

So Send I You, Inc.
2026 Lenten Devotional



A Season of Renewal
Fasting * Prayer * Almsgiving





LENTEN DEVOTIONALS

Weekly Call

SUNDAY

7:00 PM (EST) DURING LENT

JOIN US FOR A ZOOM CALL CENTERED ON THE WEEKLY LENT DEVOTIONALS



Zoom ID: 542-833-7127

Passcode:147292



646-558-8656

Passcode:147292

WWW.EVENSOSENDIYOUWORLD.ORG.



Rev. Derrick Boykin (center) at a Bible study with Rev. Caesar Machi in Durban, South Africa.

LENTEN DEVOTIONALS

Prayer Call

WEDNESDAYS @ 8:00 PM

FEBRUARY 25-APRIL 1, 2026

PRAYING FOR OUR MISSIONARY WORK ON 6 CONTINENTS



DIAL IN EVERY WEDNESDAY



267-807-9605

Passcode: 512125

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Children receiving breakfast at the learning center SSIY constructed at the WW Brown Child Center in Soweto, South Africa.



Hot
REV. DR. JOE A.
BUSH, SR.



Daily PRAYER 11AM

Call

SO SEND I YOU, INC.
P.O. BOX 1699
LINCOLNTON STATION, NY 10037
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PRAYER LINE INFORMATION
PLEASE JOIN OUR DAILY
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Images of New Rehoboth Baptist Church of Crossroads in Cape Town, South Africa, from construction to dedication.

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ABOUT US

01

OUR MISSION

We exist to engage and involve African-American and Latino-American congregations in global mission(s) work and activity around the world by bringing together congregations and individuals for specific mission projects, resulting in a greater missional impact.

02

OUR VISION

We envision a covenant community of local congregations committed to educating, nurturing, and cultivating missional leaders and congregations from within the African-American and Latino communities, resulting in a deeper level of congregational and personal involvement and participation in missional projects around the world. **SO SEND I YOU, Inc.** envisions this community of local congregations more actively engaged in sharing the good news of what God has done for the world in and through the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

03

OUR SPECIATIES

- Building and sustaining missional partnerships among local congregations, individuals, organizations, and the mission fields.
- Organizing, promoting, and leading short-term mission trips to give both clergy and laypersons firsthand exposure to and experience on the mission field.
- Organizing, promoting, and leading missional projects especially designed to deliver a stronger missional impact. We do this by gathering local congregations, individuals, and organizations around specific mission projects.



WELCOME TO THE 2026 LENTEN JOURNEY

The Board of Directors at SO SEND I YOU, Inc., Co-Chaired by Dr. William B. Sutton, III, and Dr. John W. McVicker, Sr., join me in inviting and welcoming you to the 40-day journey through the 2026 Lenten Season, which begins on Ash Wednesday, which is February 18, 2026 and ends on Easter Sunday, April 5, 2026. Millions of Christ's disciples around the world look forward to making the 40-day journey with eager anticipation. This year, we hope you will join in the journey.

As always, this six-week journey will be challenging, to say the least. But as serious followers of Jesus Christ we are encouraged to test and reclaim our call to discipleship. This 40-day journey (which does not include Sundays) provides us with a wonderful opportunity to welcome and embrace this opportunity along with the broader community of faith.

This devotional is carefully designed with the disciple in mind, and is intended to be used as a tool to lead the disciple to find and experience spiritual renewal and revitalization by engaging in four particularly important, but very often neglected, spiritual disciplines: **daily engagement with Scripture**; **daily fasting** (voluntarily going without food for a very specific period of time for spiritual benefits), **daily prayers of confession, petition, and intercession**; and **daily sacrificial giving**.



A Note From our Founder & CEO

It is our sincere prayer that at the end of this six-week journey with us, you will have been drawn closer to Jesus Christ, who is the center of our faith. Then, as a result, you will be inspired to follow Him more closely; love Him more deeply; and serve Him more diligently.

We give thanks to God for the contributing writers, most of whom are pastors who are or have been engaged in local congregational ministry. Without their involvement, a project of this nature would be very difficult to pull off.

To get the best out of this 40-day journey, it is very important that you read the entire recommended daily passage. Try to step inside each passage and walk around in it, which will help you better appreciate the context in which the passage is set. Each daily devotional is followed by a very brief prayer built around the theme of that particular day. Do your best to make that prayer your very own, reflecting on it throughout the day.

The pictures in this devotional reflect the work of **SO SEND I YOU, Inc.**, in different places worldwide. Many of the persons in these photos are in desperate need of food, water, and medication, not to mention the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some yearn for an education to enable them to live fruitful and productive lives. Most of these people are wide open to the gospel. In your daily prayers during this Lenten season, be careful to pray for all such people.

As we move through the 40 days of Lent (which does not include Sundays) we challenge you to save \$1.50 per day for each of the 40 days. At the end of the journey, which is Easter Sunday, you will have saved \$60.00. These funds are critical to what we do at **SO SEND I YOU, Inc.**, and it goes a very long way in helping us share the gospel message with people around the world.

Again this year, SO SEND I YOU, Inc., will host Ash Wednesday services on our Facebook page and YouTube channel on February 18, 2026, at 7:00 PM EST (6:00 PM CST, and 5:00 PM MST). All of our participating churches across the country are invited to join us as we kick off the 40-day Lenten journey.

Also, we will host our weekly Sunday 7:00 PM EST Zoom Call centered around discussing the contents of the devotionals for the week. We invite you to join us in those discussions by logging on and using the ZOOM ID: 542-833-7127 and Passcode:147292. If you choose to join us by phone, you will need to dial in: 646-558-8656 and use the same Passcode:147292.

Finally, you will find at the back of this devotional an envelope designed to remind and encourage you to surrender your \$60.00 offering for the 40 days of Lent to share with others in need of the gospel. Please make all checks and money orders payable to **SO SEND I YOU, Inc.** (no cash, please), and mail to our office at:

SO SEND I YOU, Inc.
P.O. Box 1699
Lincolnton Station
New York, NY 10037

To learn more about **SO SEND I YOU, Inc.**, or to surrender your \$60.00 electronically, please visit our website at: www.evensosendiyouworld.org.

This is done,
Because of Calvary

Dr. J. Albert Bush, Sr.,
Founder and CEO
SO SEND I YOU, Inc.



Here's how you can give:

- CashApp: \$SSIYWorld
- Givelify.com
- Scan the QR code

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE LENTEN FAST

“BLOW THE TRUMPET IN ZION, DECLARE HOLY A FAST” JOEL 2:15

“Whenever you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” Matthew 6:16-18

What is a Fast?

The Hebrew word for “fasting” means “to cover the mouth.” The Greek word for “fasting” means “not to eat.” Fasting means to abstain from or go without food. When one does a fast, he/she turns away from “things the body craves” so that the inner spirit may better focus on the things of God. Fasting is an often neglected spiritual discipline. Fasting does not change God’s will, nor does it impress God in any way. But true fasting can indeed change the individual, as it allows us to focus more on our spiritual needs rather than the physical. Fasting, when done correctly, helps align our hearts, minds, and wills with the heart, mind, and will of God.

The Spiritual Benefits of Fasting

- It strengthens our prayer life.
- Provides an opportunity to spend more time in the presence of the Lord.
- Helps us become more sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
- Enhances our ability to discern and understand spiritual matters.
- Helps us focus more on God as the source, supplier, and sustainer of our lives.
- Fasting cleanses and detoxes the body.

The Techniques of Fasting

There are different ways in which observers of Lent fast. Some fast, in some way, each day of the Lenten season, while others fast just one day of the week during the season. Some will eliminate one meal a day, while others will eliminate two meals a day, and still others will give up all three meals for one day a week. Some will give up all meats during the season, while others will give up all meats 3 or 4 days a week. Whatever fast regimen you choose, it should be based on your physical health, your physician’s permission, if you have serious health issues, and your personal covenant with God.

Preparations for Fasting

- *Seek God’s will for you regarding the fasting regimen you should choose.*
- *The week prior to the beginning of your fast, begin eliminating snacks and eating after 7:00 PM.*
- *Increase your intake of fruits, vegetables, fish, and water.*
- *Reduce or eliminate sweets, breads, meats, sugary drinks, and other “pleasurable” food and drinks.*
- *Begin to pray for daily strength, discipline to be focused, and faithful adherence to your Lenten fast.*
- *“If you are pregnant, diabetic, taking prescribed medications, under a doctor’s care, or have experienced illness on a previous fast, be careful to consult your physician before starting the fast.*

THE MEANING OF LENT

The forty-day season of Lent (which does not include Sundays) always begins on Ash Wednesday of each year, which marked for early Christians, the beginning of the final preparation for new converts to be baptized into the faith at the great Easter vigil. Thus, the season of Lent is marked by its baptismal character.

During the forty days of the Lenten season (excluding Sundays) the dominant theme is the personal call to repentance and spiritual renewal. This call to repentance and renewal is echoed by way of the prophet Joel in a passage that is often read at Ash Wednesday services: “Yet even now, says the LORD, return to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing” (Joel 2:12).

Lent is that annual season when the people of God and the body of Christ are called to search and examine ourselves, to see if we really belong to the faith. It is a call to test and reclaim our personal call to discipleship. It is a call for serious introspection. During Lent, we are challenged to go deeper in our relationship with Christ, and be drawn into a closer daily walk with God, resulting in a greater commitment to the kingdom building enterprise.

Alongside the call to personal introspection and examination (which is interior), there is the challenge to exterior work and activity. The primary Gospel passage often read at Ash Wednesday services is Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21 where our Lord Jesus calls and challenges His disciples to engage in certain exterior acts of charity, which includes the spiritual disciplines of alms giving (sacrificial giving), fasting, and praying. In the passage, Jesus is not only suggesting the practice of these disciplines, but He is carefully teaching His followers on how the disciplines of giving, fasting, and praying are to be put to use. “So, whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you... but when you give alms... And whenever you pray, do not look like the hypocrites... but whenever you pray... And whenever you fast, do not look dismal... But when you fast...” For Jesus, it was not a matter of if His disciples would give, fast, and pray; but it was a matter of when they would practice these spiritual disciplines.

During the season of Lent, we are challenged to take self-inventory as we look at the humanity of Jesus alongside our own. We are called to self-examination of ourselves and our commitment to Christ and His kingdom’s agenda. It is a time when we stop to ask ourselves a few serious questions: “Am I really a disciple of Christ?” “Am I following Christ as closely as I can?” “Is God satisfied with me?” “Am I as committed to the cause of Christ as I profess to be?” “Is God calling me to a deeper level of involvement and participation in the kingdom building enterprise?”

