



**FASTING
& FEASTING**

DEVOTIONS FOR LENT

2019

DENYING
OURSELVES &
DELIGHTING
IN OUR
SAVIOUR

Introduction

I did not grow up in a church that followed the church calendar. To this day I belong to a church that does not follow the church calendar on a meticulous basis. Yet I and many others see the value of observing Lent and using it as a time of deepening, discipline and devotion. I view it as a Nazirite vow of sorts, where I set myself aside in special ways for a season to the Lord. I am very excited that we have been able to provide this book and am very grateful to all those who have contributed to it in some way. It is my prayer that this collection of devotions is useful to you and helps you as you journey with Jesus through the Lenten season.

Keith Fortenberry | Pastor | Calvary Chapel Heidelberg

The title of the book you hold in your hands, 'Fasting and Feasting: Denying Ourselves & Delighting in Our Saviour', encapsulates well what Lent, at its best, is all about. Lent is a forty-day season of fasting, emulating the forty days our Lord Jesus fasted in the desert before He began his public ministry. But Lent is no exercise in ascetic self-denial merely as an end in itself, or as a work that earns us favour before God. The spiritual discipline of fasting, as the Bible so often shows us, is rather connected with drawing near to God, seeking His wisdom, often in times of testing or preparation, as well as being a mark of repentance. As we go through Lent, our desire is to seek more of our Lord Jesus Christ, to grow in holiness, and to prepare together as the church to celebrate the great feast of the Resurrection of Jesus at Easter. And not just in our inner life of prayer, scripture reading and worship; but in practical acts of service and righteousness to those around us. Jesus Himself puts it this way in Mark 1:15: "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the gospel." Which means that, as we journey with Jesus on His way to the Cross, remembering the life he lived for us, and the death he died for us, we are seeking to delight in Jesus our Saviour, in other words, to feast on Him.

I pray that this Lent may be for you a time of rich spiritual reflection and growth in the knowledge of the Saviour, and that the readings, devotions and prayers collected here may be a blessing to you in this. I am thankful to all those who have contributed to this book, and I am grateful that we are able to provide it.

Samuel Garrard | Pastor | Calvary Chapel Freiburg

How to use this book

This book consists of devotions based on the Lectionary (RCL) readings for Lent 2019. The contributors are leaders and congregants from Calvary Chapel Heidelberg (CCHD) and Calvary Chapel Freiburg (CCF), and a few others. This book is part of a project that CCHD and CCF are doing together for Lent this year. Both CCHD & CCF are making this book available for use in their churches. Also, both churches will be teaching through a Lenten series entitled 'Lifting Our Eyes'. The series will look at specific events in the Bible that took place on mountains, culminating at Mount Golgotha on Good Friday.

How to use the daily readings

Ask God to speak to you personally as you read the texts provided. See what themes connect the passages and how they relate to the season of Lent.

A word about Lent

Lent is a season for fasting, reflection and deepening. While fasting often accompanies Lent, it is not required. Rather, Lent should be used as a season of intentional reflection and tearing down of strongholds in our lives. Lent is not a work in the sense that it contributes to our righteous standing before God. That is given by faith and faith alone in the once-for-all satisfactory and sufficient work of Christ. Lent is simply a means of deepening ourselves in Christ and growing in holiness. Moreover, Lent prepares us for the joys of Easter. As we journey with Jesus on His way to the cross, we are mindful of His life that He lived vicariously for us. The number forty is often associated with testing and fasting in the Bible, such as the Hebrews' forty years in the wilderness, Moses' forty days on Sinai and Jesus' forty days in the desert just to name a few. While there is difference of opinion on how to calculate the forty days of Lent, seeing as there are forty-six days between Ash Wednesday and Easter, the best way is to see the Sundays as mini celebrations and reminders of the resurrection. For this reason, some suggest that Sundays should not be fast days. Either way, the important thing is to seek to grow in Christlikeness



Turning to God

Wednesday, March 6, 2019: Ash Wednesday

JOEL 2:1-2, 12-17 OR ISAIAH 58:1-12; PSALM 51:1-17; 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20B-6:10; MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

As we begin the season of Lent, it is important to remind ourselves that it is not simply a religious or external exercise. Jesus warns against mere external acts of devotion (Mt. 6:1-6), and Joel calls us to rend the heart and not the garment. Joel reminds us that the external act has no value unless our heart is where the true work is taking place. In this season, we are turning once again to God. The wonderful thing is that this is done not to earn God's acceptance. The call to turn to God is grounded in His mercy and grace (Joel 2:13). We approach a throne of grace when we come to God. We can come to God in contrition with confidence because of our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ. Joel called on the priests to intercede for the people. Christ is the ultimate Priest who intercedes for His people and thus God spares them. He is the Mediator who reconciles us to God by paying for our sin (2 Cor. 5:20-6:10). Thus, by His redemptive grace, we can turn to God with the assurance that He accepts us.

Prayer: Father in Heaven. I thank you that I have a faithful High Priest who takes away my sin and stands in my place. Through Him I have life and through His blood I offer myself in contrition and lay hold of your mercy that you freely give through Him. Amen.

-Keith Fortenberry-



In our Darkest Moments

Thursday, March 7, 2019

PSALM 91:1-2, 9-16; EXODUS 5:10-23; ACTS 7:30-34

In our darkest times of pain and suffering we can often only ask one question: "Why? God - why are you allowing this to happen?" It feels as if God has abandoned us. Moses must have felt like this when he was considering the plight of his people (Ex. 5:23). In Egypt, the people of Israel were exploited, mistreated, humiliated and beaten, while God seemed to be silent, looking the other way. But God had promised to ease the suffering of His people and to lead them out of captivity (Acts 7:34). Jesus, too, asked the question: "Why?" On the cross, innocent and alone, He suffered an agonizing death under the weight of our sin, forsaken by His Father. Yet, against the promise of the resurrection, He was willing to take this burden upon Himself, and was thus ultimately glorified at the right hand of the Father. God not only sees our pain, He has experienced it Himself through Jesus Christ. He knows it very well. The marks on Jesus' body bear witness to it. He personally takes part in the suffering we go through. For our God, pain is never meaningless; He is never indifferent to it. So, shouldn't we turn to God in our darkest moments and call upon Him and cry to Him for help? (Ps. 91:14-15).

Prayer: Lord, Your ways are too great for me to understand. There are things in my life which are painful, and where I can't see their purpose. But I know that You are faithful and that You see my pain. Amen.

-Damian Domke-



Trusting in Our Protector

Friday, March 8, 2019

PSALM 91:1-2, 9-16; EXODUS 6:1-13; ACTS 7:35-42

Did you love to build dens or hiding places when you were a kid? Blankets, chairs, pillows, and tables taken from all over the house could be put together to form an enchanted place of refuge.

Human-beings are characterised by a deep longing for protection; for a warm and secure place. God promises His people that He is the ultimate refuge. He wants to lead His people into the promised land with His mighty hand. But when Moses reminds the people of this promise, they are discouraged and lack confidence. God's call to freedom seems too risky, too absurd. Later, the people of Israel doubt God again. Stephen talks about this in his speech before the Sanhedrin. Although they had experienced God's supernatural protection as they passed through the Red Sea, they now question God's commandment and prefer self-made gods.

