufficient for me today. Amen.

February 20, 2026: Interior and Interpersonal

Reading: Matthew 6:1

Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them...

Reflection

Yesterday's devotion considered that repentance doesn't require a specific outward act or liturgical rite. That is just what Jesus reminds us in these instructions to his followers in the Gospel of Matthew. He cautions against actions that might appear to reflect true repentance but are actually hollow. He counsels his followers to give, pray, and fast quietly, in secret (Matthew 6:3, 6, 17-18).

The Greek word often translated as *repentance* in scripture is "metanoia," also at the root of the word *metamorphosis*. This paired with Jesus' guidance to act in secret might make it seem like repentance is an individual thing, like a caterpillar changing inside its cocoon. But turning away from our sin, ourselves and our selfish desires, and back toward God, has interpersonal implications.

When practiced genuinely, repentance has the ability to re-form relationships. When we admit the hurt we've caused a loved one, we are able to receive the joy of their forgiveness and move forward together. When we clearly see the ways our lifestyle has polluted or damaged creation, we can improve the world around us for ourselves and our entire community. When we acknowledge the prejudice we hold for those of a different ethnicity, nationality, or socioeconomic situation than ourselves, we can repair harm done and create a more loving future for everyone. The transformation happening inside of each of us might seem too small or too personal to make a difference, but these are just the small changes called for in the Kin-dom of God. They are the small things that lead to going all in.

Prayer

Change my heart, O God. May the changes inside me be evident in the life I live. Amen.

February 21, 2026: A//In for Repentance

Reading: Joel 2: 15-16

Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy.

Reflection

The call of the prophet Joel is a call for *everyone* to go all in on repentance. No one is exempt from this duty. Not the elderly, not children, not those on the precipice of marriage, not nursing mothers and their babies (who are exempt from other sacred responsibilities in scripture). Just imagine if such a crowd had been assembled in your church for Ash Wednesday services. Who would be included there among your usuals? Folks who typically don't attend evening services because they can't drive after dark? Families of school aged children occupied with homework and school activities at that hour? Neighbors who come to church only when there is something being given out? Those who haven't warmed a pew in a decade? Parents with circles under their eyes and little ones in arms? What an assembly that would be! I can imagine that more than one regular churchgoer might be skeptical of the newcomers.

Yet the call to repent is a broad one. It comes to everyone. It isn't only for those who have confessed and prayed and received the eucharist week after week. True repentance isn't an outward act or a liturgical rite. It is an inward transformation, an interior journey back to God. And that is accessible to everyone, whether they come to formal services as part of their yearly ritual or take only a quick moment for ashes on the go. Who might you invite to enter into this season with you? Who may need to return to God after a long time away? Who do you suspect might already be harboring such an interior transformation themselves?

Prayer

Send me others to journey with me this Lent, that together we might follow the call to repentance and arrive back in your loving presence. Amen.

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 22, 2026

All In for Creation

Linnéa Clark

February 22, 2026: All In for Creation

Reading: Genesis 3:7

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Reflection

Classic artistic depictions of Adam and Eve show them with perfectly placed fig leaves, but I often pause to consider the impracticality: as soon as one of them moved, the fig leaves would be gone. I once heard a preacher encourage the congregation to imagine how hard it really is to try to sew fig leaves together. Leaves, irregularly shaped and prone to tearing, are a poor substitute for leather or fabric. Even carefully crafted, a makeshift covering of fig leaves would not keep its wearer modest for long. As the Bible tells the story, Eve and Adam don't have days to work: they need to complete their emergency craft project before God's evening stroll through the garden. With no sharp needles, fine thread, or time, their craft project seems to be a failure. The two humans resort to hiding from God in the bushes.

Panic sends Adam and Eve scrambling, and their whole relationship to the garden changes. Previously, they lived in harmony with God's garden, eating what was good and sheltering in its protection. Now, they seek desperately to take whatever they can from their environment to hide their own mistake. I imagine them tearing handfuls of leaves from neighboring trees, shredding them with hasty efforts at sewing, tossing aside their failed attempts and grabbing more materials. Their panic seeds their impulse to extract whatever they can from their environment rather than trusting that the garden will generously provide what they need.

What metaphorical fig leaves do humans try to sew together today, desperate to cover the mistakes of our past or meet our present demands? How do we damage our own environment in the attempt?

Prayer

God, when you breathed life into our lungs, you placed us in a verdant garden and promised to care for us. Show us the places where the garden still grows full and lush instead of bare. Soothe our panic and reveal your abundance among us. Amen.

February 23, 2026: Creation's Family

Reading: Genesis 2:4b-7

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no vegetation of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground, but a stream would rise from the earth and water the whole face of the ground—then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Reflection

A few years ago, I asked my field education student to write a blessing for my congregation's community garden in preparation for the spring planting season. The student, a second-year seminarian, had a passion for eco-theology and poetry, so I figured he could write a decent garden blessing. As it turned out, his blessing was more than decent: it was flowing and poetic, and as we gathered to pray, the words of the blessing reminded us that "we are siblings of the soil."

Oh, I thought. We are creation's family. I never realized.

When God creates a human being in Genesis 2, God stirs them up from the dust of the earth. Ancient readers would have recognized the Hebrew play on words: the words for "person," "soil," and even the name "Adam" are similar. The first human is literally made of the same substance as the earth, the original family of creation. We are the earth's family, too, our atoms no different than those of the soil in the community garden, the farmer's field, or even the heart of a star. We share our substance with the universe.

When we are tempted to think of ourselves as different from the world around us, uniquely elevated and set apart, God reminds us: our material is the same as all creation. We are earth in temporary motion, atoms organized for now as human beings, and it is good.

Prayer

God of all creation, when we imagine that we are separate from the universe around us, remind us that we are creation's family. Stir up wonder and awe in our hearts. Help us treasure one another, fragile and impermanent, God's own image outlined in elemental dust. Amen.

February 24, 2026: Dominion

Reading: Genesis 1:28-30

God blessed [the humans], and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the air and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.

Reflection

What did God mean by “dominion?” How Christians have answered this particular theological question has shaped their interactions with the planet and its people. During the colonial period, European Christians interpreted their God-given dominion as divine justification for the violent conquest of lands inhabited by non-Christian non-Europeans. Colonizers caused irreparable harm to cultures, languages, wisdom, people, and land, all in the name of dominion. For them, dominion was God’s green light to extract as much profit as they could from other people and from the planet regardless of the consequences. Today, we are still reckoning with the harms done by such dominion. We are practicing ways to live differently as we struggle to break historic patterns of harm.

Extraction, colonization, and conquest are not the only forms of dominion. A gardener has dominion, too: a responsibility to care, cultivate, and maintain the ground over time. Farmers and gardeners know that if too much is demanded of the soil year after year, it will become depleted. Dominion need not mean domination. It can be part of an approach to sustainability and equity that collaborates with the land itself.

The dominion to which God calls God’s people is a gardener’s care. It requires patience and humility, and it teaches respect for the planet and for all humanity. God’s call to dominion is a responsibility, not a free pass to power. It can reveal the beauty of God’s creation in a way we never imagined possible.

Prayer

God who cultivates, lead us away from attitudes that abuse our fellow humans and our shared planet. Teach us the gardener’s dominion, patient and loving. Open us to change as you tend us to become fertile ground ourselves. Amen.

February 25, 2026: A Curse and a Blessing

Reading: Genesis 3:17-19

*And to the man [God] said,
“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
and have eaten of the tree
about which I commanded you,
‘You shall not eat of it,’
cursed is the ground because of you;
in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;*

*thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.
By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread
until you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.”*

Reflection

When the Bible describes a threat or punishment from God, it is often simply a description of the natural consequences of our actions when we act in ways that harm ourselves and others.

In Genesis 1:28-30, God gives the humans dominion over creation. In Genesis 3:1-6, the humans exercise that dominion by eating from the forbidden tree and (unsuccessfully?) trying to craft loincloths to cover themselves. The garden in which they are placed is the perfect home for them to practice the gardener’s version of dominion, collaborating with creation around them to satisfy their needs. Instead, they turn to an attitude of extraction, taking what they want but finding no fulfillment.

As God curses the ground because of Adam, I hear resonance with modern ecological disasters. The ground is “cursed” where people have disposed of toxic waste carelessly. It is “cursed” where poor communities live downwind of polluting factories and refineries or perch atop contaminated soil. People struggle as they live with the generational consequences, from asthma to cancer. At the edge of the garden, cast out by God, Adam learns that his future will be a struggle because of his choices. We, too, bear the consequences of choices made by humans’ extractive attitude, even if we are not individually culpable.