Let’s face it, just as Jesus was tempted to abandon the path which the Father had planned for Him, we, too, face temptation to ignore or completely abandon the calling of God on our lives. Whereas Jesus triumphed over the devil in His temptation, too often we fall victim to the temptation, leaving us spiritually defeated and even more vulnerable. During the forty-days of Lent, God often lovingly shows us our personal weakness and vulnerabilities, and then tenderly and graciously invites us to experience the spiritual renewal which He so readily provides through the disciplines of fasting, praying and alms giving.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE LENTEN FAST

“BLOW THE TRUMPET IN ZION, DECLARE HOLY A FAST” JOEL 2:15

Additional Fasting Hints

- Avoid starches, such as bread, white rice, potatoes; sweets, red meats, and caffeine.
- Drink plenty of water, herbal teas, or seltzer. If you feel lightheaded, drink a glass of unsweetened apple or grape juice (be sure it has no added sugar) or tea with honey.
- If you only eat one meal for the day, you should be sure that it includes fresh fruits, steamed vegetables, salad, and steamed or broiled fish. One of the benefits of fasting is cleansing or detoxing the body, resulting in a healthier body.
- If you are eating only one meal a day, it is highly recommended that you do not exercise during your fast.
- Avoid nibbling, drink water.
- Remember to be in prayer daily during your fast. Start each day of your fast with prayer, asking God to give you the strength to keep your fast for that day. When you feel hungry, or when you are tempted to give up remember, in your weakness, you can tap into His strength. Remember, ...be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. (Ephesians 6:10)
- If you should “fall out” of the fast, do not condemn yourself, but get back on it right away. Be thankful that in Christ there is always forgiveness and restoration.
- When the 40-day fast is complete, it is best to break the fast by eating fruit, drinking broth, eating steamed vegetables, or a light salad.

Lenten Faster’s Prayer

“Jehovah, by the power of Your Spirit, make me ready for the coming time of fasting, prayer, and sacrificial giving. I know that with you I can do all things. My desire is to be drawn closer to you during this season of Lent. Thank you in advance for the strength and power you provide for me during this fast. Be glorified by my fasting, praying, and sacrificial giving.”

In Jesus’ name, Amen.



SSIY team in Jamaica (Dec. 2025) providing support after Hurricane Melissa in Oct. 2025.

SIX-WEEK PRAYER GUIDE

"BLOW THE TRUMPET IN ZION, DECLARE HOLY A FAST" JOEL 2:15

During the six weeks of the Lenten season, we challenge our fellow pilgrims on the journey to join us in praying specifically for missionaries, missionary projects, and concerns around the world. In particular, we pray for a greater awareness and a more enthusiastic involvement in Christian missional activity on the part of African-American and Latino-American Congregations.

Each Wednesday evening during Lent, we invite you to join us in prayer for the work on six of the seven continents of the world where there is current missionary activity. The call is at 8:00 PM each Wednesday evening beginning on Wednesday, February 25, 2026, and ending on Wednesday, April 1, 2026. The prayer dial-in number is 267-807-9605, with the access code of 512125. Please do not announce yourself, but just wait a few minutes to allow others to join the call, and the prayer leader will give the call to prayer. The Six-Week Prayer Call will be as follows:

First Week: Wednesday, February 25, 2026, North America Prayer Concerns

Missionary and missional projects and opportunities in North America, the fastest-growing mission field in the world are the focus of our prayer concerns this week. This includes the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Jamaica, Haiti, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and all of Central America.

- For missionaries who currently serve in Native American and Latin American communities and the unique challenges they face in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- For an increase in the number of full-time African and Latin American missionaries to serve in the above communities.

Second Week: Wednesday, March 4, 2026, South America

We pray for missionaries and missional projects and opportunities in South America, including Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Columbia, Venezuela, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Guyana, and Uruguay.

Third Week: Wednesday, March 11, 2026, Europe

We pray for missionaries, missional projects, and opportunities in Europe, especially for those who work with refugees fleeing violence and bloodshed in Ukraine, Syria, and the Horn of Africa; and for those working among the poor and marginalized in Eastern European countries, like Belarus, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Poland.

Fourth Week: Wednesday, March 18, 2026, Australia

We pray for missionaries and missional projects and opportunities in Australia, but specifically for those who work with and among the Aboriginal Australians, whose plight is identical to that of Native Americans in the United States.

SIX-WEEK PRAYER GUIDE

"BLOW THE TRUMPET IN ZION, DECLARE HOLY A FAST" JOEL 2:15

Fifth Week: Wednesday, March 25, 2026, Asia

We pray for missionaries, missional projects and opportunities in Asia, especially for those who work with internally displaced persons and refugees fleeing violence and bloodshed in Gaza; and for those working among the poor in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

Sixth Week: Wednesday, April 1, 2026, Africa

We pray for missionaries and missional projects and opportunities in Africa, especially for those who work and minister in Muslim communities. Pray for these concerns:

- Lott Carey work in Liberia and Ghana
- The Providence Industrial Mission (PIM) in Malawi and the churches and pastors in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.
- The W.W. Brown Mission in SOWETO, the National Baptist Day Care Center, and the churches in South Africa struggling to witness in the post-Apartheid era.
- The Food Kitchen in Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) and for the children for whom we provide a daily hot meal. In addition, please pray for the current SO SEND I YOU, Inc. projects:
- The Michael Lee Graves Memorial Library to be built in Durban, South Africa
- The Pastor's Training Project for pastors who serve in Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania.



SSIY team in Jamaica (Dec. 2025) providing support after Hurricane Melissa in Oct. 2025.

DAY 1

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026

HIS ENDURING PRE-EMINENCE

Rev. Dr. Demetrius K. Williams

Colossians 1:17-18

17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

During Lent, we journey toward the cross, a season marked by reflection, repentance, and renewal. In the midst of self-examination, Colossians reminds us of a truth that steadies our hearts: Christ's enduring preeminence.

Colossians declares that Jesus is before all things. He is not one option among many, nor a fleeting leader lost in history's pages. He is the One in whom everything holds together. When our lives feel fragmented—our hopes scattered, our commitments wavering—Christ remains the anchor that sustains creation itself. His preeminence is not shaken by our failures, our doubts, or even our mortality.

Lent also confronts us with our limits: we are dust, and to dust we shall return. Yet Colossians lifts our gaze to the risen Christ, the "firstborn from the dead." In him, death does not have the final word. His resurrection is the beginning of a new creation, a pledge that life and justice will prevail. Christ is first not only in time but also in authority—His reign is ultimate, His love supreme.

What does this mean for us? It calls us to reorder our lives. Too often, other forces claim "first place"—ambition, fear, possessions, or politics. Lent invites us to lay these lesser rulers down at the foot of the cross and to remember who truly reigns. In Christ, the church finds its head and purpose; in Christ, we discover the One who binds our fractured selves into wholeness.

As we walk these forty days, may we trust in the One who holds all things together. His enduring pre-eminence is not abstract doctrine—it is the living reality that gives us hope, courage, and direction. Christ first, Christ last, Christ always.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are before all things, and in you all things hold together. Forgive us when we place other powers above you. During this Lenten season, draw our hearts back to your cross and resurrection, that we may live in the light of your enduring preeminence. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

09

DAY 2

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026

NO HIDING PLACE

Rev. Dr. Donaldson Jones

Psalm 139:8

8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

As a boy, I would go to the orchard to pick peaches and pears. Mother would turn them into pallet-pleasing pies. Psalms 139 is like entering the orchard of God's omni-ness; his omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence.

Envision the Psalmist in worship crying, "Where can I flee from your presence?" The congregation responds, "If I go up to heaven, you are there, if I make my bed in the depths, you are there." Therefore, regarding man's relationship to God, there is no hiding place!

The comprehensive complexity of this statement is crucial to the solace or condemnation of the soul. When one contemplates the intricacies in the craftsmanship of creation, it is superlatively comforting to trust in the thereness of God.

When the slave master mutilated scripture to manipulate slaves into docility. They heard an inward voice saying, "Up above my head I hear freedom in the air." They bequeath to us belief in the God that is bigger than any brand of bondage. The elders tell us God is too high to climb over, too wide to go around, and too low to go under.

In the B part of verse eight, we run into a profoundly paradoxical parallelism, "If I make my bed in the depths (Sheol, the world of the dead), you are there."

How comforting to be right with God through Christ. However, to reject Christ is to forfeit grace and enter condemnation—the devil's hell. Hell is the unleashing of the righteous wrath and judgment of God against sin. Hell is not the obliteration of the thereness of God. Hell is the absence of God's favour!

Thankfully, we can hide from this wrath and judgment in Christ. "For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in Glory" (Col. 3:3-4).

May we find our hiding place in the thereness of God through Christ; for there is no hiding place down here!

Prayer: Lord, hide and guide by your grace into glory. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

DAY 3

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2026

RESCUE FROM THE COMING WRATH

Rev. Dr. John H. Grant

1 Thessalonians 1:10

10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

The dominant theme of the 40 days of the Lenten season is the personal call to repentance and spiritual renewal. While the love and forgiveness of God are prime motivators for repentance, the wrath of God—another of the prominent doctrines of the Bible and of Biblical faith—cannot be ignored. From that wrath, God delivers us by making “him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The great purpose of His coming and His cross was and is to save us from this approaching wrath, which is real and not contingent upon one’s belief or unbelief. All who are not in Christ are exposed to fearful and eternal punishment, from which He alone can deliver: “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life” (Matthew 25:46; see also Acts 4:12 and Hebrews 10:26-31).

In summary . . .

- The Bible teaches clearly, definitively, and unequivocally that the wrath of God is real. Therefore, it is something to be feared. The only provision for refuge and escape is in Christ and His salvation. If there was any other possible provision, there would have been no need for Christ to come, suffer, and die.
- Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” (Matthew 26:39, NIV). God’s will was for Christ to drink from the cup because there is no other way to have our sins forgiven and be delivered from the coming wrath.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us so much that you provided for our salvation and deliverance through the sending of your Son, who bore your wrath in our place, and whom you raised from the dead. In Jesus’ Name, Amen

DAY 4

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2026

SATISFIED BY GOD'S GOODNESS

Rev. Dr. Jonathan Staples

Psalm 107:9

9 for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

Lent is a season of reflection, repentance, and renewal—a sacred invitation to journey into the wilderness with Christ. In this quiet space, we confront our hunger: not just physical, but spiritual. Psalm 107:9 reminds us that God is not indifferent to our emptiness. God sees the longing soul. God hears the cry of the hungry heart. And God responds—not with mere sustenance, but with goodness.

This verse is nestled in a psalm that recounts the faithfulness of God to those who wandered, rebelled, and suffered. Again and again, they cried out, and God delivered them. It's a pattern we know well. Lent exposes our wandering. It reveals the ways we've tried to fill our souls with things that cannot satisfy—success, comfort, distraction, even religion without relationship. But the beauty of Psalm 107:9 is its promise: God doesn't shame our hunger. God satisfies it.