God desires to be your protection, too. He desires to be the existential place of refuge your inner-being longs for. You can experience this as you fully trust in Him. The safest place on earth is with God. Do you trust Him?

Prayer: Father I thank You that You hold me and keep me safe. Help me to trust in You at all times. Amen.

-Tobias Zehender-



God is in Control

Saturday, March 9, 2019

PSALM 91:1-2; 9-16; ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8; JOHN 12:27-36

Jesus says that His soul is troubled (Jn 12). This shows us that He was fully human. He knew feelings of fear and desperation. They were part of His life on earth. Therefore, we can be sure that we can bring our fears and sorrows to Him anytime and that He takes them seriously. He has promised to take care of us. He is in control of our lives. It can be helpful to articulate this truth every now and then, just like we read in Psalm 91. In times of trouble, we should remind ourselves that the same almighty God who made the heavens and the earth, is also our refuge; that He never leaves us and that He is so much more powerful than all our problems. Although we don't always feel like it, we can always be one hundred per cent sure that God is with us, that He cares for us and that our situation, no matter how threatening and frightening it may seem, is under His ultimate authority and power.

Prayer: Father, You are almighty. You hold everything in Your hands, including my life and the situation I am in right now. Thank You for knowing my situation and for already working to take care of it. Amen.

-Oliver Greger-



Past and Future

Sunday, March 10, 2019: First Sunday in Lent

DEUTERONOMY 26:1-11; PSALM 91:1-2; 9-16; ROMANS 10:8B-13; LUKE 4:1-13

Once during a Bible study, I realized that there are many different occasions on which God instructs His people to remember certain miracles. He wants them to consciously speak of and celebrate His works. I believe God knows us human beings very, very well. He knows how quickly we can forget how powerful and loving He is. How quickly we can become afraid of what lies ahead and the challenges we face. For this reason, we should frequently remember His acts of salvation. Remembering God's intervention strengthens our trust in Him. Remembrance and reliance go hand in hand (Phil. 4:6-7).

Ask yourself today: Which things has God saved you from? How has He provided for you? When was the last time He helped you? God is the same, yesterday, today and forever: your loving Father.

Prayer: Abba, Father, please help me to remember what a loving God you have been to me in my past, so that I learn to trust you with my future. Amen.

-Kristina Imwalle-



Sin Has Consequences

Monday, March 11, 2019

PSALM 17; 1 CHRONICLES 21:1-17; 1 JOHN 2:1-6

Each day brings the opportunity to live a life pleasing to God. Yet we daily make many decisions according to our will and not God's will. Even David, a man after God's own heart, lets himself get carried away and makes sinful decisions which bring consequences (1 Chr. 21:1-17). David trusts himself rather than the promise God gave Abraham (Gen. 15:5). It was not David who had the power to cause Israel to grow. David seems to have forgotten that it was God who gives increase to Israel. Sin has consequences and David had to experience that. Likewise, our sin and shortcomings have consequences, even though Christ has paid the penalty for our sin as believers. It is good to be reminded and be thankful that Christ has paid for our sin once and for all at the cross. He is our advocate before the Father (1 Jn 2:2). He gives us new hope.

Prayer: Lord God, you see my life and the decisions that I all too often make without you. I thank you that you became man in order to free me from the burden of sin, as I find myself helpless in the attempt to free myself. Thank you for your sacrifice at the cross, where you bore all my sin. Amen.

-Morris Niederhofer-



Completely Purified

Tuesday, March 12, 2019

PSALM 17; ZECHARIAH 3:1-10; 2 PETER 2:4-21

Just as Satan accuses Joshua in our text from Zechariah 3, so he often accuses us, too. And so it is that after we have trespassed against God's commandments, our consciences often deem these accusations from Satan legitimate. Consequently, we are paralyzed by thoughts of impurity, doubt and condemnation. How often do we forget that we are already cleansed of all transgression, and that by His blood Jesus has washed away all our sins? Every day we need to run to Him and claim this forgiveness. If we do this, our reaction to Satan's accusations will be different. "Yes, I have sinned", we may nod, but then we point to Jesus "But in Him all is forgiven." In Jesus, the debt has already been paid (1 Jn 1:7), the enemy is defeated, and we are clothed in new, pure garments. Hence, with full awareness of this abundant grace, we are able to walk in God's ways and live our lives free of thoughts of condemnation.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for giving Yourself up in my stead. And thank You for daily providing this deliverance anew, for every single sin I have committed. Thank You that your sacrifice is more than enough for all my trespasses. Amen.

-Markus Bretzke-



In View of Eternity

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

PSALM 17; JOB 1:1-22; LUKE 21:34-22:6

Today's verses are a good encouragement, as Luke 21:34 says, not to get distracted by our everyday lives here on earth and so to lose our view of eternity - either in good times, where we can quickly become too busy with our lives and daily routines to the effect that God and our relationship with Him are neglected; or in bad times, when circumstances are difficult and worries and concern seem to overwhelm us (Ps.17). This life is not the fulfilment of our hope. We are waiting for Jesus to come again! We want to be prepared for his return (Lk. 21:34-36). We want to ask God that He would give us strong faith, faith that stays with us in good times and faith that does not break in difficult situations! Faith like that of Job, who, when he lost all his sons and daughters, prayed: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord!" (Job 1:21). We cannot produce this kind of faith ourselves, but we can pray that God gives it to us, and, like David, we can trust that God hears us, shows kindness to us and saves us when we seek refuge in Him (Ps. 17:6-7).

Prayer: Lord we pray to You for today, but also for the rest of our lives, that You would give and then strengthen our faith! Please help us to be reminded in our everyday lives that Jesus is going to come again and that our hope is for another, eternal life. Amen.

-Judith Garrard-



Trusting and Seeking Christ

Thursday, March 14, 2019

PSALM 27; GENESIS 13:1-7, 14-18; PHILIPPIANS 3:2-12

Lent is a great time for getting spiritual clarity. We seek to set our focus on our Lord Jesus Christ, perhaps by fasting, or else by setting aside greater time for prayer or the Word. When we find this difficult, we can know that this is God, in His mercy, using difficulty to show us where our priorities really lie, what our hearts really desire. In our texts today, we see how David, Abraham and the Apostle Paul all faced hardships. The Lord uses difficulties and hardships both to strengthen our faith, that we truly build our lives on His promises, and to focus our desires, that we recognize more and more that it is God Himself - Father, Son & Holy Spirit who alone can give us eternal joy. May God grant you grace, to say with Paul: 'I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord', to say with David: 'One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD'.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, whom the Father sent to testify about Jesus, may You more and more make known to me the glory of Christ that I may rest in his promises, and find joy in him, my Saviour. Amen.