Yet there is a blessing tucked into the curse: Adam and Eve have always been, and will always be, dust. They still belong to the family of all creation, even when they feel alienated from it and exhausted from their hard labor. Life will be difficult, but God will be with them, always working toward repair.

Prayer

God of the dust, even when we reap the consequences of our actions, we trust that we will rest in you. Stir our dusty selves to the sacred work of repair. When our work is done, embrace the dust we leave behind, resting in your love. Amen.

February 26, 2026: Keeping out the Cold

Reading: Genesis 3:20-21

The man named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife and clothed them.

Reflection

Mistakes have been made. This much is clear.

Adam and Eve have eaten the fruit of the forbidden tree, sewed subpar loincloths for themselves from fig leaves, tried to hide from God their creator, and been banished from the garden forever. Now, their lives and those of their descendants will always be a struggle, the natural consequence of their actions.

After all of this heaviness, God offers them a gesture of compassion. God never intended Eve and Adam to *need* clothing, but now, they do. God chooses not to leave them to mend their deteriorating fig-leaf loincloths. God gives them appropriate clothing, garments of skins that can shelter them from the sun and keep out the cold.

God's gift of clothing is easy to overlook when one has already read the story of the humans' fall. It can be overshadowed by the painful consequences. But it is an essential detail. Even after everything that has transpired, God still loves these people. God is still all in for them, and God wants them to survive. They are not on their own in a cold and cruel world: God is with them, still providing for their needs.

Compassionate gestures often speak louder than words: the embrace and the tears amid the grief; the grocery gift card when the bills are overdue; the shower, hot meal, and gently used clothing to offer nourishment and a sense of self-worth when all possessions are gone. When people need help, it is always a reflection of divine love to offer aid that dignifies. If God is all in for us, even with our poor track record of following God faithfully, then we can be all in for our neighbors, no matter what they have done.

Prayer

Compassionate God, raise us from despair, even when everything seems lost. Show us a path toward quiet compassion. Offer dignity to our neighbors even when their circumstances have stripped it away. Amen.

February 27, 2026: Leaves for Healing

Reading: Revelation 22:1-2

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Reflection

From the beginning of the story (Genesis), we jump to the end (Revelation). Biblical writers love symmetry, and John of Patmos, the author of Revelation, is no exception. In his rich and complex vision, the world's suffering is not overlooked but is known to God, and all the struggle leads to God's final victory. The trouble in Genesis started with a tree. In Revelation, another tree in God's holy city bears twelve kinds of fruit, all for life instead of death. In Genesis, Eve and Adam sewed emergency loincloths from fig leaves. In Revelation, the leaves of the tree of life offer healing to all people.

With nods to Genesis like the fruit and the leaves, Revelation imagines the fall in reverse, all creation rising to God's restoration. Finally, the relationship between humans, God, and creation is fully healed. Humanity no longer tries to dominate God's creation, extracting what they desire; God tenderly wipes away tears; fruit and leaves are freely given.

In the traditional words of the prayer of confession, we may be "captive to sin and cannot free ourselves," but we are not bound forever by our own brokenness. God's forgiveness and healing liberate us from deadly cycles of sin. God is all in for all creation, even a deeply flawed humanity, and we are never too far gone for God.

Prayer

God of our past and future, all our lives are held together in you. No matter who we are, no matter what we have done or left undone, you always greet us with forgiveness. Teach us to forgive one another, too, cultivating peace together. Amen.

February 28, 2026: Praising God Together

Reading: Psalm 148:7-10

*Praise the Lord from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deeps,
fire and hail, snow and frost,
stormy wind fulfilling his command!
Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars!
Wild animals and all cattle,
creeping things and flying birds!*

Reflection

If Genesis is where our faith story started and Revelation is the future promise of restoration, we are living somewhere in the messy middle—perhaps in the psalms. Biblical psalms contain the full range of human expression, from joy to rage to gratitude to tenderness to despair. Psalm 148 is filled with praise, and it is not only the humans who do the praising: it is all creation. Weather, landscapes, and animals of all kinds praise God together.

This praise is not comprised of soloists. It is an expansive ensemble act. As we pray with the words of the psalmist, we join the chorus ourselves. We are no different from creation. We, too, can praise God with all we have and all we are, in all our uniqueness.

Praise bursts forth without waiting for our broken creation or our broken humanity to be restored. The tree of life seems far off; still, we praise. The ground is cursed by our own actions; still, we praise. The perfect garden is out of our reach, long lost; still, we praise. Even here, in the midst of breaking and mending, there is beauty, wonder, and the goodness of God.

Prayer

God, you are our center of gravity, holding all creation together. Sing with us as we test our voices, praising you as best we can. Amen.

WEEK OF MARCH 1

All In for the Unknown

Linnéa Clark

March 1, 2026: Moving through Anxiety

Reading: Genesis 12:1

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you."

Reflection

I have three cats, and each one of them is quirky. However, one of them is quirrier than most. Rosie the brown tabby is very attached to the landscape of my home, with each piece of furniture in a predictable and unchanging position. If something is different—the sudden appearance of the large box that holds the Chewy delivery, the moving of furniture in order to vacuum, or the temporary storage of our bicycles in the living room—Rosie gets anxious.

What Rosie dreads most of all is moving. I don't blame her, because I dread it too. In the last twelve years, I've moved five times, and Rosie has been part of two of those moves. When the boxes come out, she gets jumpy and vocal. She demands comfort and reassurance. Rosie externalizes all of my own feelings about moving: the anxiety, the exhaustion, the uncertainty, the need for comfort when everything familiar has been turned upside down.

By now, I know what to expect when I move. I can hardly imagine what it was like for Abram to move for the first time at age 75. He wasn't just moving between houses. He was leaving Haran, the place he'd spent his entire life. His extended family, the familiar landscape, the predictable cycle of the seasons, the familiar faces of his neighbors: Abram was leaving them all behind to follow a supernatural call from God. What anxiety did he feel as he committed fully to the move, packing his family heirlooms away carefully? What grief caught in his throat as he explained his choice to the rest of the curious town? What worry loomed in the background? God promised to take him somewhere, but God hadn't yet revealed where that place was.

Making faithful change in our lives is not easy. Still, God calls us into the unknown, even when anxiety swirls around us.

Prayer

God, when change knocks at the door and anxieties rise, calm our fears and soothe our hearts. Reassure us with compassion. Promise us that you are out there waiting for us, even when we don't know the destination. Amen.

March 2, 2026: Altars in the Unknown

Reading: Genesis 12:7

Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

Reflection:

Just a few verses after Abram packs up his entire life and leaves Haran, God leads him to Canaan. Here it is: the promised land! Abram can unpack and settle down now... right?

Wrong. The story of Abram and his wife Sarai stretches across many chapters of Genesis, and this is only its beginning. The family's commitment to moving in order to follow God has drawn them out into the unknown, but more unknowns meet them. Canaan isn't empty: the Canaanites live there. How are Sarai and Abram's descendants supposed to inherit it? What's more, Abram and Sarai are in their 70s. The biggest mystery of all is how this childless couple is going to have the descendants God has promised them. The two of them know enough about their own biology to know that God is promising the impossible.

As they move deeper into the promised land, Abram builds a series of stone altars. They have more permanence than the tents in which Abram and his family live. The altars stretch behind Sarai and Abram like a trail of breadcrumbs, tracing an outline of God's goodness. Perhaps, when the family comes back one day, the altars will remind them of God's faithfulness. When their own faith flags, the altars will give them tangible reassurance.

Only a handful of verses later, a famine will strike the region, and Sarai and Abram will become refugees. They will head to Egypt in search of food and stability. God's promises will seem even more far-fetched there. Yet they have had a taste of what will come someday. The altars are waiting behind them in the promised land, a few small beacons in the vast unknown.

Prayer

God, when the future is unknown to us, teach us to trace your faithfulness throughout our past. Call our attention to your presence like Abram's altars. Gleam at us from the dark sea of mystery all around us and give us courage to move forward. Amen.

March 3, 2026: Laughing at the Unknown

Reading: Genesis 18:12-14

So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I be fruitful?” The Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.”

Reflection

Abram and Sarai spend more than two decades waiting for the fulfillment of God’s promise that they will become the parents of a great nation. Already old, they become truly elderly, and for Sarai in particular, pregnancy is comically far-fetched. The unknown has become the impossible. God has given them new names—Abraham and Sarah—but the promised baby is no closer to reality.