Jesus, in the wilderness, faced the temptation to turn stones into bread. However, He knew that true nourishment comes from the Word of God. During Lent, we are invited to fast—not just from food, but from anything that dulls our spiritual appetite. In doing so, we make space for the “good things” God longs to give: peace that surpasses understanding, joy that endures suffering, love that casts out fear.

May this verse serve as a prayerful anchor in your Lenten journey. When you feel the ache of longing—whether for healing, clarity, or closeness with God—remember that God is the One who satisfies. Not with scraps, but with abundance. Not with temporary fixes, but with eternal grace.

Today, pause and ask: What am I truly hungry for? Where have I been seeking satisfaction apart from God? Then, in stillness, invite Him to fill you. God is faithful. He is generous. And He delights in feeding His children with goodness.

Prayer: Lord, I confess my hunger and my tendency to seek fulfillment in lesser things. Thank You for Your promise to satisfy my soul. Teach me to hunger for You above all else. Fill me with Your goodness, and let my life reflect the joy of being nourished by Your grace. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 5

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2026

TAKE REFUGE

Rev. Elmer Porter Hardy, Jr.

Proverbs 18:10

10 The name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.

Growing up in New York, I fondly remember one of my favourite churches to visit. It was the Greater Refuge Temple in Harlem with the late, great Bishop William L. Bonner, who, even in his senior years, could be seen greeting and shaking hands with parishioners before service, as he prepared to bless us with his dynamic, anointed preaching ministry.

It was not until much later in life, after enduring several traumatic experiences including: being robbed at gunpoint; avoiding a near fatal accident with an oncoming train; escaping a neighbour's domestic violence incident, which left his wife shot 6 times, with two police officers also shot and wounded, and the Bomb Squad and S.W.A.T. Teams swarming the scene—that I existentially understood the significance of the word “refuge” in that church's name.

Refuge is defined as ‘a place of safety/shelter from danger or trouble’ and out of the many versions of today's text, it is the Brenton Septuagint Translation (BST) which resounds most within me as it says: “The name of the LORD is of great strength” because that has truly been my testimony for these past 56 years of life.

This portion of scripture, written by King Solomon (970-931 BC), is the third of five books of Wisdom Literature, and describes the name of the Lord as the place where, “The righteous run to and are safe.”

I can personally attest to the fact that His name is so strong that no enemy can undermine it; no scaling ladders can reach it; no cannonballs can break through it; and as Jesus declared centuries ago, “the gates of hell cannot prevail against it!”

Prayer: Jehovah/Yahweh/Abba, thank you for giving us the greatest name-drop of all time! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 6

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2026

DANGER OF SELF-DECEPTION

Rev. Johnny C. Bush

1 John 1:8

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Self-deception here is the spiritual indicator and sensor alerting us of the absence of truth. When we are phony, fake, and pretentious about our own-ness, as children of the light, we move away from the cause and call of Christ upon us. Each believer must deal with the primal instinct and inclination to be something or someone other than who we really are; this was the first temptation.

Truth can only abide where there is confession of sins. Confession is a spiritual discipline and diagnostic process. Sins are not just about what we've done or did not do. It is more about what it's like to experience ourselves as broken, away from God.

Sin is further experiencing ourselves as both the inevitable and utterly ruined humans we really are. What happened in the "first garden" is ultimately all our story, our heritage, and our human fate. Ruined are all our efforts to strike the target of what is right, just, and holy. Even our most fundamentals of humanity like living, loving, laughing, etc. are all spoiled by this disorder of sin.

Our fate can only be met and conquered through the atoning work of Godself, in the person of Jesus Christ. Confession then is claiming ourselves, the good, the bad, the ugly; and all while recognizing our need for the grace of forgiveness and communion with God and each other.

While sin is not a precursor for truth, it does speak to our anxious need for truth, as all about us is but a lie. When we deceive ourselves, this can be humiliating for us, but when we can own our stuff, confess our "real" and embrace our perfect imperfections, we can share the holy and righteous humility of Christ. All our righteousness, if we can locate it, is transferred to us by a bleeding Christ. In Him we live, move, and be.

Prayer: Lord, help us abandon dishonesty within ourselves, and free us with truth. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 7

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2026

CONFESSION (GOOD FOR THE SOUL)

Rev. Dr. Ivory Thigpen

1 John 1:9-10

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

Growing up as a child in the Deep South, you were often reminded that a child was to stay in the place of a child. You were not to be in the room when grown folks talk. You'd better not listen when grown folks talk. You dare not ever interject while grown folks are talking. For this was a quick way to ensure a scolding because a child was to stay in a child's place.

But, even in the instances when a child was given the opportunity to speak, there was certain language that was too strong for a child's mouth. This extended far beyond curse words. Calling someone a fool was forbidden! To call someone a liar was equally unacceptable, and it was unimaginable to call an adult a liar! If an adult and, God forbid, your parent asked, "Are you calling me a Liar?" You were in a world of trouble!

Many unsuspecting children fell into this trap of this rhetorical question. For the child who understood the notion of staying in a child's place, this was a question that was best left unanswered. For even a response of "NO" was disrespectful. For the lack of respect came in merely suggesting an authority figure was a liar!

What then do we say to the notion that we make out of God, the Ultimate Authority, to be a liar? But this is what we do as Children of God when we fail to admit that we have sinned. This is what we do as children of God when we fail to confess our sins. Confession is the evidence that God's word is in us!

Confession to God cleanses our soul from all unrighteousness. Confession is good for the soul!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we lay our sins before the altar, confessing what we have done and what we have left undone has displeased you. Cleanse us, oh God, as with hyssop. Create within us a clean heart. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 8

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2026

FAITHFUL TO THE FINISH

Rev. Dr. Derrick L. Boykin

Hebrews 12:1

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

It's interesting how the writer of Hebrews refers to this journey of faith as a race. "What type," you might wonder? It's less of a sprint and more like a marathon, filled with various obstacles throughout the course. Remarkably, these obstacles take on various forms. Some are hurdles that we find before us, while others are hurdles, we find within us. Here, the Hebrew writer specifically focuses on the latter—that is, the impediment of "sin [within] that so easily entangles."

Let's here consider long-distance runners. One immediately recognizes, they are lightly dressed to ensure they are not weighed down. Wise marathon runners start out this way. However, this marathon of faith in Christ Jesus begins differently. We start out with all sorts of things that have the potential to hold us back. What are some of them? The Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:19-21 labels them as "acts of the flesh." To name a few, "hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, and, selfish ambitions" are some aspects of the sinful nature that Paul states weigh down the human soul and thwart the free reign of the Spirit in the lives of disciples of Jesus Christ. Certainly, such things can get in the way of us effectively finishing the course. However, it is by continually submitting to the power of the Holy Spirit that, with each step, the things that so easily entangle are thrown off.

It takes perseverance, however! That is steadfast persistence in prayerfully seeking the Spirit's guidance, and submitting to where the Spirit leads; this is to be done in the face of difficulties, obstacles, or discouragements the Children of the Light might face on the journey. In doing so, our resolve to fruitfully finish the course increases, because the Spirit of Christ is guiding and carrying us along the way.

Do you need insight or encouragement to run your race well? Study the giants of the faith. Prayerfully contemplate the lives of Abraham, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, Rehab, David, and all the rest of them that the Hebrew writer mentions. Their testimonies relay divine secrets as to how to best run this course. Hear their voices now echo from eternity, as they cheer you on. Run with determination and likewise know you too will victoriously cross that finish line, where eternal bliss is your reward!

Prayer: Dear LORD God, our Eternal Father, give us minds and hearts determined to throw off the sin that so easily entangles and submit to Your Holy Spirit, as we run our life's course faithful to the finish! In the name of Him who is All-Lovely, Jesus Christ, Amen.

DAY 9

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2026

BLUNDERS AND WONDERS

Rev. Dr. Lenard O. Griffin

Lamentations 5:21

21 Restore us to yourself, Lord, that we may return; renew our days as of old.

This verse appears toward the end of this fifth chapter, which focuses attention on a prayer pleading for God's mercy. Typical to human nature, the Israelites have strayed far from God in their sinfulness. They have squandered opportunities afforded them by the relationship they have enjoyed with God. Their spiritual and physical blunders caused separation from God.

This poetic prophet pens this powerful prayer as he presents to God evidence for a divine pronouncement of mercy on Israel! Reading this fifth chapter helps one understand and appreciate why this prophet seeks divine restoration. Their troubles have trampled them into submission and surrender to God because their blunders landed them in captivity to sin. He writes in vs. 15b, "our dancing has turned to mourning."

This prophet knows that their only avenue to restoration begins and ends with God orchestrating a renewal of freedom, justice, worship, prayer, and prosperity. One comment on this prophetic poet's contribution sums up the similarity between then and now: "The poet acknowledges in this final prayer that the horrors of this era are real."

This Scriptural lesson lifted from Lamentations causes this writer to wonder about and wish for God's transformative power to restore the blessings of old after the blundering mistakes of the people. No wonder this prophetic poet pens this fifth chapter to plead for God's mercy and closes it by asserting God's power to restore, return, and renew!

Prayer: Lord, we plead for your mercy on us. Through this Lenten season, restore us to yourself! Return us to prayer and submission to Your leadership, restore our lives, and renew our minds. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 10

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2026

THE GOD WHO RESTORES

Rev. Dr. Robert P. White

Joel 2:25

25 “I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—”

Have you ever had something you valued get broken or damaged so severely that you were unsure there was hope for its restoration? An insurance company designates a wrecked vehicle as a “total loss” when the cost to repair the damage exceeds the vehicle’s actual value before the accident, so to them, restoring it is not worthwhile. The possibility of restoration is important because it offers hope. This expectation is critical for maintaining motivation and resilience in adversity. Without it, people are more vulnerable to despair and giving up. Our text posits not a possibility, but a future reality.

Interpretations of the prophecy and locust plague differ. Regardless of interpretation, Joel 2:25 is cherished by Christians for its promise of God’s restoration. A literal view begins with a warning via Joel’s prophetic proclamation of imminent devastation preceding it (v.4), his calls of Judah to lament and repent to avoid future total desolation (v.12-17), and experience God’s promised restoration (2:18-32).

A dual interpretation offers a view of judgment and hope, the imagery of the locust plague transitions into a description of an invading army (Joel 2:1–11), whether this army is literal or metaphorical, it reflects divine judgment’s inevitability and comprehensiveness; a metaphorical interpretation of the “Day of the Lord,” still reassures God can end devastation, and redeem hopeless looking situations, to restore what was lost, and turn barren lands into green pastures.