-Samuel Garrard-



Wait for the Lord

Friday, March 15, 2019

PSALM 27; GENESIS 14:17-24; PHILIPPIANS 3:17-20

It's something Paul apparently had to tell the Philippians 'often': that God has enemies (Phil. 3:18). Lent is a time that reminds us of these harder realities of the Christian life: Christ had to suffer, and Christ had enemies. As His followers, we too will experience suffering, and we too will come up against those who live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Our natural instinct is to fight fire with fire, to get upset, to get defensive or aggressive, even resort to violence. But Paul shows us a better way and asks us to follow his example. He says our citizenship is in heaven, that is, we belong to Christ's Kingdom. He is both Lord and Saviour. So we should weep for those who oppose Christ, we should pray, as David prayed, and we should trust, as Abraham trusted, that God is able to deliver our enemies into our hand (Gen. 14:20), whether that means as Lord He puts His enemies under His feet (1 Cor. 15:25, Ps. 110:1), or whether that means as Saviour He grants repentance that leads to life (Acts 11:18). When opposition comes, as it surely will, let us look to heaven, and 'Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord'. (Ps. 27:14).

Prayer: Lord Jesus, each time I take of the bread and wine in communion, help me to remember that out of love You gave Your life for me, while I was yet your enemy, that through your death you might reconcile me to God. Change my heart, that I might follow your example, loving my enemies and praying for them. Amen.

-Samuel Garrard-



God's Kindness: Source of Strength & Joy

Saturday, March 16, 2019

PSALM 27; PSALM 118:26-29; MATTHEW 23:37-39

In Psalm 27 and Psalm 118:26-29 the writers are deeply moved by God's kindness and by His favour. These prayers are full of joy that the Lord faithfully stands by His followers and shows His grace continually. Most of us should be able to relate to these kinds of prayers. Such prayers of joy seem appropriate. But such a reaction to our good God is not always the way it is. Israel experienced His kindness over and over again, but yet, as Jesus laments in Matthew 23:37-39, they also ignored God's outstretched arm over and over again. We who trust in God's kindness often act in a similar way to the Israelites - to our own disadvantage. We might not wilfully turn our back on God's kindness, but we (at least I do) let it happen far too often that in the hectic pace of everyday life, we take no time to reflect on it. It is necessary to actively ponder the kindness of God. David knew: In order to behold the beauty of the Lord (Ps. 27:4), it is necessary to actively seek His face (Ps. 118:4, 8). That is what we want to do now.

Prayer: Lord, You are the rock on which I stand safely. I praise Your never-ending kindness. Help me to not lose sight of Your kindness. Amen.

-Henrik Imwalle-



To Dwell in the House of the Lord

Sunday, March 17, 2019: Second Sunday in Lent

GENESIS 15:1-12, 17-18; PSALM 27; PHILIPPIANS 3:17-4:1; LUKE 13:31-35

We may "dwell in the house of the Lord" (Ps. 27:4) and are "citizens of heaven" (Phil. 3:20). What this means is that the ruler of the universe invites us to let our everyday lives be shaped by Him. He provides the house, we can move in; God wants to dwell with us! Our imperfection will be made perfect by God's glory and ultimately, we will reflect Him (Phil. 3:21). Part of God's greatness and glory is his gentleness: he lets us help shape the relationship with Him. Abram believed and was rewarded, which ultimately resulted in the covenant with God. God's covenant with us today also means light and peace. Rejecting God's offer leads to the house becoming desolate and empty (Lk. 13:35). God does not want to impose His relationship on you, but He wants your decision for Him every day.

Prayer: Please open up our eyes to Your magnificence and glory today. Thank You that You want to enter into relationship with us. May we see You. Amen.

-Elisabeth Brandt-



Identifying and Eradicating Idols

Monday, March 18, 2019

PSALM 105:1-42; EXODUS 33:1-6; ROMANS 4:1-12

The Bible is full of stories in which people turn their backs on God in search of worldly help. Israel builds the Golden Calf in order to have a visible god - a god that fits their concept and needs - even though they know God, whose works are wondrous and who is worthy of praise (Ps. 105:2) because God led them out of Egyptian captivity. When reading this story, we often wonder "How many signs does Israel need before they give God their full trust?" But do we not find ourselves in these situations too? We too start moaning when things do not go our way and we start searching for help on our own. We may not build a Golden Calf, but our hearts seek worldly things. Israel gave their golden jewellery, that is, their treasure, to build the Golden Calf. Jesus says "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Mt. 6:21). Where is your heart at? Ask God today to show you where He must align your heart anew. Does your trust lie with God? In which areas do you still search for help on your own?

Prayer: Father, You know my heart. You know where I struggle to give You my life completely. Show me the areas in my life, in which I need to align myself to You. You are my God and my life belongs to you. Amen.

-Morris Niederhofer-



Our Failures and God's Faithfulness

Tuesday, March 19, 2019

PSALM 105:1-42; NUMBERS 14:10B-24; 1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-13

Today's readings cover the history of Israel, highlighting their failures to obey God. This serves as a clear warning for us (1 Cor. 10:1-13). Paul says that God never allows us to be tempted beyond what we can bear, and that He provides a way of escape. Sadly, we often find ourselves failing. Fortunately, failure is not the final word. While our failures are great, God's faithfulness is greater. Psalm 105 shows us that God was in control of His people throughout their history, and that He was faithful to His promise to Abraham. In Numbers 14 we see God heeding the voice of Moses as he acts as a mediator who makes intercession for the people of God. Each of these passages can find full significance in Christ. God will keep His promise to Christ, the seed of Abraham to keep His people (Jn 6:37-44). Christ is the ultimate mediator who provides prayers for God's people and pardon by His obedience. Lastly, Christ was tempted in all points like us but was without sin. Therefore, He can sympathize with us as one of us and aid us in time of need. Be it for fortitude or forgiveness.

Prayer: Gracious Father. I needed a mediator and You gave me one in Your Son Christ Jesus my Lord. You see my faults which are many. Forgive me through the faithfulness and Name of Your Son I pray. Amen.

-Keith Fortenberry-



God is Faithful to His Word

Wednesday, March 20, 2019

PSALM 105:1-42; 2 CHRONICLES 20:1-22; LUKE 13:22-31

It's with full confidence that we can read the Bible, knowing that God is faithful to His promises today, just as he was in history, because God is the God of history. The Psalmist was fully aware of this. He praises God by giving thanks for what God has done and accomplished in the history of His people. In this we can see that we have a faithful God, who sticks to His word. In Psalm 105:42 the Psalmist writes: "For He remembered His holy promise, and Abraham His servant." It's upon this statement, this knowledge that the Psalmist builds his faith and understanding of God. In the same way, Jehoshaphat recognized God as the God of his fathers and so asked Him for help. And today, because through Jesus Christ we may call God our Father, we also can trust in Him to be faithful to the promises that He has given us in His word. He is the same God today as he was in history.

Prayer: Father, I thank You for all that You have done in my life. Thank You that you are faithful and stay by us in times of trouble and in thanksgiving. Amen.

-Lukas Widmann-



Jesus: The Rock in Times of Turmoil

Thursday, March 21, 2019

PSALM 63:1-8; DANIEL 3:19-30; REVELATION 2:8-11

Times of turmoil - hard times - are part of life. Suffering and persecution will always be here. But the one who lives by faith and searches out God in all things will be rewarded by God. They will experience God in His wonderful greatness, His unshakable reliability, goodness, love, and faithfulness. The one who knows God will be carried by Him in every situation. To know God is the greatest and most beautiful thing in the life of a Christian - in fact it is the Christian's foundation. And when hard times come, this strong foundation will carry the Christian through. Even should Satan leave nothing untried to shake it, yet it will still hold, for it is built on Jesus. Every hope built on anything else apart from Jesus will be disappointed. But the Lord Jesus will never disappoint, He is the only reliable hope.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, my whole heart longs for You. I give myself into Your mighty hand. Amen.