When God shows up in the form of three mysterious strangers in the heat of the day, Sarah and Abraham offer them gracious hospitality, and God renews the promise of children to Abraham. Sarah, listening from the tent, can’t help but laugh. It’s preposterous at this point. Literally and figuratively, God seems to have been leading them on.

But soon, Sarah and Abraham’s baby will be born. In a quirk of divine humor, God has asked the couple to name him Isaac, Hebrew for “laughter.” Sarah’s laugh at the strangeness of the unknown becomes a laugh of joy, and even the unknown in human form—baby Isaac himself—laughs right back to her.

Sometimes, the unknown to which God invites us makes us laugh out of skepticism or incredulity. Sometimes, it makes us laugh in delight. Sometimes, God even laughs with us. When have you waited a long time for God to make good on a promise? Are you still waiting? Do you laugh? Cry? Wait impatiently or patiently?

Prayer

Loving God, you are steadfast and faithful. When we wait in the unknown space between your promises and their fulfillment, receive our laughter and send it back to us, an overflowing measure of joy. Be present with us as we wait. Amen.

March 4, 2026: Reckoning Righteousness

Reading: Romans 4:1-3

What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.”

Reflection

Chapter 4 of Romans usually makes me pause for a reality check. Paul spends the chapter describing Abraham’s faith in God’s promise to the Christian community in Rome in order to inspire their faith, too. It all sounds good: Abraham was faithful for many years, and thanks to his faith—not his perfect religious observance—Abraham became the spiritual ancestor of everyone who waits in faith for God’s promises today.

Except... that’s not the story that Genesis tells about Abraham and Sarah. Abraham cycles through periods of confident faith in God’s promise and periods of utter doubt. At their lowest point, Sarah and Abraham hatch a scheme of their own. Abraham will impregnate the enslaved woman Hagar instead of Sarah, setting off a cycle of harm within their family system. Eventually, Hagar will refuse to tolerate the ongoing abuse, and she will self-emancipate with her son Ishmael in her arms and God at her side. There will still be more waiting before baby Isaac is finally born. The faith of Abraham and Sarah ebbs and flows, surges and flags.

But perhaps this is why they are the perfect example of faithfulness, both for the Christians in ancient Rome and for us. We, too, ebb and flow in our faith. We find it hard to sustain perfect faithfulness for very long, if we ever get there in the first place. Sometimes, we give up on God like Abraham and Sarah did, trying to force God’s promises on our own instead of trusting God to bring them into being—and hurting other people in the process. We don’t have to be perfect to be part of God’s love. When the unknown throws our faith off course, God doesn’t leave us. Even imperfect, temporary faithfulness is reckoned to us as righteousness. God is the one who is faithful to us, and God’s faithfulness never runs dry.

Prayer

God of the unknown, when mystery wears us out and our faith falls short, fill the gap for us. Believe on our behalf when our own belief seems impossible. Reckon even our imperfect trust in you as all the righteousness you need. Shore us up and bring us home to you. Amen.

March 5, 2026: Office Hours with Jesus

Reading: John 3:9-10

Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

Reflection

I wish I had made more use of my professors' office hours in college and graduate school. I think I was too concerned about appearing not to understand something in class. As a result, I suspect that I missed out on some fascinating discussion with experts in their field.

I recognize similar reluctance in Nicodemus, who comes to "office hours" with Jesus late at night. A leader and a teacher himself, he wants to puzzle out some of Jesus' teaching in privacy instead of in public in front of everyone else. But he does not come prepared to embrace the conversation to which Jesus invites him. Nicodemus expects concrete answers; instead, Jesus wants to widen his wondering and his understanding of what God can do. Nicodemus is hoping to narrow down his questions. When Jesus broadens the discussion instead, Nicodemus is unsettled, knocked off balance. Meanwhile, Jesus seems to be frustrated that Nicodemus will not follow him into the deeper waters of their shared faith. "Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?" he says.

Abraham's faith is far from perfect, but he follows God into profound uncertainty, body and mind and heart. Nicodemus' faith is, on the surface, perfect, but he cannot follow where Jesus leads. Something holds him back.

What do you think holds Nicodemus back from embracing the mystery to which Jesus invites him? Have you ever looked for concrete answers to your questions about faith, but come up short? How did you deal with the uncertainty?

Prayer

God, you invite us to ponder the unknown with you, but we can't always follow you fully. Meet us where we are, in all of our questions and doubts. Embrace us with the mysterious depths of your own faithfulness. Amen.

March 6, 2026: Into the Wind

Reading: John 3:16-17

[Jesus said,] “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. 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.”

Reflection

My spouse and I received bicycles as a wedding gift. We got married in April 2020, so the Covid-friendly gift of bicycles was welcome. That year, and every year since, we put many miles on our bikes during the long New Jersey riding season. Over time, we’ve worked out a system. I ride in front to set the pace. My spouse rides behind to encourage. I am also the ride planner, choosing our route based on the temperature, available shade, and—most important of all—the strength and direction of the wind.

We rode like this for four years until one day, more tired than usual, I fell behind and my spouse took the lead. We were both surprised to discover that he had been riding my draft the whole time. As he headed into the wind, I recovered behind him. In a few miles, we switched again. I had thought drafting was only useful to racers, not to recreational riders. I was wrong.

Now, we take turns intentionally: one of us leading, then the other. With a strong headwind, we count our mileage and trade positions at regular intervals. This way, we avoid exhaustion. We go farther. Our rides feel more collaborative.

Faith is not meant to be a solo struggle into the wind. It is not a feat that each of us needs to achieve alone. It is a community effort. The only person whose faith stands alone is Jesus, our savior; he leads our peloton, and we ride in his draft. We lift one another when faith seems hard to bear. We live faithfully for each other when faithful living seems out of reach for us individually. On any given Sunday, your congregation is full of people who struggle with their faith, but together, your fellow worshipers create a composite faith, with Jesus in the lead. When we share faith with one another and allow Jesus to head into the wind, we start to understand the depth of his gift of love for the sake of the whole world.

Prayer

God, when faith feels like a struggle against a headwind, give us the grace to let others take the lead. When faith wavers in our neighbors, strengthen us to lead on their behalf. Draw us all into the slipstream of your grace. Amen.

March 7, 2026: The Unknown Darkness

Reading: John 3:1-2a

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night...

Reflection

Nicodemus comes to talk with Jesus at night. Readers of John's gospel often ponder why Nicodemus would choose the night, not the day. He is a well-known teacher, an expert on faith and Jewish law. Perhaps he chooses the cover of darkness so that he will not be seen asking questions. Perhaps he is hoping for some privacy when associating with Jesus, who has no academic credentials of his own. Or perhaps the setting is for psychological effect: night is a time of mystery, dreams, and the unknown, and Nicodemus is full of questions.

You have likely experienced some nighttime questions yourself. During the day, it is easier to keep busy and to stave off worries, fears, and existential doubts. At night, it's a different story. In the relative darkness and quiet, everything bubbles to the surface, even if you've maintained careful control over the course of the day. Sometimes, it feels overwhelming, as if all your untended thoughts and concerns are flooding you.

Jesus does not send Nicodemus away to wait until the morning. He welcomes his doubts and questions. Even though Nicodemus will not depart with any more clarity than before, his questions are honored, taken seriously by Jesus. Long dark nights don't become shorter by any effort of our own; only the slow ticking of the clock can bring us steadily toward sunrise. Jesus does not rotate our planet any faster toward the morning. He stays with us through the night and its unknown darkness, whether we worry, work, weep, or wait.

Prayer

God of long nights, be present with us when worries overtake our minds. Stay with us when we struggle for answers. Hold us and guide us safely toward the sunrise. Amen.

WEEK OF MARCH 8, 2026

All In for Wonder

Emily Trubey-Weller

March 8, 2026: All In for Wonder

Reading: John 4:9

The Samaritan woman said to [Jesus], “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?”

Reflection

What is the last question you looked up?

Where have I seen that actor before? How do I get dog barf out of my carpet? What great sci-fi novel is everyone reading?

Of all the things to dislike about modern technology, I appreciate the easy access to information. Technology is good for more than my mundane questions. The answers it provides have a charming way of sparking curiosity for my kids. Want to learn more about eagles, lightning, the existence of aliens, tardigrades, how toilets work? Every question draws them out of themselves and into the world around them. Each answer fuels more wonderings and leads to greater curiosity. Their questions create a sense of wonder that they inhabit as they walk around the world.