In the Bible, restoration is God’s act of bringing His people back to wholeness after periods of loss, exile, or judgment. The Joel 2:25 verse is a promise from God to restore the years lost in hardship or destruction symbolized by locusts. God will make up for years of difficulty, struggle, and suffering, offering hope to all experiencing loss of time, opportunities, relationships, or health. In the bleakest situation or amidst devastation, we can rest assured trusting God’s faithfulness to fulfil His promised restoration (Jer. 30:17) that results in celebration (Job 42:10; Luke 15:22).

Prayer: Faithful Father, thanks for your mercy. Incline our hearts toward repentance so we will not violate principles and forfeit a conditional promise of your restoration. In Jesus’ Name, Amen!

DAY 11

MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2026

PREACHING AND TEACHING REBELS

Rev. Dr. Riggins Earl

Isaiah 30:10

10 They say to the seers, “See no more visions!” and to the prophets, “Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions.

The Book of Isaiah teaches that seers and prophets are made out of the coarser experiences of life. This makes their messages to the hearers feel like a rough piece of burlap fabric or sandpaper. It makes the people rebel rather than obey God and the messenger. The prophet, therefore, has to stand in the gap between rebellion and obedience. Isaiah chapter 30:10 reads like the introduction to a tragicomedy, a play or novel containing elements of both comedy and tragedy. The sad comedy is that the children rebelliously tell the parent(s) what they don't want the parents to tell or show them. The tragedy is that their rebellion is self-destructive.

It is no accident that this chapter opens in verse one with the Lord's cry to the rebels, "Woe to the obstinate children. . ." The children themselves seemingly enjoy littering their parents' sacred space with the debris of sin. They have chosen to trust in their former enemies (the Egyptians vv 2-5) rather than the God who delivered their ancestors from Egypt. God gave them the prophets as moral guardians, as instructors of God's righteousness. Verse 10 of this chapter is a display of the raw rebelliousness of God's children. It is heard in their defiant word to the seers and prophets.

Rebelliousness against God is the act of sin. It makes it difficult for the prophet to prophesy to the children of Israel or to show them what God has revealed. Attempts at communication become a rough and bumpy road between the people and the messenger. Perhaps this is why in verse 8 God tells both the seer and prophet to make a record of what they are told to show and tell the people: "Go now, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it on a scroll, so that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever." The written texts become a third party, so to speak, "an everlasting witness" between the seer, prophet, and the people.

In this chapter of Isaiah, the prophet reminds Israel that Egypt has no concern for Israel's welfare. The God who delivered Israel from Egypt calls this great urban center, Egypt, "Rahab the Do Nothing" empire. God declares her to be a useless ally. Rebellious Israel chooses illusion over reality, a lie over the truth. Their type of choosing emphasizes the burden carried by the messenger of God. God's messenger is always having to preach in the illusion-reality gap. The prophet dares to teach the futility of trusting in Egypt's military or political strength to help against the Assyrian invasion. In short, God warns that Egypt's assistance is in vain. God is trying to get the people to understand through the messages of the prophet and seer that this monster called Egypt cannot save them. Israel is deluded and destroyed by her thirst for lies.

Prayer: God help us to preach and teach in the gaps. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 12

TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026

CALL ME, SEEK ME, FIND ME

Rev. Dr. Anthony Lowe

Jeremiah 29:10–14

12 Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Jeremiah opens and closes this section with the assurance that the Lord intends to bring back those who have been exiled. He speaks of the Lord's gracious promise—a promise of prosperity, a promise of hope, and a promise of a future. The Lord makes it clear, however, that this is a reciprocal relationship. He promises prosperity and a future, but he also expects reverence and devotion. He indicates this in a series of five verbs. He expects the people to call, come and pray, seek, and find him. This is the language of worship. There is also an expectation of something that has been missing from their worship. He says to them, “you [will] seek me with all your heart.”

Of course, people never turn to God with their whole hearts, nor is the whole heart engaged in prayer as much as it should be. But the prophet contrasts the whole heart with the double heart. So, we should understand here not perfection (which can never be found in human beings), but integrity and sincerity. Anyone who seeks God sincerely and wholeheartedly will find him. What the seeker is really looking for is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the way to God, the Savior of the world, and the answer to all of life's questions.

Jesus repeats the same wonderful promise first made in Jeremiah 29. He says, “Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:7–8).

My brother and sister, it is unrelenting and believing prayer that will bring down every blessing which God himself is able to bestow.

Prayer: O Lord Jesus! Teach me to understand and believe what you have promised me. I promise in faith to do my part. Amen.

20

DAY 13

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2026

HELP FOR THOSE WHO ARE REBUILDING AND IN RECOVERY

Rev. Dr. William B. Sutton III

Zechariah 9:9

9 Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

One of the things that makes recovery possible is possessing a positive outlook and vision of the future. Regardless of the nature of what we may be recovering from, be it recovery from sickness and disease; financial recovery; recovery from the loss of a meaningful relationship; or the recovery from some kind of moral failure; the key to what facilitates our recovery is possessing a positive view of what waits for us in our future.

In our lesson for today, Zechariah's prophetic ministry takes place during the reign of Darius I of Persia, around 520-518 BC. During this time in Israel's history, the Jewish people were returning from a period of exile from Babylon to the city of Jerusalem. The primary focus during this time was the reconstruction of the Temple that had been destroyed. The Prophet Zechariah, alongside his contemporary, the Prophet Haggai, played a crucial role in encouraging the Jewish People to complete the rebuilding of the Temple in order to facilitate the recovery of Israel's spiritual identity. Needless to say, this was a monumental task that required vision, perseverance, dedication, and an unwavering faith in God.

In today's lesson, the Prophet Zechariah encourages the people of God to remain focused during this time of rebuilding. As they continue the process of reconstructing the Temple in Jerusalem, Zechariah provides encouragement to them by declaring, "See, your King comes to you." However, their King is not coming as a conqueror on a white stallion. He is coming not in an extravagant or in an extraordinary manner. On the contrary, this King is coming on that which is common and ordinary. He is coming on a donkey, a colt, and although he comes on an animal that is by all means considered commonplace and ordinary, his mere presence is nothing less than extraordinary.

This passage of Scripture reminds us that as we journey through the Lenten season, God has promised to come to us. Especially those of us who are in the process of having our lives rebuilt, and who are recovering from some kind of disaster. God's message to us is clear. God is on His way! He may not come with lots of bells and whistles. As a matter of fact, He is going to come in ways that are common and ordinary. For example, the ability to make it through another day illustrates that our King is coming. Having a place to stay, something to eat, possessing clothing to wear, having people in our lives to encourage us through trying and difficult times are all signs that our King is on His way! Remember, He may not come in an extraordinary or extravagant manner. However, His presence in our lives is a reminder to us that the extraordinary is not too far behind, so stay inspired!

Prayer: Gracious and loving God, thank You for coming to us in our lives, especially when we are recovering from some loss, tragedy, and disaster. Thank You for sending people into our lives who have a prophetic Word for us, declaring that our King is on his way! Help us during this season of Lent to prepare ourselves for the coming of our King. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

21

DAY 14

THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2026

NOT A PLEASANT SIGHT TO BEHOLD

Rev. Dr. Terry E. Mackey

Isaiah 53:2-3

2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces, he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

In Isaiah 53, the Lord God gives Isaiah a preview of a coming attraction: Jesus the Christ. One would expect to view the coming Savior in power and might, but in verses two and three of this text, we are presented with a picture that is not pleasant to behold. In verse two, the visionary sees that the person of Jesus the Christ would not look good physically because Isaiah declared, “he hath no form or comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.” In verse three, the visionary sees the life of Jesus would not look good because Isaiah declared that he would be “despised and rejected; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” When you add these two pictures together, you are undoubtedly presented with a sight that is not pleasant to behold.

But although the vision is a sight that is not pleasant, it is a sight that is pleasing! It is a pleasing sight because it reminds us that looks are not everything!

In our society, so much emphasis is placed on how well one should look, but God is more concerned with the condition of your heart. For God declared in I Samuel 13:7 that humankind looks upon the “outward appearance, but He looks at the heart.” It is not important that you wear jeans with the brand name Seven, but what is important is that you know that seven is the complete number of God. It is not important that you wear a St. John suit, but what is important is that you believe St. John 3:16.

During this Lenten Season, let us remember that the focus of our faith is not on looking good but on being good!

Prayer: All-wise, all-knowing, and all-loving God, we pray that You would constantly remind us that the heart of the matter is always the matter of the heart! In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 15

FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 2026

CALLING INCARNATIONAL MISSIONARIES

Rev. Dr. Don Darius Butler

John 1:14

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

This verse holds transformative power, especially for those of us who understand our call to missions and justice in our communities. The Word—God Himself—took on flesh and entered our world, our struggles, our dreams, and our fight for dignity. Jesus did not stay distant in some heavenly realm, but made a home among us, showing that God’s glory shines brightest when God steps into the pain and the promise of real life with us.

This Lenten season, as we reflect on Christ’s incarnation, we are reminded that God is deeply invested in our humanity—the stories of our families, the cry for justice in our neighbourhoods, and the hope that our children will walk in freedom and peace. Jesus lived the fullness of the human experience, and in doing so, he models a mission grounded in presence and compassion. God’s grace is not passive; it moves us to stand with the oppressed, to speak boldly against injustice, and to be beacons of truth in places where lies and oppression often reign.

We have seen Jesus’ glory not only in the quiet acts of love, but also in the radical ways He confronts broken systems of power. The complete gifts of grace and truth invite us to carry forward His mission—lifting the marginalized, amplifying the voices we do not hear, and rebuilding communities with justice and mercy. This Lent, let us hear the call to be incarnational missionaries, living out the Word in our daily lives and neighbourhoods.

As we endure our own wilderness journeys and the world’s trials, we remember the God who pitched His tent among us, who knows our pain and wrestles with injustice alongside us. May this truth embolden us to be agents of healing and hope, sharing the light of Christ’s love boldly with every corner of our world.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, abide with me through this Lent, that I may receive your grace and truth anew, and live out your mission of justice and freedom for all your people. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 16

SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 2025

WHEN THE WORD TAKES ON

Rev. Dr. Lisa Weaver

John 1:14

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

I want to make a distinction between knowing all about someone and knowing someone.

One can learn all about people in many ways. We have autobiographies. We have biographies. We have accounts and references in other books and writings. We even have documentaries and podcasts. From these sources, we can gather data points from which we develop narratives about someone's life: where they've been, what they've accomplished. However, the old adage is true: you never know a person until you live with them.