-Alex Röh-
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Being Satisfied in the Lord is a Choice

Friday, March 22, 2019

PSALM 63:1-8; DANIEL 12:1-4; REVELATION 3:1-6

When David wrote Psalm 63, he was hiding in the wilderness of Judah from his own son who was seeking to kill him. He found himself in a desperate and desolate situation; abandoned and lonely in a harsh environment. In his desperation, he exclaims his need and yearning for God, drawing inspiration from his environment: "as in a dry and weary land where there is no water." As he recalls worshipping in community and the experience of God's "power and glory" and "steadfast love" (Ps. 62:2-3) he makes the resolution to keep praising God despite his circumstances "as long as he lives" (Ps. 63:4). He knows that complete satisfaction is only found in the Lord, in his attachment and devotion to the Lord. This is all he needs. He clings to the Lord because he knows he is being helped and upheld by the Lord (Ps. 63:7-8). What stands out in this psalm is that David makes choices by standing on experiences with the Lord and on His promises. The circumstances might be desperate, but this is all the more reason to seek the Lord, ponder His faithfulness and meditate on His promises. Are you ready to redirect your focus in order to be fully satisfied in the Lord?

Prayer: Lord, I am making the choice today to seek You and treasure You most of all. Amen.

-Rebekka Barger-



Being Rooted in Christ

Saturday, March 23, 2019

PSALM 63:1-8; ISAIAH 5:1-7; LUKE 6:43-45

Today's passage from Luke 6:43-45 is part of Jesus' address to His disciples right after He appointed the Twelve Apostles. He gives them instructions on a well lived life. To make a practical application of these Christian values, Jesus uses the example of a tree. A healthy or good tree bears good fruit while an unhealthy tree bears inedible fruit. So it is that each tree bears fruit corresponding to its DNA. In order to be healthy, a tree needs enough water and light. Consequently, it extends its branches towards the sun and its roots towards a source of water. The inner condition of the tree is thus shown in its bearing of fruit. Jesus applies the same principle to people. If our heart is not in the right place, carrying grudges against others, being judgmental, deceitful, etc. - it will show in our actions or lack thereof and how we carry ourselves. To guard our hearts against negative sentiments and character traits, we need to take preventive measures, just as the tree does in order to stay healthy. We need to extend our roots towards the living water, Christ. When we are rooted in Christ our lives will reflect what is in our hearts.

Prayer: Father, help me to extend my roots only towards You, so that I may bear good fruit and be a tree of purpose to the people around me. Amen.

-Rebekka Barger-



The Time is Now

Sunday, March 24, 2019: Third Sunday in Lent

ISAIAH 55:1-9; PSALM 63:1-8; 1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-13; LUKE 13:1-9

We often act as if we have all the time in the world, with our whole lives still ahead of us. And this misconception tempts us to make ourselves comfortable here on earth and to simply go along with the ways of the world. Our apathy soon becomes habit, and habit quickly turns into sin. And we are content to go along with this, comfortable with the notion that we still have plenty of time left to make a change. Yet no-one knows what will happen tomorrow, or that tomorrow will even come. No, now is the time to turn to Him, to seek Him and call upon Him (Is. 55:6). Do we really want to be caught in our sin in the Last Days, to be found in our worldly desires and impurity? (1 Cor. 10:5-8) Christ died for sinners, so that they could satisfy all their hunger and thirst in Him and stop chasing after sin (Ps. 63:2). Sin destroys, but Christ saves. In sin we remain hungry, but in Jesus we are fully satisfied. Right here and now is the time to turn away from our sins and towards our Holy God, who saves us through His indescribable gift, the sacrifice of His Son. Only a repentant heart will see the glory of the Lord (Lk. 13:3).

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You know our hearts. I come to You in all humility to confess to You the sin in my life, to which I have submitted so freely. And in all humility, I offer this heartfelt prayer for forgiveness according to Your amazing grace. Amen.

-Damian Domke-



God is Holy

Monday, March 25, 2019

PSALM 39; JEREMIAH 11:1-17; ROMANS 2:1-11

How often do we think that our selfish and self-righteous behaviour, which conflicts with God's commands, is not going to have any consequences? Do we not sometimes think that God's clear instructions in the New Testament on how to live our lives are only good advice, which we can take for the situations we want to and otherwise simply ignore? Do we believe that God still chastises us today like He did in the Old Testament with the people of Israel? Are we still aware of the fact that God is HOLY and do we know what that means? Do we interpret God's grace and patience as a lack of interest in our behaviour (Rom. 2:4)? It's through His grace He wants to persuade us to change ourselves and our behaviour (Rom. 2:5)! We are saved through faith in Jesus Christ, not by our works. Yet God still expects us to tirelessly do good and follow His commands (Rom.2:7), keeping in mind our goal, eternity, where He will give us eternal glory, honour and peace (Rom. 2:10).

Prayer: Lord, please help us to understand who You are. Help us to always be aware that You are HOLY and help us live our lives in a way that honours You! Amen.

-Judith Garrard-



Life is Short

Tuesday, March 26, 2019

PSALM 39; EZEKIEL 17:1-10; ROMANS 2:12-16

David, the writer of Psalm 39, reminds us of the fact that our life on this earth is very short. It is only a "breath" (Ps. 39:5); it passes very fast. Despite this, we often spend time with things that don't really matter and have no value for eternity. But it makes much more sense to live this life in view of heaven instead of focussing on the problems or even joys of this life. We should realize on a daily basis that our time here is limited. The day when "God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus" (Rom. 2:16) is coming fast. The knowledge of this fact should motivate us, like David, to guard our ways and fight against sin in our lives. The thought of how short our life is and that a day of judgement is approaching should make us focus on other people. They need to hear that Jesus Christ died for their sins and that He wants to give them eternal life in a deep relationship with God. Are we willing to give them this life-changing message?

Prayer: Father, help us to not forget what life really is about. Help me to set my priorities right and give me courage to tell others about You. Amen.

-Oliver Greger-



Hope of Glory

Wednesday, March 27, 2019

PSALM 39; NUMBERS 13:17-27; LUKE 13:18-21

It is wise, when looking at our human existence, to consider that it will end. Physical death is a fact and a consequence of sin. That is why Christians see themselves on earth as strangers and exiles (1 Pet. 2:11; Heb. 11:13-16). We hope for a new home in a new land. We hope for a land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 13:27), and whose fruits we can already begin to taste today as we experience Jesus transforming our lives and who we are, step by step. In Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God, our Promised Land, has already come to us (e.g. Lk. 17:21). The Kingdom, starting small, as inconspicuous as a mustard seed, has begun to grow. One day it will be visible in all its glory. This will happen when Christ returns to establish His kingdom in all its fullness. This is our hope. Thinking about the end of life is not easy for some Christians. It makes us uneasy, sometimes even fearful. At such times we can join with David and remind ourselves: "But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you." (Ps.39:7).

Prayer: Lord, where else should I turn, if not to You? Only You have the words of eternal life. Please help me not to fix my hopes and plans on this world, but on You, Jesus. Amen.