Questions come readily for the woman in today’s scripture, and she has a different source to search: this mysterious guy at the local well. When the woman goes to collect water, she encounters Jesus. The well is typically the place of women, and they meet here at the unlikely hour of noon, while others avoid this chore in the heat of the day. The circumstances are curious from the start. Neither propriety nor shame nor surprise stop the woman’s gush of wondering. Much like a Wikipedia rabbit hole, each answer only leads to another question. Contrast this to when the disciples return later in the story (John 4:27) and won’t even ask Jesus what he’s been up to.

Questions lead to deeper knowledge. Even when we don’t get precisely the answers we seek or we don’t really understand the results, we gain something from asking. The woman at the well’s questions lead to a conversation she probably could not have imagined. Going all in for wonder means being willing to wonder aloud, to ask the questions, to seek something more.

If you weren’t stopped by shame or propriety, what would you ask Jesus?

Prayer

Take a moment to name your questions aloud. Take a deep breath and sit in the quiet. Amen.

March 9, 2026: The Wonder of Relationship

Reading: John 4:10

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."

Reflection

Wondering draws us into relationship with one another.

Think back to when you met a good friend or your partner. Something about them must have sparked your curiosity. *I wonder what they're studying or what their job is. I wonder if they're always this funny. I wonder what they think about this. I wonder what that weird hat they're wearing is all about!* My spouse remembers that when we met, he was curious about the pants I was wearing with a large dragon embroidered down the side (I'd be embarrassed, but it was the early 2000s and it sparked the curiosity of my future life partner, so, you know, it paid off). It takes only a little genuine curiosity to spark a relationship.

When we approach someone having already made our mind up about them, the opposite is true. Without a sense of wonder or curiosity, it's hard to get to know someone. Think about meeting someone who you "know" is of a different political persuasion from yourself. You might make assumptions about what they believe and why, what's important to them, and whether you have anything in common. But when you approach someone with curiosity instead—wondering about their hopes and dreams, their background, why they believe what they do—it paves the way for relationship with even the most unlikely candidates.

If wondering draws us into deeper relationship with each other, it also draws us into deeper relationship with God. The woman at the well could make a lot of assumptions about Jesus. He's of a different gender, ethnicity, and religious tradition. Her people have had conflict with his for years. But because she approaches Jesus with curiosity, she asks questions. And because she asks questions, she gets to know who she is talking to. And because she gets to know who is talking to, she experiences a miracle. She meets Christ. She receives the gift of living water poured out for her.

Prayer

God, keep me curious about others and about you. Amen.

March 10, 2026: Unimpressed

Reading: Exodus 17:5-6

The Lord said to Moses, “Go on ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.” Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Reflection

Moses’ relationship with God began with curiosity. Moses received his call from God when he noticed the burning bush and was curious about why it didn’t seem to be burning up. From this act flowed a stream of wonders that God worked through Moses to rescue the Hebrew people.

The wonder in today’s reading comes after their flight from Egypt, when they are wandering in the wilderness en route to the promised land. With the Egyptian army safely behind them, the people now thirst for more mundane wonders, like food and water. Instead of trusting in God’s ability to provide, they complain to Moses and falsely remember Egypt as a place where they were well cared for. They’ve forgotten all the divine wonders they have already experienced.

So God will give them a reminder. God will rekindle their sense of awe. Sending Moses ahead with the same staff he used to strike and part the sea, God now has Moses strike a rock, and water gushes forth. Though we’re told the elders witness this, we don’t know how they react. Are they impressed? Do they have questions for Moses? Does this reignite their sense of wonder and curiosity about God?

When we refuse to approach even the most miraculous things with awe, nothing impresses us. We witness miracles and react with cynicism. We ascribe acts of generosity and kindness to ulterior motives. Rather than suspending our disbelief and entering with whole-hearted vulnerability into the wonder in front of us, we end up looking back on times of hardship and declaring them the good old days.

When have you found it hard to accept something amazing? Was there news that just seemed too good to be true? An act of kindness you couldn’t accept? Is it sometimes hard to believe that God is still up to wonders today?

Prayer

Amazing God, help me to suspend my disbelief, and enter whole-heartedly into the great work you are up to. Amen.

March 11, 2026: Small Wonders

Reading: John 4:16-18

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!"

Reflection

I recently witnessed the utter amazement of a toddler who discovered that a balloon will rise into the air if you put it over the heating vent just so. What a simple thing to generate wonder! This same curiosity about the small things makes backyard walks take ages. If it's not the toddler inspecting every rock, it's the dog sniffing a million tiny wonders invisible to my human nose, or my botanophile spouse relentlessly identifying perfectly ordinary plants. Some creatures just seem to retain a sense of wonder.

The woman at the well has led a complicated, and likely difficult, life. Jesus confronts her plainly about her past, and I imagine his query not in anger but with a sense of sympathy. To have had so many husbands means that this woman has been widowed or divorced multiple times. After so much loss, she may have been regarded as a town pariah: cursed, difficult, or out of favor with God. She would have had many reasons to grow cynical, disengage, and keep any wondering to herself.

But she doesn't. She engages this stranger at the well with genuine curiosity.

The woman at the well is an important example. Unlike the male disciples, who stifle their questions many times throughout scripture, her wonder encourages us to approach the world with genuine curiosity. Jesus not only entertains her wonder, but encourages it. He joins her in a conversation that takes her questions seriously and encourages more. Jesus is all in for wonder.

God has created a world full of wonders for us to enjoy, if only we open ourselves to them. Stars twinkle and lightning bugs glow. Music fills our hearts and lends inspiration. There is beauty in the way plants and people grow. Prayer lightens burdens. Tardigrades tickle curiosity.

What small wonders have you passed today without a sense of awe?

Prayer

Awesome God, I have passed wonders without even noticing. Open my heart to experience them anew. Amen.

March 12, 2026: Small Wonders Lead to Greater Ones

Reading: John 4:28-29, 39

Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"... Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony.

Reflection

Wonder is contagious.

The woman at the well is so amazed and excited by her conversation with Jesus that she can't keep it to herself. She returns to town and shares her experience with a tone of astonishment: "He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" The townspeople respond. Because she didn't stifle her questions, she has an experience so full it overflows to others. Her smaller sense of wonder, leads to this greater wonder of an entire town coming to meet Jesus and listen to his teachings.

When has someone else's sense of wonder or curiosity inspired you? Maybe a friend passed on a good book about a new topic. Perhaps you saw someone stopped before a beautiful view or sunset, and you paused beside them to appreciate it too. Maybe something your pastor mentioned off-hand in a sermon sparked your curiosity and you looked up more about the scripture or the topic later. Maybe you decided on your particular course of study or career because someone else's interest inspired you.

How might you allow your wonder and wondering about Jesus overflow like the woman at the well did? If you are this far into Lenten devotions, you must have some level of curiosity fueling you. Do you have an idea for a Bible study? Can you grab an extra copy of this devotional guide to give to a friend? Is there a neighbor who should be at your church's Lenten midweek services with you, or someone you haven't seen at church in a while you should check in on? Can you share what your Lenten spiritual practices have meant to you with someone else?

You might not bring an entire town to Jesus, but you don't know what impact your own wonder might have on someone else.

Prayer

Jesus, help me to share my wonder and my wondering about you with others. Inspire us all through our experiences with you. Amen.

March 13, 2026: A Lifetime of Wondering

Reading: Romans 5:1

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection

I remember one of my earliest questions about God. I was about four years old, and my family had been visitors at a church for a couple of weeks. I asked my parents if God was a man or a woman. My parents were both laypeople who had grown up in the church, spent years away from it, and were just venturing back in. They didn't have formal theological training. But I still think the answer they gave me is a pretty great one. They answered that God isn't really a man or a woman, but that God is love. From that day on, for years, my mental image of who God is was a giant anatomically correct human heart sort of floating in the sky. Though the image may have been strange, that answer stuck with me.

Years later, it is an answer that I still find both satisfying and incomplete. It has often fed more questions for me: How do we know that God is love? What about the parts of scripture where God's actions or Jesus' reactions seem less than loving? How about when our life experiences seem to contradict that understanding?

I am grateful to have grown up in a church and a tradition that encouraged my questions. As a child, I never felt that any question about God, as long as it was genuine, was off limits. I still feel that way! There are, of course, traditions that discourage people from asking questions and instead encourage a sort of unquestioning trust. I find immense peace in knowing that Jesus has already covered me in God's grace for eternity. I already belong to God, no matter life's circumstances and no matter what questions about the Divine are on my heart. This security gives me the confidence to keep asking questions, even when the answers come slowly or not at all.