If we believe in the omniscience of Jesus as the God-man, then Jesus knew everything there was to know about the people with whom He lived, specifically and all humanity broadly. When you live with someone, you get to know them, beyond data points and facts. You know how they think, how they feel, what moves their heart, what scares them. You get to know the inside of a person. And the better you know someone, the better you can speak on their behalf.

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among them." God lived among us as intimately as God could. God became like us in Jesus. So that after Jesus died, rose, and ascended to God's right hand, Jesus is able to intimately and accurately intercede for us... because He's been with us, like us, and yet without sin.

Thanks be to God for the gift of His incarnation.

Prayer: Holy, All-Knowing, and Loving God, I thank You that when I go to pray, and words fail me, You know exactly what I need because You have been like me: enfleshed, yet sinless. Hear my prayer, O Lord, as my lips utter it and even as my heart struggles to form the words. I'm grateful for Your Holy Spirit's interpretation of my groans. In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

DAY 17

MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2026

NOT BY BREAD ALONE

Dr. Patricia T. Carter

Matthew 4:4

4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

In the midst of holiday celebrations, food (bread) is at the center of our planning and activities. Shopping, exchanging recipes, cooking, and eating consume a great deal of time and energy.

Food is necessary for physical life; the physical body must be nourished for survival. But what about the spiritual body? We cannot neglect feeding our souls with "every word" out of the mouth of God—which is the scripture.

As God, Jesus did not hunger for physical food, but as man, Jesus had a natural need and desire for bread. Matthew 4:2 says he was hungry after fasting 40 days. We know that Satan chooses the weakest moments of life to attack. How vulnerable was Jesus at that moment of temptation? How vulnerable are we when we feel like the world is caving in on us? Because he knew the Word of God, He remained focused on fasting, not feasting. Like Christ, we must remain focused on the task at hand and not allow the tempter to divert our attention to earthly things. A full stomach and empty soul (spirit) is ripe for the tempter/Satan to step in.

Let us not neglect feeding our minds and our souls with the Word of God. Consistent, ready, regular attendance in Bible study prepares for times of temptation. I challenge us to study and learn the work so that when the tempter comes, we, like Jesus, will be able to stand on the Word of God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to learn Your word that we may live Your way. Amen.

DAY 18

TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2026

CHRIST'S CALL TO REPENTANCE

Rev. Dr. Edwin Holmes

Matthew 4:17

17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven [a]is at hand."

Have you ever had to repent for something in this life? Growing up in Detroit, at age 16, I just received my driver's license. I was excited. My father gave me the rules: never be late returning the car, never let it run on empty, and always be on time to pick him up. One day I was late. Seeing my father's disappointed look, I repented—not because I feared punishment, but because I despised disobedience to him. How much more should we lament when we fall short of our heavenly Father? He has given us His Word to follow, and when we fail, there should be conviction—a godly sorrow—that leads to a 180-degree turn back to God's path.

What is repentance? A transformative change of mind that produces a changed life—reorienting our priorities, desires, and actions to align with God's Will. It is not mere sorrow; it is a decision to turn around. Repentance involves both turning toward God and turning away from sin. In Matthew 4:17, Jesus begins His public ministry in Galilee with a concise, piercing directive: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In the glare of a crowded world, this radical message announces that the coming reign of God is urgent and near, breaking into everyday life. To respond is to align with God's coming kingdom, to abandon paths that lead away from Him, and to reorient the entire life around His purposes.

Two lessons emerge from repentance:

- 1) The manner of proclamation: The word "preach" means to cry out, to announce publicly. This is not dialogue or discussion; it is a declaration of an important truth, proclaimed with earnest urgency. If God has done anything for you, let the redeemed of the Lord say so. If you have seen the goodness of the Lord, say something!
- 2) The message of preaching: "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17) echoes John the Baptist's proclamation in Matthew 3:2.

Three features stand out:

- It is an admonishing message (to repent is to acknowledge sin).
- It is a needed message (the holy kingdom cannot be entered without holiness).
- It is an urgent message ("at hand" signals present opportunity; do not delay).

Repentance is not a one-time act, but a daily turning that reorders our priorities, desires, and actions toward God's kingdom. In every circumstance, we are invited to live in light of Jesus's timely call. As we listen to Jesus's call, may our hearts continuously turn from Self-rule to God's rule, until every thought, word, and deed bears witness to the kingdom that is drawing near.

Prayer: Lord, bend my heart toward you today: renew my mind, recalibrate my life, and unleash my love so others may see your Kingdom and turn to you.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

26

DAY 19

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2026

HOW FAR ARE YOU WILLING TO GO?

Rev. Dr. Jamey O. Graham

Matthew 9:35

35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

As you journey with Jesus during this Lenten season, how far are you willing to go in mission and in ministry? Jesus goes far and wide to reach people for the Kingdom. Jesus also willingly goes everywhere to save the lost, mature the saints, and heal the hurting.

Jesus literally went everywhere: in all the cities and villages (Mt. 9:35), in the countryside (Mt. 5:1), in the synagogues (Mt. 9:35), on mountains (Mt. 5:1), by the seashore (Mt. 4:18), in boats (Mt. 8:23f), by graveyards (Mt. 8:28f), and in homes (Mt. 8:14; 9:10). There was no place where Jesus did not go to minister. We, too, must go everywhere to save the lost, make disciples, and heal the hurting.

Then, Jesus willingly goes to the three levels or depths of ministry to meet the needs of three groups in the world. Look at the three levels and the three groups. The text said, Jesus went about preaching to the lost, teaching the disciples, and healing the hurting. Are you willing to go to the depths of ministry to minister to the three groups of people that Jesus ministered to?

First, Jesus went everywhere preaching to reach the souls of those who were lost! Jesus said, "The Son of man has come to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Paul said, it is the proclamation of the Gospel that saves (Romans 1:16). Preaching is the first level of ministry that we must be willing to go to and do in order to save the Lost.

Secondly, Jesus went everywhere teaching and making disciples of those who were saved. Preaching must move to teaching in order for the saved immature to grow into a fully mature disciple, who in turn goes forth to make more disciples. Are we willing to move to the next level of ministry by being obedient to Jesus' great commission to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20)?

Finally, Jesus went everywhere healing those who were hurting. In His sermon in Nazareth, He said the Spirit of the Lord anointed Him to heal the broken-hearted... (Luke 4:18). Matthew said, Jesus went about healing every sickness and every disease among the people (Matthew 9:35). Are we willing to take our ministry to the next level, where we are healing those who are sick and hurting among us?

Prayer: Lord, in our effort to journey with You during this Lenten season and beyond, empower us to be willing to go everywhere preaching to save the lost, teaching to make disciples, and healing the hurting. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

DAY 20

THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2026

FAITH ON THE OTHER SIDE OF FRUSTRATION

Rev. Treyvon J. Sinclair, Sr.

Luke 5:5

5 Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But (Nevertheless) because you say so, I will let down the nets.”

Have you ever cleaned your house, sat down to rest, and then somebody walked in with muddy shoes? That moment of frustration where you want to say, “Really, now!” That’s how Simon Peter must have felt. He had clocked out for the day, folded his nets, washed them, and was ready to go home. Then Jesus shows up and asks him to go back out. Peter had already tried and failed. He had every reason to say, “No.” But his faith shows up in one small but powerful word, “Nevertheless.”

“Nevertheless,” faith is born in frustration. Peter did not find faith after success, but in the middle of failure. Real faith is not just what you declare on the mountaintop; it’s what you decide in the valley.

“Nevertheless,” faith trusts the voice over the evidence. The evidence said – “empty nets.” The voice of Jesus said – “cast again.” Faith means leaning more on what He says than what you see.

“Nevertheless,” faith prepares you for overflow. When Peter said “Nevertheless,” he moved from empty nets to breaking nets. What looked like wasted effort turned into a witness of abundance.

Somebody reading this knows what it is to be tired, frustrated, and ready to quit. But I’m writing this to tell you that faith is not the absence of frustration, but it’s the decision to trust God in spite of it.

So, the next time your plans don’t add up, and the night feels long, whisper like Peter, “Nevertheless, at Your Word.” On the other side of your “Nevertheless” may be the breakthrough you have been waiting on.

Prayer: Lord, give me a “Nevertheless Faith” that trusts Your Word even when life feels empty, and help me to keep casting my net until You fill it. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 21

FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2026

IT'S ALL OR NOTHING

Rev. Mcford B. Chipuliko

Mark 12:30

“30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ [a]This is the first commandment.”

This first commandment summarises all God’s laws and calls us for a complete and undivided devotion to our God. This involves our heart, soul, mind and strength. This is a deep and comprehensive love that covers our being, and without this kind of love, we have nothing.

It is important to note each component mentioned in this verse:

- **The “Heart”** signifies the seat of emotion and affections. Loving God with the heart involves genuine, heartfelt devotion.
- **The “Soul”** represents the centre of our being. Loving God with the Soul involves a profound and strong connection with God.
- **The “Mind”** refers to intellectual engagement. It implies thoughtful and intentional commitment to understanding God's Will.
- **The “Strength”** covers physical and practical aspects. Loving God with strength implies active obedience and service.

Our priority of love for God is above all else. This is a call for everyone to place God at the centre of our lives. He is the ultimate source of love, purpose and the meaning of life. God is all our love. The word “All” is repeated, it means we have to give God all our love continually. We should not keep back any love for ourselves.

To love God means to obey God. God is supremely lovely and lovable. No one else is as wise and wonderful and great, and good and beautiful as Almighty God. Therefore, let this commandment rule our thoughts, decisions and actions. Indeed, it’s all or nothing!

Prayer: Almighty God, our Father, help us to love you more and remain in your love forever. Lord, you are our source of life and love. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

DAY 22

SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2026

CONSIDER THE CHILDREN

Dr. Eleanor N. Graves

Mark 10:14

14 He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”

Children are to be seen and not heard. Many of us grew up with this saying, especially when adult conversation was taking place. The origin of this “proverb,” inaccurately attributed to the Bible, is from a 1450 A.D. homily of an Augustinian clergyman, referring to young women.

Nevertheless, even today, we silence or ignore our children’s voices—considering them, as did the disciples, as unwelcome intrusions. How many times have you turned off the television when images of emaciated, pot-bellied children with vacant stares become too painful for you to watch? More than 7 million children die quietly every year from hunger. Malnutrition affects one in three children in developing countries. Do we “send them away?” Jesus became indignant with this attitude. He says, with open arms, to consider the children. See them. Touch them. Bless them and be like them. He says to receive them is to receive Him (Mark 9:37), and to give to them will be rewarded (Matthew 10:42).