-Alexander Gasnik-



Future Glory Beats all Affliction

Thursday, March 28, 2019

PSALM 32; JOSHUA 4:1-13; 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-5:5

Our afflictions will only be brief and light says the Apostle Paul (2. Cor. 4:17a). It can sound like a fairly insensitive, even offensive statement if you take it out of context. Surely no one would want to agree with this kind of outrageous claim. In face of all the suffering in this world, from which Christians are not spared, this statement seems to be a mockery. But Paul is serious. On the one hand, he would never deny that there is enormous suffering in this world and that it is often hardly bearable. But on the other hand, he has no other choice than to declare our sufferings, even the most unbearable, unimportant, because of the perspective he is taking, the perspective of eternity. Thus, he can make the statement in good conscience. All crises simply pale in comparison to the "eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" (4:17b) into which we are going to enter after this life. And it gets even better: Paul actually claims that our afflictions are achieving future glory, perfection that comes from victory over suffering. All present affliction is leading to future joy that will beat the affliction by far. There is great comfort in this truth.

Prayer: Lord, give me this perspective. I want to live in light of eternity and experience the comfort that comes with it. Amen.

-Henrik Imwalle-



Jesus is the Way

Friday, March 29, 2019

PSALM 32; JOSHUA 4:14-24; 2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-15

When you go walking in the woods, track markers are essential. They show you the where the path is headed. You often only notice a marker when you are very close to it. Life with God is similar: God promises us in His word to show us the way (Ps. 32:8). He guides us and shows us where the path goes. Even better, He can make a way where there was none before (Jos. 4:14-24). This is seen in the clearest and most glorious way possible in the work of His Son Jesus Christ. He died in our place so that we can receive forgiveness for our sins (2 Cor. 5:15). Jesus has opened the way for us to have fellowship with God. He is Himself the way. If you have strayed from the path in your own life, pray to Jesus, confess your sins to Him, ask for forgiveness and let the best guide of all time show you the way!

Prayer: Jesus, show me the way, show me who You are! Amen.

-Kristina Imwalle-



The Joy of the Forgiveness of Sin

Saturday, March 30, 2019

PSALM 32; EXODUS 32:7-14; LUKE 15:1-10

When God has forgiven us our sins, we can be full of joy (Psalm 32). It goes against our natural expectations, that, through the death of His Son, God has made a way for us to come to Him as it was not His fault but ours that our relationship with Him was broken. This shows us that God is willing to forgive our sins if we ask Him to do so. Not only some of our sins, but all of them, just like Horatio G. Spafford puts it in his famous hymn it 'Is Well With My Soul': "My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! My sin, not in part but the whole, is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, o my soul!" God loves us and He wants us to be with Him eternally. He rejoices when we ask for forgiveness (Lk. 15:7). What keeps you from doing so?

Prayer: Thank You, Father, that You forgive our sins when we ask You to do so. Thank You that You have made such an enormous sacrifice because of Your love for us. Thank You that through this sacrifice we can have a relationship with You. Amen.

-Oliver Greger-



This Man Receives Sinners

Sunday, March 31, 2019: Fourth Sunday in Lent

JOSHUA 5:9-12, PSALM 32, 2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-21, LUKE 15:1-3

In Luke 15:1, something wonderful happened: "Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him". Previous to this (in Luke 14), Jesus spoke to a large number of people and gave them a call to radical discipleship. In response, people thought to be notorious sinners did not turn away from Jesus. Instead, the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. This offended the religious leaders. They were not pleased that Jesus welcomed sinners, even infamous sinners like tax collectors. They even complained to Jesus and to anyone who would hear them. The words of their complaint are wonderful: "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." They were offended that Jesus received sinners. Many of the religious leaders of Jesus' time divided humanity into two groups: the unclean and the righteous. They tried to live as separated as possible from the sinners. We are deeply, humbly grateful that Jesus receives us as sinners.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, that in Jesus Christ You truly receive me a sinner. Amen.

-David Guzik-



Out of Captivity

Monday, April 1, 2019

PSALM 53, LEVITICUS 23:26-41, REVELATION 19:1-8

Psalm 53 is a sad and depressing song of frustration with the fallen nature of man. In lines that would later be quoted by the Apostle Paul, David the psalmist spoke of the deep sinfulness of humanity. We are described as "corrupt", and it is said that "there is none who does good." For emphasis, those ideas are repeated in Psalm 53. As sad as this song is, it also has a strong note of hope. There is hope in the ultimate justice of God (seen in Ps. 53:4-5), and most of all there is hope in God's deliverance. We love these lines of Psalm 53:6: "Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When God brings back the captivity of His people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad." Even when we consider mankind at his most sinful, we see the hope in God's deliverance. This would be accomplished by what Jesus did in His life and death, but it was mankind's hope long before. Let it be your hope today.

Prayer: Thank You Father, for the hope I have in Jesus Christ. Amen.

-David Guzik-



The Best Party

Tuesday, April 2, 2019

PSALM 53, LEVITICUS 25:1-19, REVELATION 19:9-10

The Bible gives many blessings to many people, but one of the most wonderful blessings is found in Revelation 19:9 where it says, "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." Those who are invited to that wedding feast are welcomed to something so wonderful that Jesus Himself eagerly anticipated it. Jesus spoke longingly of the day when He enjoys this feast with his people (Mt. 26:29). In Jewish culture, the marriage supper was the best banquet or party anyone knew; it always was an occasion of tremendous joy. But this feast is more than a party; it is also a revelation of the church as it really is. On that day, everyone will see the church for what she really is: the precious bride of Jesus. This sounds almost too good to be true, but God affirms to us: "These are the true sayings of God." Don't fear and don't doubt; in Jesus Christ, this is God's glorious destiny for all His people.

Prayer: Thank You Father, for who You are making me and all believers to be in Jesus Christ. Amen.

-David Guzik-



God Works Through Our Faith

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

PSALM 53; 2 KINGS 4:1-7; LUKE 9:10-17

The active intervention of God that David so longed for in the Psalm (Ps.53:6) is something experienced by both the widow (2. Kgs. 4:1-7) and the disciples (Lk. 9:10-17). Both were confronted by situations that they could not cope with by themselves, and from which they saw no way out. The salvation that David desired in his hopeless circumstances was something wholly practical. God provided, and in abundance. The act of salvation, however, is preceded by David's attitude of complete trust in God's greatness and power, as depicted in the Psalm. Distress may be near and tangible, but it is only the fool (Ps. 53:1) who says, "there is no God." The widow collected together all the vessels; the disciples brought five loaves and two fishes to Jesus. What can we offer today, small as it may seem, expecting that He will do great things with it?

Prayer: Thank You that You are greater than all our needs and feelings of hopelessness. Please reveal this truth to us today and show us what we ourselves can do to further Your kingdom. Amen.

-Elisabeth Brandt-



Stand Still!

Thursday, April 4, 2019

PSALM 126; ISAIAH 43:1-7; PHILIPPIANS 2:19-24

"Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord" (Ex. 14:13). When was the last time you stood still to see the salvation of the Lord? Is your mouth filled with joyful shouting, because you have experienced how He has done great things for you? Do you rest in His promise to be with you in all circumstances? Do you know that you are precious in His sight? Do you know that hope about which Paul wrote to the Philippians while imprisoned? Or is all this foreign to you? Stand still today, in order to pause and consider all the good things He has done for you. And then trust anew in the Lord amidst your difficult and seemingly desperate circumstances. Trust that He will transform your tears into joyful shouting. He is near to you right now and He will not leave or forsake you, because He has redeemed you once and for all by His own, precious blood and has bought you for Himself.