Are there any questions from your childhood or youth about God, scripture, or faith that you still ask?

Prayer

Gracious God, help me to know that I am secure in belonging to you, and that you can receive any question I bring. Amen.

March 14, 2026: Where Wondering Ends, Wonder Begins

Reading: Psalm 95:1 (or the whole thing!)

O come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

Reflection

Our wondering can fuel a lot of learning. Questions can draw us out of ourselves, closer to others, and closer to God. They inspire us to unravel the mysteries of nature, explore the beauty God has created through art and music, get to know our neighbors better, and ask big theological questions.

But our human understanding has an end. There are things that we get wrong. There are some questions that won't be answered in our lifetime and some questions that won't be answered at all. Where our understanding, our wondering, and our ability to get the answers we seek end, that is when we are invited to dwell in wonder and praise before God.

This psalm of praise declares that somehow both the mysterious depths of the earth and the majestic heights of the mountains are in God's hands; that God made it all; that God sits as a ruler above all other gods that humanity has created. This is praise for a God beyond human comprehension. In the time when the psalm was written, a time before the modern scientific age, it was easy to accept that there were mysteries only God knew. In a modern age, when we are used to ready answers, constant technological advancement, and scientific discovery, we're tempted to believe that we can and should know it all.

So today spend at least a moment sitting in wonder of God, accepting that you don't get it all. If you rewrote today's psalm, for what wonders would you praise God? Natural wonders, the blessing of relationships, the gift of forgiveness or peace, the friendship of animal companions, the mysteries science has yet to unravel? Sit in awe and behold the presence of God.

Prayer

You are awesome, God. I praise you for... *name some of the wonders you can think of here.* Thank you, thank you, thank you! Amen.

WEEK OF MARCH 15, 2026

All In for Relationships

Victoria Larson

March 15, 2026: All In for Relationships

Reading: Psalm 23:1-3a

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

*He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.*

Reflection

As Christians, our lives are built on this abiding truth: God acted first.

In creation, God shaped us. In the scriptural stories of salvation, God made the first move. At the table and the font, God welcomes us. God leads us beside still waters and green pastures. God restores our souls.

God's primacy is important to remember because it's *hard* to remember. Our day-to-day lives often press us to give an account: what have *we* created? What moves have *we* made? What welcomes have *we* issued?

It's not that these questions are unimportant. It's just that they're secondary: they come after what God first did for us. And that means that our actions can be responses to God's goodness. *Because* God has restored and redeemed us, we are freed to live into the Greatest Commandment to love God before all else, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

How will you respond to what God has done for you as this week unfolds? How will you love God, love your neighbor, love yourself, in response to how God has first loved you?

Prayer

Shepherding God, you've given me all I need. Lead me past my fears and anxieties of not being enough, not having enough, not doing enough. Settle me down in the green pastures of your love and the still waters of your peace. Amen.

March 16, 2026: Relating to Jesus

Reading: John 9:35-38

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” [The man who had been blind] answered, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him.

Reflection

This reading is a piece from a much longer story—read all of John 9 if you have the time today! But this excerpt is striking: in much of the gospels, people are actively seeking Jesus out, yet here’s an instance of Jesus going and finding someone himself. He met this man earlier in the chapter, healing him of his blindness, but this is the first time the man *sees* Jesus. Despite having just given some pretty great testimony before the religious authorities about Jesus’ power, the man doesn’t recognize Jesus right away. But when Jesus reveals himself, this man knows just what to do: worship him.

Jesus isn’t always easy to recognize, even when he’s seeking us out. My mind goes to the *Jesus the Homeless* statue by Timothy Schmalz. The bronze statue depicting Jesus huddled under a blanket and sleeping on a bench was first installed outside of an Episcopal church in North Carolina in 2014. The first time a neighbor drove by, she called the police to report a vagrant. “That’s right,” an NPR reporter noted, “somebody called the cops on Jesus.”¹

To be fair, the statue is only recognizable as Jesus when you get close enough to see the wounds in his feet: a reminder, cast in bronze, of how God has gone all in for us. What would it be like to open ourselves to Jesus’ presence in the least expected places and people as we move through this day?

Prayer

Jesus, seek me out today. Surprise me around every corner. Speak to me when I’m expecting silence. Find me when I think I’ve been left alone. Show yourself in every place that I’ve dared to imagine you won’t bother to be. There’s no wrong time or place to worship you. Amen.

¹ John Burnett, “Statue of a Homeless Jesus Startles a Wealthy Community.” NPR, April 13, 2014. <https://www.npr.org/2014/04/13/302019921/statue-of-a-homeless-jesus-startles-a-wealthy-community>

March 17, 2026: Relating to Yourself

Reading: Ephesians 5:14b

“Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Reflection

This fragment from Ephesians is most likely an early Christian hymn about the conversion experience. Conversion is like waking up, like coming back to life, like exiting the tomb into the breaking light of a new day.² It is also about you, beloved believer: you, who know something about the new life that suffuses you because Christ has claimed you as God’s own, God’s beloved. You are *so deeply* loved.

During this week’s reflections on what it means to be all in for relationships, with their highs and lows, it’s important not to overlook that Jesus’ commandment to love our neighbors also implies a call to love ourselves. For some of us, this isn’t a taxing proposition. For others—especially those of us who struggle with mental health—it feels like an impossibility. For all of us: our love for others is (ironically) at its most selfless when we are able to offer ourselves clear-eyed, unconditional love—as God, through Christ, first loved us.

How can you love yourself just a little bit more today—say, 10% more? What are the asks you’ve been ignoring from yourself that reflect a genuine need: more rest, more nourishment, more forgiveness, more time with the people you care about?

Prayer

Healing Spirit, wake me up from the small deaths I encounter each day: the powers and principalities that tell me that I don’t deserve your love, or even my own. Bring me back to life through the deathless love of Jesus. Amen.

² Richard Carlson, “Commentary on Ephesians 5:8-14” *Working Preacher*. March 30, 2014.
<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/fourth-sunday-in-lent/commentary-on-ephesians-58-14-3>

March 18, 2026: Relating to Neighbors

Reading: John 9:8-9

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?” Some were saying, “It is he.” Others were saying, “No, but it is someone like him.” He kept saying, “I am he.”

This reading is a short exchange in John 9 between the man who had been born blind—now no longer blind—and the neighbors who saw him *literally every day* and can’t recognize him, now that he can see.

Those neighbors got used to seeing the man in a particular position, literally and figuratively: begging in the same spot each day, dependent on their charity. But thanks to Jesus, everything is different... and not everyone is happy about it.

Jesus’ healing changed more than one man’s life: it disrupted an entire community. This suggests that the healing wasn’t just about a physical disability, but about a systemic problem that turned that disability into such a defining feature of one person’s identity in the first place. This story exposes the ways that the systems that perpetuate indignities and injustices can become such an expected part of the status quo that we can’t see those systems anymore—until Jesus exposes them, that is.

As you move through your day today or look back on it, take a few moments to really *perceive* your neighbors. Can you notice something about them today that you’ve never noticed before? If you do, ask yourself: what kept me from perceiving this? What assumptions have I made about this person? What categories have I put them in that keep me from recognizing more of who they really are?

Prayer

Sanctifying Spirit, open my mind to perceive who my neighbors really are: your beloved children. Open my heart to the ways that I’ve neglected to truly recognize them. Open my hands to welcome them and meet their needs. Amen.

March 19, 2026: Relating to Creation

Reading: John 9:6-7

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, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

Reflection

I have never fully appreciated the role of mud in this miracle. I'm not inclined to start appreciating it in mid-March, when the world outside seems awfully brown despite the nearness of spring.

But in this season of Lent, as we come to this story just a few weeks after being in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, I'm reminded: in the beginning, God made humankind out of a handful of mud.

Back in the beginning, scripture tells us, everything was a roiling mass of watery chaos, and God called up some dry ground right in the middle of it all. And when God created all the creatures, God shaped the first little *adam* out of a handful of dirt and some divine breath.

Dirt and water: that's what mud is. That's what God worked with, back in the beginning. That's what Jesus worked with, back in John 9. God has a history of playing in the mud.

It's easy to miss, but creation makes constant appearances in the stories of scripture, including this one. As more and more people of faith recognize that advocating for creation in the face of climate change and environmental damage is a sacred thing to do, noticing the presence of creation in the midst of our stories of faith is an important practice. Creation care is not something we need to shoehorn into our Christian discipleship. Creation, and God's love for it, has been here the whole time.