In this Lenten Season of reflection, reaction, and hopefully action, we are to consider the children, give sacrificially, and inspire others to do so. We must value their lives and adopt their attitudes of trust and guileless faith. In the words of Margaret Clarkson’s hymn “So Send I You,”

“So send I you to hearts made hard by hatred
To eyes made blind because they will not see
To spend though it be blood to spend and spare not
So send I you to taste of Calvary.”

Prayer: O God, as Jesus stretched out His loving arms on Calvary, may we also open our arms to the voiceless, suffering children. Amen.

DAY 23

MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2026

EXTENDING FORGIVENESS TO OTHERS

Rev. Dr. Brandon Whitehurst
Matthew 18:32-33

32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’

This parable in Matthew 18:32-33 allows the reader to witness the inconsistent action of the forgiven, yet unforgiving servant. Although this unforgiving servant stood in a place to extend the same generosity, he falls short of his obligation to pay it forward, not back. Just as we have benefited from the forgiveness of God, we are called to extend the same to others. Yet so often, when someone offends us, we hold on tightly to anger, resentment, or the desire for repayment.

Consider the story of the Heavy Backpack. Imagine a man walking down the street carrying a huge backpack filled with heavy rocks. Every time someone offends him, he bends down, picks up another stone, and stuffs it inside. At first, he doesn’t notice the weight, but as the years go by, the load becomes unbearable. He’s hunched over, exhausted, and barely able to take another step.

Now, picture someone coming alongside him and saying, “Why don’t you put it down? You don’t have to carry that anymore.” But instead of letting go, the man clutches the straps tighter and insists, “These rocks are mine—they remind me of what others did to me!”

Unforgiveness is just like that backpack. Every grudge, every offense, every wound we refuse to release adds weight to our souls. Meanwhile, Christ has already offered to take the burden off our shoulders. When we forgive, we are not excusing the wrong, but we are choosing to set down the stones that weigh us down.

As Jesus said in the parable, “Should you not also have had compassion...?” We forgive not because others always deserve it, but because we’ve been set free from our own crushing debt. Forgiveness is dropping the backpack—and walking in freedom. During this Lenten season, let us pay it forward by extending forgiveness to others.

Prayer: Father, give us the ability to become intentional as we extend forgiveness to others, just as you have done for us. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 24

TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2026

THE SIN OF PRETENSE

Rev. Dr. Brandle C. Morrow

Matthew 15:8

8 “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me...”

The Matthean Gospel introduces Christ as preeminently a teacher. The object of Christian teaching is to educate the mind and to influence the intentions of the heart. One without the other is problematic. An educated mind without a transformed heart is hazardous. A sober heart without an informed mind is unacquainted with God. It was the divine ambition of Christ during His earthly ministry to accomplish both.

In the prescribed text, Jesus is disputing the fallacious sensibilities of the Pharisees, and (ironically), the teachers of the law. The prevailing issue is the integration of human traditions with Christian convictions. In other words, Jesus accuses the Pharisees and the teachers of the law of initiating a manufactured religion, masquerading as sacred truth. Far too often, we consolidate our thoughts with God’s thoughts. Jesus said doing so invalidates the Word of God (Matthew 15:6). The peril of contradicting God’s Word makes impostors of us all. Consequently, how we practice our faith, and, especially, how we worship God, is misinformed and inadequate.

I encourage you during the Lenten season to permit the word of God to educate your mind and reform the intentions of your heart.

Prayer: God, through the agency of your Spirit, transform my mind, and create in me a clean heart. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 25

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2026

FROM STONES TO CORNERSTONE

Rev. Dr. Alvin C. Bernstine

John 8:58-59

58 Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” 59 Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going [a] through the midst of them, and so passed by.

“Lent teaches us that the heaviest stones we carry are not in our hands, but in our hearts and heads.”

John 8 captures the stone-throwing tendency of repressive faith. It begins with stones raised against a woman caught in adultery, and it ends with stones lifted against Jesus himself. From start to finish, the chapter reveals how quick we are to weaponize faith, to turn religion into rubble rather than refuge. Yet, the true danger is not in the rocks themselves but in the rigid hearts and closed minds that hold them.

Rigid fundamentalism clutches stones of rule-keeping, more ready to condemn than to heal. Anti-intellectualism hurls stones at thought, confusing honest questions with disobedience. Colonized religion heaps stones of shame upon the very people Christ came to free, teaching them to despise their own voices and histories. These stones—lodged in our hearts and heads—are more hurtful than any stone we could ever throw.

Here is the Lenten miracle: the very one against whom stones were raised becomes the cornerstone of a new world order. What others meant for destruction, God transforms into foundation. The Christ once targeted by rocks of rejection becomes the solid ground for communities of mercy, love, justice, and joy. Instead of throwing stones in fear, we are invited to build on Him in faith.

The Apostle Paul echoes this vision in Ephesians 2:19–22: “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, 20built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

The woman walked away alive. Jesus walked through violence unbowed. And we walk into freedom, discovering that the stones once lifted to destroy can become the cornerstone of God’s liberating love. This Lent, let us stop throwing and start building—on Christ, the cornerstone, who makes all things new!

Prayer: O, Cornerstone Christ, may this Lenten season deliver us from stone-throwing to building a new world order. In Your Name, Amen.

DAY 26

THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2026

OPENING BLIND EYES

Rev. Dr. Byron Williams

John 9:39-41

39 Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.” 40 Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, “What? Are we blind too?” 41 Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.”

Helen Keller once said, “The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.”

It is our knowledge of sin that makes us guilty of sin. From the very beginning, God created Adam and Eve in innocence, or to put it another way, in total blindness to sin. Once the act of disobedience to God was committed, their “eyes were opened,” and they knew right from wrong, thus exposing and condemning themselves to death, in which is both blindness and darkness forever. Their eyes being opened could not have implied physical blindness because they could indeed see physically. Therefore, it could only refer to spiritual sight.

Christ has come into the world to heal us of our blindness. He says to those who witnessed the healing of a man blind from birth, “Your claim to have spiritual sight while at the same time rejecting Me is that which seals you up in the guilt of unbelief.” “Unbelief” is self-inflicted ignorance, born out of stubbornness toward the truth. Remember, the word “ignorance” has as its root the word “ignore.” To ignore a thing does not imply the lack of the knowledge of the truth, it implies one’s failure to acknowledge the knowledge of the truth. In this passage, our Lord speaks comfort to the physically blind and conviction to the spiritually blind. The paradox is that the physically blind are healed—a human impossibility. The spiritually blind are not healed—a divine possibility.

The entire passage indicates that those who seek God's guidance are going to fare much better than those who reject it. It also provides an opening to the Kingdom for those who did not know enough to seek God's guidance in the first place.

Prayer: God our Father, thank you for opening our blind eyes to see in Jesus all we need for life forevermore! Amen.

DAY 27

FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2026

LOOKING FOR THE RIGHT TIME AN EVIL DEED

Rev. Dr. Darrell A. Drumwright

Matthew 26:3-5

3 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, 4 and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. 5 “But not during the festival,” they said, “or there may be a riot among the people.”

We must always be on alert that there are enemies of God’s kingdom. The text today reminds us all the more of the evil intent to do Jesus of Nazareth in. There are some individuals and entities that may even know the language of scripture, engage in religious actions, present themselves as representatives of God, yet inwardly their hearts are bent towards evil and works of darkness. Strikingly, they are waiting for an opportunity to show their true selves. Evil lurkers can be found in absolutely every context.

In light of this reality, seek God for the spirit of discernment so that you can truly identify who and what is of God and who and what is not. Likewise, be vigilant of your surroundings in all ways, knowing that there is an enemy to the progress of God’s people. Moreover, call it exactly what it is. We are informed in the word that a tree is known by its fruit. If it looks, sounds, and acts in evil ways with evil intents, then it’s evil. Finally, guard your heart, mind, emotions, and environments so that your spiritual sensitivity creates a window of safe space that benefits you and others.

Prayer: Eternal God our Heavenly Father, increase our discernment so that we may know who and what is of you and who and what is not, in the name of the Lord Jesus we pray Christ, Amen.



35

DAY 28

SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2026

NO GREATER LOVE

Rev. Dr. Jason Lawrence Turner

John 15:13

13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Friendship is a part of the human experience that is seldom understood, carelessly practiced, but desperately needed by all. God created all of us to be in communion with Him and to desire community as it manifested in the bonds of friendship. Friendship is something that is given attention in the pages of Holy Writ. It is in Proverbs 18:24 where we are apprised that "...there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Then in Proverbs 17:17, we receive explicitly what to expect from a friend when we are told, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity." Whether or not we have experienced what is described in Scripture, without excuse, we know what friendship is by precept.

But when "the Word made flesh" and "dwelt among us" in the person of Jesus Christ, is when we witnessed friendship personified. Christ, while sharing a last evening with His disciples, testifies of Himself while unraveling the complexity of human interaction through friendship when He tells His followers, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." On the next day, Jesus would lay down His life on Calvary not only to pay the debt of our sins and to satisfy the demands of Divine Justice but to ultimately reconcile us to Himself for eternity. What A Friend We Have in Jesus!

We now, as His followers, are not called to give our lives as Christ has done, for that work is complete. Nevertheless, we are challenged to lay down our lives, set aside our ambitions and selfish desires for the joy and friendship of those who join us on the journey of Christian Discipleship until we see the Friend, face to face, who with great sacrifice laid down His life because He loved us so.

Prayer: Loving God, as you have laid down your life to be in relationship with us, soften our hearts that we might surrender our lives to know and be known as true friends through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

DAY 29

MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2026

AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

Rev. Dr. Christopher R. Boston

John 13:14-15

14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

In the song “Super Bad,” The Godfather of Soul, James Brown, shouts twice in the intro, “Watch me.” That phrase was a verbal cue for his band to follow his lead. Jesus, after dining with His disciples, rises from the table, prepares a basin, and starts washing His disciples’ feet. He said no words and made no grand announcement. He simply starts washing.

John 13 begins the long goodbye of Jesus that would continue through chapter 17. This farewell begins with washing, not with words. Some might be tempted to quip that this is because “Talk is cheap.” That is not the case with Jesus. Every word that proceeds from His mouth is to be cherished. Perhaps the act of washing before speaking is a way to emphasize the art of doing.

When Jesus extended the invitation to His disciples, He did use words. James Brown commanded his band with, “Watch Me.” Jesus formed an orchestra from outcasts and ordinary men with the words, “Follow Me.” To prep for His departure, He left an instruction manual of service that included a visual aid of washing. In typical fashion, Jesus washing disrupted established protocols while simultaneously constituted new ones. His sincerity removed any hint of pretentious-based performance and showed that authentic spirituality is purposeful action to help others, not using power to harm them.

After He acts, Jesus carefully clarified His actions, saying to His disciples, “Do as I have done.” His synthesized summation of works and words in our text beckons us to avoid the bread of idleness, retreat from the forces of convenience, and “Just Do It.”