Prayer: My Lord and my God, I praise You for Your loving kindness. Thank You that I can stand still before You, to gaze at Your salvation and to see how You do great things. Help me to fully trust You anew, because You are faithful. Amen.

-Martin Briel-



I am the Lord and Apart From Me There is no Saviour

Friday, April 5, 2019

PSALM 126; ISAIAH 43:8-15; PHILIPPIANS 2:25-3:1

God is our Saviour. He is the one who holds everything in His hand and there is no-one more powerful than Him. God is responsible for all the help we experience in life, for all the good, for all the blessings, for all that is beautiful. He alone is Saviour. Are we truly aware of this? Paul encourages the Philippians to thank God for saving and healing Epaphroditus. For him it is self-evident that God holds all things in His hand. Paul invites us to be thankful and, like him, we too can be grateful for all that God does in the lives of our brothers and sisters and in our own lives. How grateful are you? What can you thank God for?

Prayer: Father, thank You for being our Saviour. Thank You for all the good in our lives. Lord, let us always remember to be thankful. Open our eyes to see what You have done and give us grateful hearts. Amen.

-Lukas Widmann-



Remember Your Rescuer

Saturday, April 6, 2019

PSALM 126; EXODUS 12:21-17; JOHN 11:45-57

Israel was a people enslaved, not knowing where to go or what to do. That was the situation they were in. They had been living amongst the Egyptians for several hundred years and were toiling in slavery, far from freedom. But God had a plan. He rescued His people from slavery. The Lord God hears His people and longs for community (Ex. 12:21-27). The longer I ponder Israel in Egypt, the more I find parallels to my own situation. Even living in the 21st century, I am not as free as I sometimes believe myself to be. I am in captivity and enslaved. I am enslaved by my own sin, from which I cannot free myself. But God also has a plan for me. He gave Himself as my Passover sacrifice (Jn 11:51-52). Jesus Christ paid for my sin so that I may go into the Promised Land to the Father. As this message is not new to me anymore, Psalm 126 is a word from God to rekindle thanksgiving in my heart for what the Lord has done for me. May these words remind you of His great deeds today.

Prayer: Lord, fill my heart anew with thanksgiving for the works You have done in my life. You deserve glory, honour and praise. Amen.

-Morris Niederhofer-



God Brings New Life

Sunday, April 7, 2019: Fifth Sunday in Lent

ISAIAH 43:16-21; PSALM 126; PHILIPPIANS 3:4B-14; JOHN 12:1-8

The desert is a fascinating but also a frighteningly inhospitable place. It is a landscape which barely hints that it once contained life. You can make out traces of dried-up streams in the places where life once was. What is it like in your life, when you find yourself in such a place? Places where you can find nothing good, where everything is difficult and exhausting? Is it your workplace, dominated by rivalry and ambition? Is it your neighbourhood, where everyone eyes you critically? Where are the deserts in your life? God promises to bring water into these deserts, streams of water into the dry wasteland (Isa. 43:20). Paul also tasted this life-changing water and recognized that God's power can raise the dead. And so He can awaken dry land to new life. Through us. Even if we sow in tears, God will turn our toil into praise and rejoicing.

Prayer: Father, please help us! You know the deserts in our lives. Lord, please give us the strength to serve and to proclaim Your word in those places. Let Your living water flow into the places where it is hardest for us to serve You. Amen.

-Lukas Widmann-



The Holy God Comes to Us

Monday, April 8, 2019

PSALM 20; EXODUS 40:1-15; HEBREWS 10:19-25

God loves us human beings so much that He wants to 'dwell' with us just as He did in the Garden of Eden. The tabernacle of Israel of old was the place where God was present through His Spirit. Since God is holy, and humans are today as they were back then, i.e. unholy, the objects in the tabernacle had to be 'sanctified' (Ex. 40:9-11). Washings had to be carried out on the priests (Ex. 40:12-15) and finally animals had to be sacrificed. The tabernacle and later the temple and all the sacrifices were only images of a heavenly reality and a signpost of God's presence, which would one day come to us in Jesus Christ. Since we cannot make ourselves holy, the holy God comes to us so we can share in His holiness (Ps. 20:3,6). In Jesus, the eternal priesthood of Aaron is fulfilled (Heb. 10:21). At the same time, He is the only spotless sacrifice that can cover sins! In Jesus, we now have access to the presence of God. His Spirit, and thus His presence even dwells in us. This same Spirit is the confirmation that one day we are going to see God face to face in eternity (Eph. 1:13-14).

Prayer: Thank you that I can enter into God's holy presence everyday anew because Jesus has made it possible. Amen.

-Alexander & Felicitas Gasnik-



Does God Rule in Your Life?

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

PSALM 20; JUDGES 9:7-15; 1 JOHN 2:18-28

What a privilege it is to have God as the Lord of our lives. The almighty God who knows you through and through and who loves you is the Creator of the world and He offers to guide your future and help you prosper. Take a moment to let that sink in. What do you make of this thought? Does it help you to let go of your cares or of the control you would like to have over your own life? Do you hold fast to Him in difficult circumstances and live in obedience, or do you try to get help and support from the world (Ps. 20:6-9)? God promises that in Him everything will turn out for your good, even if it does not seem like it at the moment. With Him, you will stand firm in the end. Hold fast to His Holy Spirit and follow Him. Let Him guide and teach you (1 Jn 2:27-28). He has chosen and equipped you for a special purpose. Ask Him today what His purpose for you is and use the gift He has given you for it (Jdg. 9:8-13). You can be sure that God stands firmly with you and will help you succeed.

Prayer: Father, thank You that You have given me Your Holy Spirit to teach me the truth and to guide me. Please rule over my life and lead me in the service that You have chosen for me. Please help me to remain faithful to You in difficult times. Amen.

-Angela Grigg-



God is in Control

Wednesday, April 10, 2019

PSALM 20; HABAKKUK 3:2-15; LUKE 18:31-34

I do admit: I have a hard time understanding movies. Often times, I have to ask the people I'm watching the movie with why the characters do what they're doing. Movies can be complicated. The main thing is that I get the ending. The disciples must have felt the same way when Jesus reeled off the program for the days coming up. They didn't understand. Many times, we also don't understand God's ways. Habakkuk describes God as a mighty and powerful ruler, who has dominion over the whole cosmos. How can anyone comprehend him? Impossible. But one thing is certain: God hears our prayers. He intervenes. His great power, that rules over all the earth, wants to help us. His glory reaches every place on earth just like the sun's rays. There is no place that God cannot reach. In the end, He will rescue you, He is righteous (Hab. 3:12). And you can rejoice in His salvation (Ps. 20:5). Even if sometimes we don't understand the movie of our life, God is in perfect control. We just need to understand one thing: the ending. And this is where the joy of God's help remains.

Prayer: Father, thank You that You are in control of my life. Amen.