Today, practice seeing yourself as a part of nature, rather than set apart from it. Greet the tender green shoots, the morning frost, the chattering squirrels, the tentative songbirds—yes, even the mud—fellow co-creations of a loving God.

Prayer

Creating God, draw my attention to the ways in which you have spoken and are still speaking through the world you've made. Help me notice how creation appears in scripture. Teach me to treat it as a friend in my own life. Amen.

March 20, 2026: Relating to Those We'll Never Meet

Reading: 1 Samuel 16:7

When they came, [Samuel] looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely his anointed is now before the LORD." But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him, for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."

Reflection

Unless you are of that rare breed who gave up social media for Lent, chances are good that you've already spent a few minutes online today, looking at pictures and videos of people you've never met, or haven't seen in years.

This can be a blessing. Thanks to social media, I've made or maintained connections with people that otherwise I would have long lost track of, or never met at all. But social media can only ever offer brief, curated glimpses into other people's lives. The fullness and complexity of each person's beautiful, terrible, wild, boring, everyday life can't ever be honored in a 30-second video.

But sometimes we think it can. And in those moments, we're just a little bit like Samuel, on the hunt for the new king that God has already selected, taking in that hunky man-sandwich by the name Eliab and thinking, "Yeah, this guy, he's got the right stuff to be king."

Stop it right there, God tells the prophet. *You don't have the whole picture. But I do.*

Thanks to our media environment, we're immersed in a world that feels broader than ever. But without care, it can be shallower than ever too. What does it mean to be all-in on relationships when we live in a world where we can follow people we'll never meet?

At least in part, it means listening to what God tells Samuel. We never see the whole picture: only God does. We never fully perceive unique tragedies and joys, the burdens and blessings that shape people into the complex beings that they are. Whenever a social media post, a news story, or a reality TV show feels like it's inviting our judgment, it's wise to stop and remember: the only thing we know to be completely and irreducibly true about the person whom we behold is that they, too, are deeply beloved by God.

Prayer

Loving Spirit, guide me into a posture of compassion. Help me remember that I only ever know a part of someone else's story. Help me to reflect the way you love me in the way I treat others. Amen.

March 21, 2026: Relating to Enemies

Reading: Psalm 23:5

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.*

Reflection

It's Saturday, so I hope you got to sleep in before you tackle this dimension of being all-in on relationships: loving our enemies.

On one hand: *why*, Jesus?

On the other: *thank you*, Jesus.

I think of a hymn that maybe you'll hear during Holy Week: "Ah, Holy Jesus." The second stanza of this hymn invites the singer to step into Peter's and Judas' shoes, and consider I as a person who betrayed Jesus: "'Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee; I crucified thee!"

Intense, yes? (But what is Holy Week, if not intense?)

There's a profound but difficult truth in this song: we all have the potential to do the things we know aren't right, for reasons that... well, they seemed good enough at the time. But they weren't. And on some level, we knew that. Jesus' command to love our enemies? His forgiveness of the thief on the cross? His entire life and ministry? They all testify to a truth greater than our sin: there is absolutely nothing that can separate us from the love of God made known to us in Jesus Christ.

And this truth transforms this line of Psalm 23 in a rather worrying way. On first gloss, it's easy to read the way that God sets our table in the presence of our enemies as a not-so-subtle "so there" to those who have done us wrong.

But we worship Jesus, who sets a table for Peter on the night before his betrayal and death, and for Judas too. Maybe this line isn't telling us to exclude those we hate, but to invite them to come to the table and sit down beside us.

Prayer

Crucified Jesus, I need you to show me how to forgive. Please: open my heart to my enemies, and help me to let go completely of whatever debts they owe me. Root me firmly in the truth that you've already done the same for me. Amen.

WEEK OF MARCH 22, 2026

All In for Letting Go

Linnéa Clark

March 22, 2026: All In for Letting Go

Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-3

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know."

Reflection

At this point in his prophetic career, Ezekiel has learned something important: when God asks a question, the response is not as obvious as it seems. When God asks him if the dry bones can live, Ezekiel knows the logical answer. It's impossible for an entire valley of dry bones to live. He also knows that with God, anything is possible, and nothing is as final as it seems. Ezekiel can't answer with a confident "yes," but this is God, so "no" isn't the answer, either. What's a prophet to do?

Ezekiel lets go of his certainty that this long-dead army can never live again, and he demurs: "O Lord God, you know."

With a simple statement, he places his trust in God, even if he can't quite imagine whether or how this will all work out. By releasing his certainty, his assumption that death is final and that the natural order can't be contravened, Ezekiel prepares himself to witness wonders. What will God do next? How will these bones come alive again?

Pause for a moment to consider how your own assumptions about what is possible might prevent you from encountering God's resurrection work. How can you speak alongside Ezekiel with words of trust you might not yet fully believe, saying, *O Lord God, you know?*

Prayer

God, we think we know how the world works: lost things are gone forever, the dead stay dead, and our mistakes are permanent. Help us to let go of our certainty. When we think we know the future, remind us that you, O God, are the one who knows. Amen.

March 23, 2026: Letting Go of Urgency

Reading: John 11:3-7

So [Lazarus'] sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather, it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

Reflection

I'm the sort of person who jumps at the opportunity to help other people. There's a core part of my personality that wants to feel useful, capable, and needed. Sometimes, this works out well: I'm able to help friends and strangers alike, and I find a reflection of God in our interactions. But the more overwhelmed I get, the more my impulse to help others starts to show negative effects in my life. I miss emails, drop balls, and spend less time with my family and friends. When other people's urgency becomes my own urgency too frequently, I pay the price.

When Jesus receives the message about Lazarus' illness, he *could* hurry off to respond. It's what his disciples expect, and what Lazarus' sisters Martha and Mary expect, too. His ministry has always involved responding to people's urgent calls for help. But this time, Jesus lets go of the demand to go immediately. He stays another two days. This might seem insensitive, but some biblical scholars calculate that, given the distance to Bethany, Jesus could not have made it to Lazarus' bedside before he died. The sisters' message was already too late when Jesus received it.

By letting go of the urgency, pausing before responding, Jesus is able to prepare himself and his disciples for what will soon occur. It is a chance to center himself, take a breath, move with deliberate intention toward Bethany, and allow Lazarus' raising to be truly extraordinary. When Lazarus walks out of the tomb alive, it will set the conspiracy leading to Jesus' own death into motion. By arriving too late instead of on demand, Jesus will teach the whole village that no one is too far gone for God, not even a man who has been dead for four days.

Prayer

God, when others' demands threaten to drain us, help us pause. Let us balance care for others with care for ourselves. Let your love always be revealed in our actions and our choices. Amen.

March 24, 2026: Letting Go of Certainty

Reading: John 11:23-27

Jesus said to [Martha], “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

Reflection

Martha knows her theology. As she speaks with Jesus, grieving Lazarus’ recent death, she offers the academically correct response to his assertion that Lazarus will rise again: “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day,” when God will judge the righteous and unrighteous. Many Jews of the Second Temple period believed in a final resurrection and day of judgment, and Martha is one of them. Her response is perfectly orthodox.

But Jesus isn’t seeking Martha’s theological certainty. He is here to lead the people of Lazarus’ town beyond what they *think* they know into a more wondrous, less certain world: a world where the dead can live, where vulnerability is stronger than power, where empire is broken. He tells her directly that he is the resurrection and the life, and he presses her again: “Do you believe this?”

Martha takes the opportunity Jesus offers her, and like the prophet Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones, she chooses the leap of faith. Her next words are not about a hypothetical theology but a present reality, a profound confession of faith. Jesus is the Messiah.

Letting go of certainty, especially theological certainty, can be unsettling. Sometimes, it even feels like a flying leap to an unknown landing. But to let go of certainty is to offer God room to transform everything we thought we knew. Even metaphors become concrete.

Prayer

God of mystery, you invite us to take leaps of faith, but the vertigo we feel on the edge of letting go can be overwhelming. Reassure us as we practice trusting you. Unclench our grip on certainty and show us what trust looks like. Amen.

March 25, 2026: Letting Go of the Known

Reading: John 11:43-44

When [Jesus] had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 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."

Reflection

The townspeople of Bethany know how death works. When their loved ones die, they wash their bodies and prepare them for burial. To maintain the dignity of the dead as nature takes its course, they bind their hands and feet and shroud them in cloth. Then, they take them to the shared tomb, where the bodies decompose. After a year or so, the bones can be collected and interred in an ossuary for a secondary burial.