As we navigate this life, we can kick up some dirt and debris, and our feet can get dusty in the process. Let us be thankful for Jesus, who shows us what it means to get down in the dust to serve others.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for showing us the way. May we always follow Your example of service and make people our priority. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 30

TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2026

AS I HAVE LOVED YOU

Rev. Dr. Haywood A. Robinson, III

John 13:34-35

34 A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Every good parent, coach, manager, or leader learns to capitalize on teachable moments. No one mastered this like Jesus. While preparing His disciples for His departure and for His imminent confrontation with the forces of evil, Jesus gives them a critical ministry insight and imperative. His simple, yet salient instruction is, “Love one another, as I have loved you.” Allow me to suggest that the weight of this command is found in the phrase “as I have loved you.” The future of His church was too important for Christ to allow His disciples to interpret the meaning and measure of love. So, He defines it for them: “as I have loved you.” Furthermore, He implies that the most convincing mark of true discipleship to be observed by men is in our loving other believers as Christ loved His own disciples.

When we consider this command in its context, we learn at least three important truths. First, our love is to be intentional. Notice the insight John gives us in the first verse of chapter 13. Although fully aware of the discord caused by James and John’s request for favors, the imminent betrayal of Judas, the denials of Peter, and the defection of the others, “He loved them.” Wow! Dear friend, we, too, must love on purpose, in spite of, and in light of, what we know others might do.

We also learn that our love is to be incessant. This means “without stopping” or “continual.” Don’t miss the three words that follow: “to the end.” Jesus loved through the dissension, the deception, the denial, the drowsiness, and the defection. Our love for each other, likewise, must transcend every offense, every obstacle, and every opposition.

Finally, let’s be mindful that our love is to be instructional. The central phrase under consideration, “as I have loved you,” strongly suggests that loving like Jesus can be both caught and taught. We, therefore, are commanded to love each other in such a way that others can learn to love like Jesus.

During this Lenten journey, may we become more intentional, incessant, and instructional in the way that we express our love for Christ by so loving one another.

Prayer: Father, cultivate in me a love like Yours and like that of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Teach me how to love intentionally, incessantly, and instructionally, not only that I might bear this signal mark of a true disciple, but that, in so doing, others might be attracted to the prospect and power of becoming loving disciples of Christ as well.

In His wonderful name, I ask it. Amen.

38

DAY 31

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026

A DEPARTING GIFT TO YOU

Rev. Dr. Clarke McGriff

John 14:27

“27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

As the shadow of the cross loomed over Jesus, He gathered His disciples for a final, tender conversation. They were confused, anxious, and fearful of the unknown. And in the midst of this eventual turmoil, Jesus offered them a parting gift: Peace. Not merely a hopeful wish, but His peace—complete, divine, and enduring.

This was not the fragile peace the world offers, conditional, fleeting, and easily disturbed. It was the deep, anchoring peace of the Son of God who trusted the Father completely, even in suffering. As Isaiah 9:6 calls Him, Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and He shares His peace freely with those who follow Him.

During Lent, we walk a path that mirrors Jesus’ Road to the cross. It is often a season of inner wrestling, repentance, and surrender. Along that path, we are invited not only to examine our hearts, but to receive again this precious gift—peace that settles the storm within us.

Paul reminds us in Romans 5:1, “Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Christ’s sacrifice reconciles us to God, removing the burden of guilt and shame, and granting us access to a peace that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7).

But Jesus’ words in John 14 go further. He gives this peace before the resurrection, before the victory is seen. It is peace that carries us through trouble, not merely out of it. That’s why He tells His followers, “Let not your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid.”

As you journey through this Lenten season, consider what fears or unrest weigh on your heart. In what places of your life do you need to receive Christ’s peace?

His peace is not passive. It is active, powerful, and sustaining. It guards, it restores, and it steadies. It is His gift to you—not just at Lent, but always.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You for the peace You offer, not as the world gives, but as only You can. In this Lenten season, help me to receive Your peace fully—to let go of fear, anxiety, and control. Quiet my heart and fix my eyes on You, my Prince of Peace. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 32

THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2026

THE “IF” OF FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS

Rev. Dr. Joseph G. Ford

John 15:14

14 You are my friends if you do what I command.

Joseph Scriven penned the words, “What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!” He reminds us that Jesus is our friend, but the question becomes, are we truly His friend?

Friendship with Jesus is one of the most profound privileges a believer can experience. He does not call us servants but friends, those who share His heart, His mission, and His love. Yet, in this verse, Jesus attaches an important condition: “if you do whatever I command.” That little word “if” carries great weight. It reminds us that friendship with Jesus is not casual, it is covenantal.

Jesus’ commands are not burdens to bear but bridges to deeper devotion. When we obey Him, we align our will with His, and through that alignment, trust grows. Obedience becomes the language of love. Jesus reminds us in John 14:15, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” Just as we prove loyalty in earthly friendships through faithfulness, we prove our friendship with Christ through our willingness to follow where He leads, even when the path is uncomfortable.

Jesus says, “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you,” not servants. Servants have no choice, but as friends, we choose. Friendship with Jesus is an act of the will, a willingness to surrender born out of love, not compulsion. It shifts our relationship from mere duty to delight, from obligation to opportunity. True friendship with Jesus means we not only hear His words but live them out with joy.

Every “if” in Scripture invites a response. This “if” calls us to examine whether our friendship with Jesus is built on convenience or commitment. When we choose obedience, we move from simply knowing about Jesus to truly walking with Him. And in that walk, we find that His commands are not restrictions, but revelations of His deep love and desire for our best.

Prayer: Jesus, help me to live as Your true friend, one who obeys not out of duty, but out of deep love and trust in You. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

40

DAY 33

FRIDAY, MARCH 27, 2026

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER

Rev. Dr. Ralph D. West

Revelation 19:9

9 Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”

Jesus will not eat again until the eschatological kingdom is fulfilled. So, the hour is now at hand when the celebration of the Passover year after year will cease. God will instead inaugurate the eternal Passover of fulfillment, which God’s people yearn for in their regular observance of the Lord’s Supper. The next meal Jesus will host with His disciples will be the messianic meal on a transfigured earth. Jesus will drink the new wine. To be new is the mark of the redeemed world, the time of salvation, and the transfigured creation.

On a transfigured earth, where perfect communion with God will have become a reality through corporal transfiguration, Jesus will once more, as at the Last Supper, act as the Paterfamilias: He will break the bread of blessing for His redeemed, and give them the cup of thanksgiving. Once more, he will be the giver and minister, and His own once more will be the recipients who, through eating and drinking, will receive the gift of God’s salvation—eternal life.

The weary disciples are especially in need of such assurance in view of the impending events of the Passion. Jesus wishes to fix this confirmation as firmly in their minds as He possibly can. Therefore, He is not content with a spoken promise, so He translates it into the language of the senses for them through His actions. He does not share in the cup. By His solemn vow of abstinence, He forswears all feasts and wine in the future, in order to impart to them His own complete certainty that the final consummation is at hand.

You will be there at the celestial banquet, where Jesus the host will serve the meal and sit down with His welcomed guests. Then, all the ransomed of God will be safe, to sin no more.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we eagerly look forward to that glorious day when we’ll sit down with You to partake of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. There, we will have no regrets or tears for the sinful things we’ve done on earth. Instead, we’ll celebrate the freedom that Your salvation has given us for all eternity. Amen.

DAY 34

SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2026

THE SINGING JESUS

Rev. Dr. Jeffery S. Thompson

Mark 14:26

26 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

This pericope opens with Jesus sending forth two of his disciples to Jerusalem with detailed instructions to secure a place for Jesus to observe the Passover meal with his disciples. While observing the Passover meal, the memorial meal that pointed back to commemorate God's act of delivering Israel from 430 years of Egyptian bondage, Jesus issues a stinging indictment, announcing that one of the disciples would betray him! Baffled and sorrowful, each one begins to ask, "Is it I?"

Jesus knew full well that among his 12 disciples there was one who would betray him; there was one who would deny him not once, not twice, but three times. There was one who would not believe the reality of his resurrection and that in the days to come all his disciples would desert him. Jesus nevertheless took the bread and wine, blessed them, and gave them to his disciples.

Declaring the bread to be his body and the wine to be his blood of the new covenant, Jesus instituted the first Christian Communion service and pointed forward to the redemptive work that lay ahead for him as the substitutional sacrificial Lamb of God that takes away sin. After celebrating the Passover meal, instituting the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion), Jesus and his disciples ended the meal in the normal manner. They sang a hymn. They sang one of the Psalms. The Psalm would have recounted God's mighty acts, connecting Israel's past with Jesus' passion.

We do not know what hymn they sang, but we do know that they sang, and Jesus sang with them. With all of the anguish and anxiety that lie ahead... Jesus sang. With all of the severity and sorrow that lie ahead... Jesus sang. With all of the pain and persecution that lie ahead... Jesus sang. With all of the betrayal and beatings that lay ahead, Jesus sang. With all of the darkness and destruction ahead, Jesus sang. With the unfair prosecution and unjust persecution ahead, Jesus sang.

Prayer: May we sing like You, Lord Jesus, despite our situation, our circumstance, or the darkness we face. For Lord, with You on our side, we will not fear! Amen.

DAY 35

MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2026

FRIEND, ENEMY, OR FRIENEMY

Rev. Dr. Joe Albert Bush, Sr.

Matthew 26:48-50

48 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.” 49 Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him. 50 Jesus replied, “Do what you came for, friend.”

The question was asked, “What do you think was Christ’s greatest miracle?” A college student answered: “He had had twelve close friends in his 30s.” Really something to think about! Not many people in their 30s can say they have twelve close friends. Many of us know how to deal with our friends and our enemies. But it is those frienemies that often hit us with the bitter sting of treacherous betrayal.

Friends are forever, and enemies can often be transformed into friends, but frienemies are people who come into our lives for a reason and a brief season. Such people can only go so far with you before they begin to drag you down. Frienemies are people who we invite into our lives with good intentions, but who never seem to fully identify with or appreciate the fact that we are children of destiny. Our frienemies seem to always draw more from the relationship than they are willing to contribute to, and they tend to use and abuse their relationship with others for personal gain. This was the case with Judas Iscariot.

Judas, just like the other eleven, was carefully and prayerfully chosen by Jesus to “become apostles” (i.e., one who is sent) to continue the great work when Jesus would no longer be present in the flesh. Jesus was careful to invest and deposit just as much in Judas’s spiritual development as he did in the others, even though Jesus clearly knew what Judas was all about.

More than once, Jesus referred to the twelve as “friends,” saying to them, “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you servants.... I call you friends” (John 15:13-15). They were His bosom buddies with whom He was prepared to share everything, but that was not enough for Judas.