-Tobias Zehender-



Jesus Carried the Just Penalty

Thursday, April 11, 2019

PSALM 31:9-16; ISAIAH 53:10-12; HEBREWS 2:1-9

God's law is just and true. Whoever does not keep it is guilty before God. The law is more than rules. That's because, for God, the heart counts more than keeping rules. He requires nothing less than true unconditional love towards himself and our fellow human beings. No one lives up to that standard, and therefore all are guilty before God. We are sinners and far from God's holy standard. Every trespass requires penalty since the law is holy. What a load of sin! And we are rightly to be punished. How wonderful, then, is the message of Jesus on the cross! He carried the penalty on that cross. And brought forgiveness for all past, present and future sin. We are set free for a new life. Let us live out of the power of reconciliation and resurrection.

Prayer: Father God, I am guilty before You and Your holy law and deserve every penalty. Thank You for Your son Jesus. Through His cross, and I believe this, I have received grace and forgiveness. Thank You for the new life I have in You. Amen.

-Alex Röhm-



Death is Not the End

Friday, April 12, 2019

PSALM 31:9-16; ISAIAH 54:9-10; HEBREWS 2:10-18

The most innate fear for human beings consists in an uncertainty: namely, not knowing what happens to us after death. Since time immemorial, philosophies and religions have been invented then discarded again, according to the mood of the moment, all in an attempt to find an answer to this question. The fact is that we all reach the point where we ask ourselves what death is all about. And the older we get, the more real this question becomes for us. (Ps. 31:11) However, it is also a fact that we Christians have a clear answer. Death is the consequence of sin, the just punishment for the sinner. And we also know that 2000 years ago the God of the universe became man and took this punishment upon Himself. For our sake, Jesus became sin and died. He descended into the realm of the dead and made the impossible possible. He truly rose from the dead and He lives! Death has lost its power. Sin has been atoned for so that all who believe may live forever (Heb. 2:14-15). Death is not the end, rather, it is the beginning of an eternity with God, made possible by grace alone, sealed in the eternal covenant of peace in Jesus' blood (Is. 54:10).

Prayer: Great and merciful God, because of You I need have no fear of death. My praise and thanks are due to You for all eternity, for You have set me free and destroyed the power of death. Thanks to You, I am no longer afraid. I praise You, Lord. Amen.

-Damian Domke-



Beaten Tracks

Saturday, April 13, 2019

PSALM 31:9-16; LEVITICUS 23:1-8; LUKE 22:1-13

How often do we use the issues of everyday life as excuses not to fulfil God's commands! But this was never the case with Jesus. Although He knew about the resistance building against Him, it was out of the question not to celebrate the Passover as God had commanded (Lev. 23:5). In contrast to us, He didn't forget that such feasts and times (Sabbath) had been given to Israel by God to recall His past deeds and therefore give Him worship. So Jesus instructs some disciples to prepare for the Passover. While fulfilling their tasks, they find that the Lord has already ordained everything. We experience this just as the disciples did: God needs to make ready the way for us so that our ministry can be effective. It is necessary that He softens hearts so that His word can bring fruit. He also has to prepare us to be good witnesses. And often we stand in a situation like the disciples and realize that, although Jesus is not present in person, everything has been taken care of, and so we are again reminded and amazed by the provision and grace of our Redeemer.

Prayer: O Lord, our Provider, let us follow Your commands with joy and help us to look away from ourselves unto You. Amen.

-Markus Bretzke-



Open the Gates

Sunday, April 14, 2019: Palm Sunday: Sixth Sunday in Lent

PSALM 118:1-2, 19-29; LUKE 19:28-40

Crowds of people. People everywhere. Downtown Heidelberg is packed with people. Everybody pushes, everybody squeezes, everybody is looking for the perfect spot. When? When will they arrive? Who's going to see them first? It was in this situation that I found myself almost two years ago when Prince William and Princess Kate, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, visited Heidelberg. This is also how I imagine Jerusalem to be, as the crowds waited for Jesus on Palm Sunday. The people were so excited. They welcomed the Man they had seen doing miraculous things. The words of praise that the people sing remind us of the song of the angels when Jesus was born. Not only in Jerusalem, but also in Bethlehem, God came close to mankind. Here the colt, there the manger. The holy One comes and becomes man. He came to us so that you and I can come to Him. His way to us becomes our way to Him. Every day is a new chance to enter into His presence. That's the passion of the Psalmist: standing in God's presence, rejoicing over His salvation, admiring His deeds, praising His holy Name. That's the way you can open your gates for Jesus. Do you want to welcome your Saviour into your heart once more?

Even if Jesus had been welcomed in Jerusalem a thousand times, yet not in your heart, you still would be lost.

Prayer: Jesus, I open up to you once again. Amen.

-Tobias Zehender-



The Gentleness of God

Monday, April 15, 2019: Monday of Holy Week

ISAIAH 42:1-9; PSALM 36:5-11; HEBREWS 9:11-15; JOHN 12:1-11

As we are now in Holy week, the drama of the Gospel is intensifying. We are in the final week of our Lord's life before He offers Himself up for our sins. Today's readings are dense and deep. There is a connection in the themes of anointing and covenant. In Isaiah, God declares that He has anointed His Messiah with His Spirit. In John's Gospel, we see Mary anointing Jesus. Mary's anointing of Jesus was in preparation for His burial. In Isaiah, the Messiah is given as a covenant to the people. In Hebrews, Christ is the mediator of a New Covenant established in His blood. His blood cleanses our hearts and consciences from sin and dead works to serve God. The texts are saturated with the gospel truth that Christ died for our sins to achieve our forgiveness. It is a wonderful thing to have a conscience cleansed by the blood of Jesus. I want draw attention to and emphasize the words of Isaiah. Isaiah says, "a bruised reed He will not break." That is, Jesus is ever gentle with His people. At times we feel like a bruised reed, we can rest assured knowing that He will not break us, but was rather broken for us. He was bruised in our place.

Prayer: Jesus thank You that You were broken on our behalf. I pray that Your blood would once again cleanse my conscience in a fresh way and awaken my heart to serve You, the Living God. Amen.

-Keith Fortenberry-



God Has Chosen You for Life

Tuesday, April 16, 2019: Tuesday of Holy Week

ISAIAH 49:1-7; 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-31; JOHN 12:20-36; PSALM 71:1-14

The message is clear; the infinite and personal God has spoken to broken humanity of His great love for them; He has chosen to send His own Son to pay the great penalty of sin through a brutal death, so that we may be reunited in relationship with God. Wait, what?! Stop for a moment; this sounds ridiculous! God chose to send His Son to be killed by people who hate Him, to pay for the sinful debt they owe Him? Oddly enough, God intended His plan to seem foolish to us. In fact, it actually proved His great wisdom by destroying our 'wisdom', that we humans are inherently good and able to live a meaningful life independent from Him. Instead God claims that to gain the life we seek, we must completely depend on the person of Jesus Christ by way of living relationship, while 'dying' to our own fierce independence from Him, that the world teaches (John 12:24-26). How have your attempts to find life outside God failed? Be specific. How can you creatively praise Him right now instead, even in trials, sin and confusion, knowing that He has personally chosen to give Himself and therefore true life to you? Today's Psalm may help.

Prayer: Father, thank You that You have personally chosen me to be Yours through Your love and forgiveness. Show me where I need to repent of my independence, and use me as a testimony of Your goodness to draw others to You. Amen.