Because they are intimately familiar with the ordinary details of death in their community, the people of Bethany are shocked by what happens at the tomb when Jesus arrives to see Lazarus. First, Jesus asks for the tomb to be unsealed, despite their cautionary comments about the odor. Then, at Jesus' command, Lazarus walks out. His body is alive, but he is still dressed for death, with his hands and feet tied and his face covered.

This is the moment when Bethany's residents have to let go of what they think they know about death—that the dead stay dead, they decompose, and they certainly don't leave their tombs. Lazarus is alive, and he needs their help *now*. Someone needs to untie his hands and feet. Someone needs to uncover his face. Someone needs to dress him, feed him, escort him home. They seem to pause for a single moment of shock, in which Jesus urges them, "Unbind him, and let him go." Then, they get to work together. Lazarus has come home.

When God surprises us with the impossible, it could terrify us into running away or freeze us in place with shock. Often, though, what God needs from us in these wondrous moments is our help: to spring into action to assist our neighbors in a way we never expected. How is God urging you to help your neighbor in an unexpected way today?

Prayer

God, we resist letting go of what we think we know. When the moment to act arrives, do not let us be frozen or deterred. Empower us to act, to care for our neighbors whose need is urgent. Amen.

March 26, 2026: Letting Go of What Will Come

Reading: John 11:47-50

So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council and said, "What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed."

Reflection

Lazarus' resurrection has an important place in Jesus' ministry. As the gospel of John tells the story, the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem have been suspicious of Jesus for some time, but the news of Lazarus is the final straw. Now, they feel forced to act, lest the Romans punish them. In John's gospel, Jesus always acts in full knowledge of the consequence of his actions, even to his final words from the cross, "It is finished." Jesus is certainly aware of the consequences in the near future when he raises Lazarus.

Yet from the moment he receives the message from Martha and Mary, Jesus chooses to let go of any remaining doubt or worry about his future. Deliberately, he waits; deliberately, he walks to Bethany; deliberately, he speaks with the grieving sisters; deliberately, with tears streaming down his face, he calls Lazarus back to life. There is no reversing this act of resurrection. Jesus faces the full consequences of his life and ministry, and filled with love, he chooses to act anyway, again and again.

Sometimes, when God's call to care for our neighbors reaches us, there are predictable consequences. They are not always good. The care our neighbors need may be politically unpopular; it may place us at odds with our existing laws; it may be financially expensive; it may be emotionally costly. Caring for our neighbors can even cause the death of our assumptions about right and wrong, "good" people and "bad" people. For example, consider the experience of some congregations that commit finances and effort to build food pantries or housing for unhoused people in places where the neighbors would prefer that poverty stay out of sight. Or consider the way your own assumptions have been challenged by volunteering at a soup kitchen or by receiving benefits yourself.

Standing at the entrance to Lazarus' tomb, Jesus shows us what it looks like to act anyway. Resurrection is urgent and necessary, come what may.

Prayer

God, when our fears of the future hold us back from doing what is important, move us toward action. Stir up a spirit of courage in our hearts, even when circumstances challenge us. Amen.

March 27, 2026: Letting Go of Hesitation

Reading: Ezekiel 37:4-6

Then [God] said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you and will cause flesh to come upon you and cover you with skin and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord."

Reflection

After surrendering his assumptions about whether the valley of dry bones can live, Ezekiel takes a leap of faith. He begins preaching to the bones, which should not be able to hear or heed him.

The impossible happens. Bones rattle and knock together as they move toward one another, organizing into skeletons. Muscles and tendons and skin grow. A wind from God fills the newly-formed lungs, and the long-dead army stands on its feet again, alive. The army is resurrected before Ezekiel even finishes delivering the words of the prophecy entrusted to him by God. There is no more hesitation. God moves swiftly. The timing is exactly right.

Flying trapeze performers amaze circus-goers with daring jumps and soaring leaps, swooping through the air over a net far below. Though the flying gets the attention from spectators, performers know that completing a trick safely is about having the right timing, not just taking a brave leap from a platform or swinging trapeze. A well-timed release gives them the altitude to perform a complete trick; it sends them safely and precisely into the hands of their catchers. They communicate with each other and develop trust, and when the right moment arrives, they do not hesitate.

The miracle is accomplished as soon as Ezekiel opens his mouth to prophesy. The situation is improbable—a valley of the dead can't hear him—but God's timing is perfect. The noisier, flashier miracle happens as the bones come together, but the quieter, more remarkable miracle happens as Ezekiel takes the leap of faith to trust God. This is the moment for which God was waiting all along.

Prayer

God of immaculate timing, help us to trust your call when the moment is right. As we fly into the unknown, catch us safely in your arms and hold us in your care. Amen.

March 28, 2026: Letting Go in Real Time

Reading: Ezekiel 37:12b-14

Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people, and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.

Reflection

The story of Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones isn't about a dead army coming back to life. It's a prophetic vision folded within a larger prophecy. More than just an object lesson about a prophet learning to trust God, it comes with a message for the prophet to take back to his own people. When Ezekiel speaks to the exiles longing for home but despairing that they will ever return, God charges him with a word of hope. God will bring them out of their metaphorical death—their exile and alienation—and restore them “on your own soil.” Restoration seems improbable, yet it is what God promises.

To whom does God send us with an improbable prophecy today, and where do we need to let go of our own assumptions about the impossibility of God's call? Consider your own community or neighborhood. Where are people suffering, even if their suffering is tucked out of sight? Who is going without food or housing? Who is struggling to find hope? Who is drained dry? Which situations feel truly hopeless, like conversations across lines of political difference or a cycle of poverty that seems to have no exit?

Ezekiel does not need to resurrect the entire valley of dry bones. God takes care of that. All Ezekiel needs to do is take the next faithful step, to say, “O Lord God, you know,” and to begin his dry-bones prophecy. When we face insurmountable challenges, we don't need to raise all the dry bones, either. By letting go of our assumptions and trusting God, we invite God to work through us. With Ezekiel, we take the next faithful step.

Prayer

Infinite God, you cradle all of creation in your hands, and you breathe life into desperate situations. When we feel daunted and overwhelmed, teach us to trust you again. Guide us toward the next faithful step. We leave resurrection in your hands. Amen.

WEEK OF MARCH 29, 2026

All In for the Highs and Lows

Victoria Larson

March 29, 2026, Palm and Passion Sunday: Turmoil in the City

Reading: Matthew 21:10-11

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

Reflection

At the church where I worship, we make a procession around the city block on Palm Sunday. We traipse past the local bakery and the Whole Foods and the nail salon and the place with the amazing Mexican ice cream. We're bundled up against the cold and waving palm fronds with varying degrees of enthusiasm. We even have a bagpiper. We are a strange spectacle, and many passersby give us lingering stares—"what are they *doing*?"—and I admit, it's not easy to tell for those on the outside.

Apparently, Jesus didn't have that issue.

He rode into the city of Jerusalem, and it threw the place into *turmoil*. That word, "turmoil," is more like "shook" or "quake" in Greek. The question wasn't "What are they doing?" but "Who is this?" and the answer was evidently such a source of joy for some and apprehension for others that it shook Jerusalem down to its bedrock.

The Greek word for turmoil appears only three times in Matthew: on Palm Sunday, on Good Friday, and on Easter morning. The same word describes the turmoil in the city, the quaking of the earth when Jesus died, and the trembling of the guards when the angel at the tomb announced Christ's resurrection. The same juddering word brackets Holy Week, as though to remind us that our joy and our grief, our highs and our lows, are never very far apart.

There is no right way to arrive at this week, the most sacred one on the Christian calendar. There is only the promise that God is here, right here, and that there is no convulsion so great that it can move our unshakeable God.

Prayer

Unshakeable God, anchor me. Where I am feeling apathy, open me up to experience the highs and lows of this week. Through the peaks and valleys of your Passion, deepen my devotion. Amen.

March 30, 2026: Mary of Bethany

Reading: John 12:1-3

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus's feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Reflection

Here's what I think about when I try to imagine a how much a pound of perfume is:

I own exactly three bottles of perfume—they hold about five ounces altogether—and I have had them for over fifteen years. None of those bottles is more than half-empty. That means that in the past fifteen years, I have used less than three ounces of perfume.

There are *sixteen* ounces in a pound.

Mary is pouring out *more than a lifetime supply* of perfume onto Jesus' feet.

Can you imagine the smell?

Overwhelming. Demanding. Insouciant. Bellicose. That perfume grabbed everyone's odor receptors and took them prisoner. It issued no demands. It was not there to negotiate. Make no mistake: every person in that house smelled like perfume for *days*.