Jesus made one last-ditch effort to catch Judas at the Passover meal, but it was not to happen. Judas, the frienemy, fell into the hands of the enemy.

Thank God for your friends, be prayerful with your enemies, and be on the lookout with your frienemies, who come into our lives for a reason and a brief season.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, teach us to appreciate our friends, to love our enemies; but also teach us to appreciate the fact that there are some people You allow into our lives for a reason and a brief season. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 36

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2026

SILENT STRENGTH

Rev. Dr. Derick Brennan

Matthew 27:12-14

12 When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. 13 Then Pilate asked him, “Don’t you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?” 14 But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.

Langston Hughes wrote, “I catch the pattern of your silence. Before you speak, I do not need to hear a word. In your silence, every tone I see is heard.”

The instinct of the human heart, when confronted with false accusation, is to respond in self-defence. We long to vindicate ourselves and to set the record straight. Yet in Matthew 27, as Christ stood before His accusers, He chose another way. The chief priests and elders levelled their charges; Pilate himself urged Him to respond. Yet, Jesus remained silent.

The Savior uses silence as a tool of power and protest. Though prophesied multi-centuries before (Isaiah 53:9), the suffering servant illustrates that spiritual battles cannot be fought nor won with verbal armaments. This silence was not the silence of defeat, but of divine strength. Our Lord understood that the greater purpose of the Father was unfolding, and He willingly submitted to it. Every unspoken word testified to His trust in the sovereignty of God.

For believers, Christ reveals that there are occasions when silence, grounded in faith, communicates more powerfully than speech. Such restraint bears witness to a deeper truth—that ultimate justice rests not with us, but with God alone.

This does not imply that Christians are called to be perpetually silent and passively witness injustice. Scripture has numerous accounts when Christ and others spoke with temerity and certitude.

Jesus’ calm before Pilate teaches the discipline of wisdom, and Pilate responds with awe. Believers have numerous opportunities to make the world marvel, through our voices, dissent, service, and meekness sourced from our confidence in Christ. In what circumstances might God be calling you to lay aside self-defence and entrust the outcome to Him?

Prayer: Holy Spirit, may my restraint be a sign of unshakable trust in You and grant me the discernment to know when to speak and when to remain silent. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 37

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2026

THE TEARS OF REPENTANCE

Rev. Dr. Major McGuire, III

Luke 22:60 - 62

60 Peter replied, “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. 61The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.” 62 And he went outside and wept bitterly.

There are all kinds of tears – tears of joy, tears of fear, and tears of apprehension. Some of the most challenging kinds of tears are the tears of repentance. These are the tears that erupt from our eyes when we come to the realization that we have done something that does not agree with whom we represent. This is the predicament in which Peter finds himself. Earlier in the chapter (Luke 22:31-34), Jesus predicted Peter’s denial. Matthew records Peter saying, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you” (Matthew 26:35 NIV). But Peter not only disowned Jesus one time, but three times did he disown his Lord.

As I meditated upon this biblical account, my heart went out to Peter, but in a real sense to all who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. All of us have a little bit of Peter in us. Like Peter, we pledge our loyalty and love to Jesus. We affirm our determination to be of good courage.

But with every noble motive, praiseworthy ambition, and capacity to soar comes the tragedy of low achievement. It came for Peter, but Jesus did not “kick him to the curb.” While he may have disowned Jesus, Jesus did not disown him. Following the third denial (verse 61), “The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: ‘Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times’.”

During this Lenten Period, let us remember how the Lord turns toward us even in our worst moments. Let us praise God for the Jesus look, for no one can look at you like Jesus. Finally, let us thank God for the gift of memory. Peter no doubt remembered Jesus’ words to him, “But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank You for the capacity to shed tears – tears of joy and fear, but most of all, tears of repentance. We do so with the hope of being used by You in the advancement of the kingdom of God. May You get glory out of our feeble attempts to serve you in this present age. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

DAY 38

THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2026

CARRY YOUR CROSS

Rev. Dr. Mark Wainwright

John 19:17

17 Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).

Jesus walked to Golgotha, also known as “the place of the Skull,” carrying the weight of the cross upon His shoulders. It was not just wood pressing down on Him, but the heaviness of injustice, sin, and oppression. The Skull was not simply a location; it symbolized the powers of death, dehumanization, and cruelty that sought to strip Him—and us—of dignity and hope.

Yet, in carrying His own cross, Jesus demonstrated a radical form of liberation. He did not deny the injustice around Him, nor did He pass the burden to another. Instead, He bore it fully, showing us that true freedom is found in facing the skulls of life—those systems, structures, and struggles that try to suffocate our faith, identity, and purpose.

The skulls of our society appear in many forms: racism that devalues lives; sexism that silences voices; greed that widens inequality; violence that destroys communities; and hopelessness that erodes the human spirit. Like Jesus, we are called to carry our crosses, not as a sign of defeat, but as a testimony that injustice will not have the last word.

Carrying the cross means naming the skulls for what they are and refusing to let them define us. It means standing firm in God’s justice, even when the path is heavy. It means walking toward liberation, trusting that beyond the Skull lies resurrection. The cross teaches us that every skull in our lives—every structure of oppression, every fear, every shame—can be overcome by God’s love and our faithful endurance.

As we journey through Lent, may we not shy away from the crosses entrusted to us. Instead, let us carry them boldly, knowing that with Christ, liberation is already breaking through the darkness of every Skull.

Prayer: Lord, help me carry my cross with courage. Liberate me from the skulls that haunt my life and society, and lead me into the freedom and justice of Your resurrection. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 39

FRIDAY APRIL 3, 2026

THE HILL OF THE SKULL

Rev. Dr. Jesse Voyd Bottoms, Jr.

Luke 23:33

33 When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left.

Calvary, the Latin Calvaria, meaning “skull,” is the same place called Golgotha in Hebrew. It was a hill just outside Jerusalem’s walls where executions by crucifixion were publicly carried out. ‘There they crucified Him...’ These few words describe the most significant act in human history. He suffered not for His sins, but for ours.

And, ‘the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left’ — Jesus was crucified between two criminals, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 53:12: He was numbered with the transgressors. One of those criminals would soon repent and receive eternal life. The other would reject Him — a picture of the two possible responses to the Cross of Christ.

The hands that blessed the children were nailed to a cross; the feet that walked on water were fastened with iron spikes. Yet, He went willingly: “No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (John 10:18). He died not as a victim, but as the Victor — defeating sin, Satan, and death.

The cross reveals the justice of God (sin must be punished). The cross reveals the love of God (He took the punishment Himself). The cross reveals the power of God (salvation is accomplished). Because of Calvary, no sin is too great, no past too dark, no burden too heavy. Grace flows from that hill to every heart that believes.

It looked like defeat, but three days later came victory. He died one Friday, but late Sunday morning — It was late Sunday morning when the women got there, because He got up early.

What happened at Calvary still changes lives today. The Blood still cleanses, the Cross still saves, and the Empty Tomb still proves He lives. It was there where sin met its punishment, the sinner met his Savior, and Heaven met earth.

Every person must decide: What does the Cross mean to me? Will I reject it like one thief—or receive it like the other?

Prayer: Dear God, please bring us to Calvary, the place where mercy met misery, and grace conquered guilt. Let there be evidence that we have passed by Calvary. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

47

DAY 40

SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 2026

THE HIGH COST OF REDEMPTION

Rev. Dr. Johnny Turner

1 Peter 1:18-19

18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

The Foundation of Redemption

Redemption finds its profound meaning in the sacrifice of Christ. This Lenten season reminds you of your redemptive experience and its transformative power, because silver and gold cannot provide redemption for the ungodly. Sin was blocking the path of a fruitful life. Therefore, this foundation's purpose is to align individuals with a new standard, moving beyond priorities that offer only temporary satisfaction while failing to recognize the emptiness that accompanies such pursuits.

The Sacrifice of Jesus

Jesus stands as the perfect sacrifice, offering His blood as the ultimate price for redemption. Through His willingness to endure the punishment for our sins on Calvary's Cross, He provided how true salvation is made possible. Many people today find themselves lost in uncertainty, prioritizing worldly matters or pursuing personal agendas—clinging to an emptiness that offers no lasting fulfillment. Some give little thought to their eventual departure from this life and have not considered the importance of their redemption. Jesus' perfect sacrifice is essential for our redemption.

Reflection on the Cost

The high cost of redemption serves as a reason for believers to reflect on the past, where sin's vile motive was obstructed by grace. Before accepting Christ, happiness, peace, and joy were kept at bay by sin. After individuals accepted Christ, their lives were transformed with new meaning. His redemptive sacrifice links believers to eternity and sets us free from the bondage of sin to salvation, securing our eternal destiny for heavenly fellowship. Only Christ could fit the high cost of redemption.

Freedom and Salvation

Through redemption, we experience the freedom from the shackles of sin and are replaced by the security of salvation. God enables believers to look ahead to eternal fellowship, firmly established through the costly sacrifice of Christ for eternal celebration.

Prayer: Eternal Creator, thank you for sending Christ as the atoning sacrifice on the Cross for our redemption from sins. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

RESURRECTION SUNDAY

SUNDAY, APRIL 5, 2026

A PIVOTAL QUESTION: LOOKING IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

Rev. Dr. Joe Samuel Ratliff

Luke 24:5

5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?”

The first day of the week, the first Easter, the first time to worship their Savior, these women and certain others are confronted with the pivotal question: “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” What they found is not what they expected! They found the stone rolled away, and not the body of the Lord. The women prepared and brought the ceremonial spices to treat the body of their crucified Savior, only to find he was not there.

As they were perplexed and afraid, they were challenged with the pivotal question: “Why?” Often, we are perplexed because what we seek eludes us! We may be looking in the wrong places. Our confidence is challenged, and our egos are deflated when we think we are prepared to acquire what we are seeking.

The pivotal question of looking for the living among the dead transcends time and becomes a pivotal pattern for us today. For we continue to look for the living among the dead. We continue to look for that which gives life among those things that rob us of vitality and vigor. Our insatiable thirst for materialism, success, happiness, pleasure, lust, power, and greed leaves us perplexed and unfulfilled. Even when we are looking in the wrong places, God will send messengers to point us in the right direction, just as the two messengers that day reminded the women and others to remember his words: “the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again” (Luke 24:7). He is not here, He is risen! So we must remember that He yet lives! We serve a risen Savior.

Prayer: Lord, forgive us for seeking substitutes and false gods in all the wrong places. For there is none like You. Thank You for being patient, gracious, and forgiving to us, the unfaithful. You are risen indeed and live mightily in our hearts. To thine be the glory. Amen.

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2026 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL NOTES

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