-Anthony Grigg-



Run On!

Wednesday, April 17, 2019: Wednesday of Holy Week

ISAIAH 50:4-9A; PSALM 70; HEBREWS 12:1-3; JOHN 13:21-32

A Christian's life is like a long-distance run where only the one who holds out to the end reaches the goal. But what if you feel you need to stop right now and sit down on the wayside? What if you are tired from many difficulties that have got in your way? What if you have been so entangled in sins that you are not able to put one foot in front of the other? What if the view forward is darkened and the view back does not help? "Look at Me, the author and perfecter of the faith," the Lord calls to you. See how He endured the cross because of the joy set before him. See how He has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. See and experience how He is your help and your salvation. Let us be those who, looking at our example and forerunner, Jesus Christ, do not stop running, but run until we reach the goal and so are with Him for all eternity.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, I thank You that You have endured to the end. Thank You for having endured the cross so that You now sit at the right hand of the throne of God. Thank You that I am able to look at You here and now during my run. Help me to continue running until the finish. Amen.

-Martin Briel-



Mandatum novum do vobis

(A New Commandment I Give to You)

Thursday, April 18, 2019: Maundy Thursday

EXODUS 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14; PSALM 116:1-2, 12-19; 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-26; JOHN 13:1-17, 31B-35

A number of key themes in the Bible come together on the evening of Maundy Thursday, the night of the Passover. It wasn't just chance or meaningless coincidence that Jesus was betrayed and handed over to be crucified on the night of the Passover festival; this was God's design, the fulfilment of the ages, that in Jesus Christ all the shadows and signposts that were the festivals given to Israel in the Old Testament would find their reality (Col. 2:17). So it is that Christ fulfils the Passover, He is our Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). He is God's firstborn, who bears God's judgement, such that we are spared, that we might live, that we might truly be freed from bondage to sin. Jesus gave His disciples a sure and visible sign of His sacrifice, a lasting ordinance (Ex. 12:14), commanding them to 'do this in remembrance of me' - the breaking of the bread symbolizing the breaking of His body in death. The Apostle John wants us to see that what Jesus does is no cosmic sacrifice, devoid of personal connection or relationship. John tells us that in laying down His life for His friends, Jesus loved them to the end, to the uttermost. Indeed, it is to this love we are called, it is this love which marks us out as his disciples: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (Jn 13:34).

Prayer: God my Father, You sent your Son as the great Passover lamb. Give me love for my brothers and sisters, that the world may see that we truly are his disciples. Amen.

-Samuel Garrard-



Entering the Holy Place

Friday, April 19, 2019: Good Friday

ISAIAH 52:13-53:12; PSALM 22; HEBREWS 10:16-25; JOHN 18:1-19:42

On Good Friday we contemplate and celebrate what Christ did on the cross and what it accomplished. Jesus was suffering for our sins as the suffering servant of Isaiah. Healing us by His stripes and wounds, bearing our sins and iniquity. He was forsaken (Ps. 22). He said it is finished (John 19:30). Now we are forgiven (Heb. 10:16-25). Jesus not only atoned for our sins. He provided us access into the very holy place of God. He gives a new and living way (Heb. 10:19) to come to God. His flesh is the veil (10:20) and through it we enter into God's holy place. The beaten, bruised, broken and bloody body of Jesus brings us into the very life and presence of the Triune God. Christ Himself being the true temple absorbs us into and through His humanity into the life of the Divine. Because of that we draw near with assurance and clean consciences. Through Christ we do not worship God from afar but in His very presence in the person of Christ who ushers us in. Jesus brings us to God through and in Himself. All through His suffering for our sins. Blessed be His name.

Prayer:

Approach my soul the mercy seat, where Jesus answers prayer.

There humbly fall before His feet for none can perish there.

Thy promise is my only plea, by this I venture nigh. Thou callest burdened souls to thee and such O Lord am I. - John Newton

-Keith Fortenberry-



Holy Saturday

Saturday, April 20, 2019: Holy Saturday

LAMENTATIONS 3:1-9, 19-24; PSALM 31:1-4, 15-16; 1 PETER 4:1-8; MATTHEW 27:57-66

It's hard to really sense the gravity of Holy Saturday, the day after Christ's death, because we know the end of the story. But imagine how you would've felt if you were there on that first Holy Saturday, if you were Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene, or the disciples. Imagine if you had been there applying myrrh and spices and aloes to his dead body and wrapping it in linen cloth. Imagine then carrying the body to the tomb, rolling the heavy stone, and walking away (Mt. 27:60; Jn 19:39-40). You remember His words: "After three days I will rise again" (Mt. 27:63; Mk. 9:31). But can it really be true? You saw the dead body. Will you trust your eyes and doubting heart, or God's Word? Abraham faced a similar same trial of faith when God asked him to sacrifice his son Isaac. Many misunderstand this test, thinking God just wanted to try Abraham's willingness to do something really crazy for God. No. God wanted to see if Abraham trusted his promise. God told him he would multiply his seed as the stars in the heaven and bless all nations: through Isaac. But did Abraham believe it? Yes. As he departs to the mountain alone with Isaac, he tells his servants "We will come back" (Gen. 22:5). We too can trust God at His word.

Prayer: Father, You have shown Your goodness and faithfulness to us over and over again. We trust in You. Amen.

-Ryan Hoselton-

Victory Belongs to the Lord

Sunday, April 21, 2019: Resurrection of the Lord

ACTS 10:34-43; PSALM 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:19-26; JOHN 20:1-18 AND LUKE 24:1-12

Is there any day more suited to shouts of joy and victory (Ps. 118:15) than Easter Sunday, on which we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead? The Lord has raised him, and it is marvellous in our eyes. The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad! This resurrection of Jesus is the lynchpin and fulcrum of our faith - upon it hang all other things. Many Christians - and churches - have forgotten how to celebrate. How we 'celebrate' is often incongruous with, inconsistent with, the massive, glorious, joyful truths we claim to believe. God gives instructions on tithing in Deuteronomy 14:26, saying to the Israelites: "spend the money for whatever you desire - oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves. And you shall eat there before the Lord your God and rejoice, you and your household." If this is how Israel is to celebrate a good harvest under the old covenant, how much more should we celebrate the defeat of sin, death and the devil?! Christian, it is time to put the 'feast' back into Christian 'feast day'! This day calls for the choicest of food and drink, for the rich fellowship of Christian believers, for together we rejoice: God has announced Good News of peace through Jesus Christ: everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sin through his name (Acts 10:36, 43). On Good Friday the promise is held out, an Easter Sunday comes sure confirmation through Christ's resounding victory: the debt of sin is paid; it's wages, death, defeated, we have a new and living hope that one day we too will be resurrected to new and eternal life, as God's precious sons and daughters. "The Lord is my strength and my defence; He has become my salvation." (Ps. 118:14).

Prayer: Lord God, give me faith to believe in the mighty resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ, in which death and sin were defeated. Holy Spirit, apply the truth of the resurrection to my heart, that, setting aside whatever might trouble me, I might have exceeding and inexpressible joy in the victory of Christ, the salvation of my soul. Amen.

-Samuel Garrard-



Alleluia! Christ Is Risen!