Mary's action has been described in lots of different ways over the years, sacrifice and devotion being recurring favorites. And it is that. But it also feels like an act of rebellion.

Mary knew that Jesus was headed for the cross. She could feel the shadow of death stretching over the dinner table. And she mounted an offensive against the encroaching promise of decay's stench: she reached for that pound of costly nard, and there she went: all in.

Prayer

Jesus, imprint on me the scent of hope: hope potent enough to resist the power of death. Amen.

March 31, 2026: The Fallen Grain

Reading: John 12:24

[Jesus said,] "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit."

Reflection

The dying, living grain of wheat reveals a terrible and wonderful truth: the highs and the lows of life are intimately intertwined. We can't have one without the other.

The cross is, of course, the clearest emblem of this teaching. As Christians, we look at the cross, a Roman instrument of death, a torturer and executioner in one simple device, and we see in it the means of our redemption. We look at Jesus on the cross, naked and dying, and we see the glory of God most fully revealed.

Holy Week brings us face-to-face with the most basic elements of our humanity and God's divinity, and Jesus names a big one here in this tiny teaching about the grain of wheat: our fear of death. That fear is deeply instilled in us. But here, Jesus gently promises that there is life on the other side: life and growth beyond our wildest imagining.

We live in a culture that, true to our fear, is pretty avoidant when it comes to the topic of death. We find it hard to even say the words, preferring to wrap the sharp edges of our grief in euphemism: passed away, went home, crossed over. What would it look like to embrace Jesus' promise that death is not the end? Would it let us confront some other difficult patterns that we've been avoiding? Would it let us bury what needs to die within us in order to receive new life?

Which old habits, old stories, old ways of being in the world do you need to release to death? What do you hope might rise up in their place?

Prayer

Resurrecting God, bring me through death to life again. Take what needs to die in me and bury it in good soil. Raise up new fruit: new stories, new habits, new relationships, new hope. Amen.

April 1, 2026: Tokens of the Resurrection

Reading: John 13:30-31

So, after receiving the piece of bread, [Judas] immediately went out. And it was night. When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him.'

Reflection

As Holy Week draws on, it gets harder and harder to tell the highs apart from the lows. This especially seems to be a problem for Jesus, who was just betrayed by one of his closest friends and confidantes, and who sees in this the glory of God.

I'm reading a book called *Sometimes Amazing Things Happen* by Elizabeth Ford, who describes what it's like to offer psychiatric care at a prison hospital. Her breakthroughs with patients often arrive because she treats them humanely, and in the giving and receiving of mutual respect, her patients let down their guard, open up to her, and reveal tender vulnerabilities that are safe nowhere else in the world of prison. Both Ford and her patient know that these moments are fleeting and insufficient: that shared moment of connection will not be enough to break the patient out of the prison that keeps harming their bodies, minds, and souls. But it is a token of the Resurrection: a miraculous glimpse of humanity persisting in the most dehumanizing of institutions, a flicker of the glory of God shining in abyssal despair.

Such flickers and tokens are visible only when we are willing to allow our hearts to be broken, as Jesus let his own be broken by Judas' betrayal. They are available only when we are willing to love the world with all its highs and lows, knowing that the world will offer us both friendship and disappointment, loyalty and betrayal, beauty and pain. It feels impossible to love the world like that, to allow our hearts to be filled only to be shattered. But this is how Jesus loves us: unrelentingly, with every single piece of his broken and still beating heart.

Prayer

Jesus, forgive me for the ways that I turn away from the pain of the world, and the pain of those you love. I am afraid of having my heart broken. Teach me how to love as you love. Show me the tokens of the Resurrection that glimmer in my own life. Amen.

April 2, 2026, Maundy Thursday: A Sign of Freedom

Reading: Exodus 12:13

The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

Reflection

Tonight, as Christians around the globe observe Maundy Thursday, our Jewish siblings mark the second night of Passover: they remember the sacred story of how the angel of Death passed over the houses of the Hebrews enslaved in Egypt who daubed their doorway with lamb's blood.

Imagine that moment. How the Hebrews had witnessed the unfolding of nine wonders in the land of Egypt. How Pharaoh's hard heart kept him from releasing them from slavery. How they received the promise of a tenth plague, even more terrible than the nine that had decimated the roaring Egyptian economy: a plague that would take the firstborn child of every household. How nothing stood between them and that towering threat but a thin smear of lamb's blood over their doorway: a symbol, a sign, nothing more. It couldn't have felt like enough... until, miraculously, it was.

Now imagine the disciples, gathered around the table with Jesus. Tonight, Jesus will be handed over to the empire. The hard-hearted will arrest him, put him on trial, and crucify him. The powers of the world will take the life of the Son of God. And on this night, Jesus hands them a fragment of bread. A sip from a cup. A few words: "Do this in remembrance of me." It was a symbol, a sign, nothing more. It couldn't have felt like enough... until, miraculously, it was.

What signs and symbols do you cling to in the midst of crushing circumstances? Tonight is a night to celebrate them, to go all in on their paradoxical power: in their littleness, their weakness, God's strength is revealed.

Prayer

God of the little things: thank you for the words, the signs, the symbols, that sustain me when it seems like that the powers of the world are winning and everything may be lost. It doesn't feel like much sometimes. But God, let it be enough. Amen.

April 3, 2026, Good Friday: The Ultimate Commitment

Reading: John 19:30

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Reflection

Throughout salvation history, starting with creation and moving forward from there, God has shown us over and over again how God is willing to go all in for us. God creates and blesses, forgives and forbears, guides and accompanies, and does it with and through even the most unlikely characters.

But tonight, Christians tell the story of the ultimate moment when God went all-in for us: the night when the Son of God—the second person of the Trinity—submitted to the power of death to prove that there is nowhere, not one single place, where God will not go for us. Not even beyond the boundary of death.

There is nothing for you to do. Nothing for you to earn. Nothing for you to feel before this can be true: God has already done this.

God has already gone all in for you.

Prayer

God, you have shown that there is nowhere you will not go to bring me home. As I contemplate Jesus' death on the cross, teach me to love my neighbor, even just a little bit more, with that kind of strength, unrestrained by reason or reciprocity. Amen.

April 4, 2026, Holy Saturday: All in for Mercy

Reading: John 19:38-40

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission, so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews.

Reflection

Nicodemus is back!

We first met him way back in chapter 3 of John's gospel (and several weeks ago in our observance of Lent), when he came to Jesus by night and asked for clarification on some of these teachings that Jesus had been dishing out. Nicodemus is a Pharisee, a religious authority, someone who is supposed to have all the answers. But Jesus, in a classic Jesus move, only leaves him with more questions. Nicodemus leaves the nighttime encounter with Jesus frustrated and confused, and we aren't at all sure where he's going to go from there.

But now he reappears, and John reveals to us a portion of what's been happening in Nicodemus' heart over these past sixteen chapters: he has become a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one. The seeds that Jesus planted that night have grown into a faith that blooms at night: it is hidden, but beautiful.

Now that faith leads Nicodemus to claim Jesus' body. I imagine that when Nicodemus claims Jesus, it is with that same sense of confusion and frustration, washed with grief—*this isn't how things were supposed to go*. But I imagine, too, that there was an edge of not knowing. An openness to what Jesus might still be able to do. A generative uncertainty. Nicodemus, of all people, knows what Jesus is capable of doing with that. And based on that not-knowing alone, Nicodemus is willing to risk revealing his discipleship. He's willing to go all in for what he can't be certain of... but nevertheless hopes might just be.

Prayer

Holy Spirit, whisper to me about the what-ifs and the maybes. Not the ones that raise my blood pressure, but the ones that raise my hopes. The ones that breathe possibility into what feels stagnant, and life into what I thought was dead. Amen.

April 5, 2026, Easter Sunday: All in for Resurrection

Reading: John 20:16

Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).

Reflection

What a moment of whiplash for Mary: she has shown up at the tomb intent on caring for Jesus' body. Unable to find it, she seems to be growing frantic: *just tell me where he is*, she cries to this tear-blurred form who must be the gardener. *I will take him away*. Picture Mary, intent on fireman-carrying the body of Jesus to its final resting place. She could not save her friend from his death, but she has gone all-in on making sure that his body is treated with dignity.

But into her desperate low, a familiar voice speaks her name. And she finds herself, all at once, in the midst of the highest of highs:

Jesus Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Prayer

Alleluia, Jesus!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Write it onto my heart, so I carry it wherever I go: into my highest highs, and lowest lows. You live, and so does my hope, my faith, my love. You live, and so everything is: alleluia.

Amen.

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