

# ***Mourning to Joy***

*Our 2026 Lenten Devotional Booklet*

***Our Spirit-inspired guide  
for daily reading and reflection.***

*Ash Wednesday, February 18 – Holy Saturday, April 4*



## *Daily Devotion Writers*

Day 1: Alicia Melton	Day 25: Sharon Grimes
Day 2: Christine George	Day 26: Emma DeGreen
Day 3: Isaac & Britany Sagert	Day 27: John & Judy Roberts
Day 4: Maizie Nelson	Day 28: Youth
Day 5: Alyson Usher	Day 29: Tim Champion
Day 6: Missy Bibb	Day 30: Youth
Day 7: Martha Green	Day 31: Connie Kasper
Day 8: Lydia Pizner	Day 32: Youth
Day 9: A grateful friend	Day 33: Daphne Phillips
Day 10: Youth	Day 34: Peg Lawrence
Day 11: Debbie Fick	Day 35: Jim Palan
Day 12: Youth	Day 36: Marlin & Lee Stoltz
Day 13: Mikal & Ranae Remillard	Day 37: Sterling & Celeste Barbour
Day 14: Youth	Day 38: Karen & Kendall Cross
Day 15: Matsy Remillard	Day 39: David & Kori Cecil
Day 16: Youth	Day 40: Calley & Jess Gober
Day 17: Martha Jones	Day 41: Angela Dunn
Day 18: Youth	Day 42: Nikki Wahl
Day 19: Karen Pierce	Day 43: John Weed
Day 20: Youth	Day 44: Lydia Pizner
Day 21: Emma DeGreen	Day 45: John & Judy Roberts
Day 22: Youth	Day 46: Aria Shelley
Day 23: Robert Johnson	
Day 24: Youth	

**Day 1 of Lent 2026**  
**February 18, 2026**  
**Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21**

“Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Joel 2:12-13

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, 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 others 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. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Mathew 6:1-6, 16-21.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent—a time in our spiritual lives where we are called to return to the Lord with all of our heart. We mark this time in many ways: wearing ashes to remind us that we are dust and will return to dust. We may choose to give up something that we enjoy greatly, or choose to fast, or choose to take something on in our Lenten journey. But without thoughtfully preparing our hearts, we run the risk of going through all the “right” motions of Lent and completely missing the point. Worse still, we miss out on the reward that God is trying to give us: the opportunity to rededicate our WHOLE heart to Him.

If we pause for even a moment, we do not have to look far to find reasons to weep or mourn, do we? Sickness, suffering, selfishness, and brokenness are a part of our lives and a part of life for all those we love. Only God can restore us to what He created us to be in the first place. Partial surrender and loud, empty prayers can never undo the mess we’ve made of God’s good world. Only when we completely surrender to His gracious invitation to rend our hearts, admit that God is God and we are not, and lay down our own desire for approval from others can we experience the wonders of God’s presence. There we find how deep His compassion is for us, how he abounds in love, and is eager to give grace instead of the calamity we deserve.

God, open our eyes to the unbelievable gift you offer us during this time of reflection: the opportunity to belong to You completely. Only You can give us the grace, mercy, and abounding love that shields from calamity. Remind us that Your love alone does not fade or rust or decay, nor can anyone take us out of Your hand. We love You, and we need You. Amen.

Alicia Melton

## Day 2 of Lent 2026 February 19, 2026

### Luke 9:22-25 “Following Christ means daily surrender, not self-preservation”

Walking with God as we journey to the cross

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 tells us to love God and walk in his ways while keeping his commandments. These verses present a stark, final choice between life/blessing and death/curse, urging the Israelites to choose life by loving and obeying God as they enter the Promised Land. It emphasizes that true life is found in total commitment to God, with obedience leading to prosperity and disobedience causing destruction.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 states: “You shall love the Living God, your God, with all your heart, all your soul and with all your strength.” Love is a whole person experience involving heart, mind and conscience as well as body.

Choosing life involves walking in the ways of God and listening to the voice of God. Hearing the voice of God and obeying could be viewed as submissive. But Deuteronomy sees obedience as a response to God’s covenant. It is active walking and listening. Choosing life also involves keeping God’s commands and clinging to God. The Israelites were expected to act appropriately toward each other and God. This was the way to life, not death.

Luke 9:22-25 outlines the cost of discipleship, where Jesus predicts his suffering, death, and resurrection. Jesus takes the idea of walking with God to an even higher level. He calls followers to deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow him. True life is found by losing it for Jesus’ sake, rather than gaining the world and losing one’s soul. This is the paradox of life.

Taking up one’s cross daily indicates a continuous commitment which is highlighted well in our Lenten book. Paul David Tripp’s Journey to the Cross emphasizes that we must acknowledge that we can’t become complacent about sin’s power over us. That is the reason why the daily commitment is so important. Sin doesn’t take a day off. Humility, sacrifice and selflessness are key. Self-centered desires should give way to living for Jesus’ purpose. Tripp’s very readable book goes into much detail giving us a “plan of attack” for resisting sin.

Christine George

## Day 2 of Lent 2026 February 19, 2026

In *Journey to the Cross*, Paul David Tripp describes self-preservation as a tendency to protect oneself from the discomfort of recognizing sin for what it is and the need for a Savior. He focuses on the sacrifice that Jesus made for us while encouraging us to reflect, repent and trust in divine grace.

Tripp references the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 1-12 where Jesus says that those who mourn will be blessed. When you are mourning a loved one early on, it is difficult to imagine being blessed. But Tripp takes mourning to another plane and says you should mourn being controlled by sin. Mourning means you recognize the most important reality in the human existence, sin. You are hit by the weight of what it has done to you and to everyone you know. It means that every day you will be greeted with many temptations. Mourning means that you should confess and pray when there are places where your heart still wanders. Mourning sin can lead you to cry out for help and comfort and celebrate your Redeemer 's divine grace. This is the first step where mourning does something wonderful for you.

Self-righteousness is in the heart of every sinner. We are adept at giving self-atoning arguments for what we have said and done, trying to remove the guilt for our sin. Sin has many faces. You get angry, you want to be right, you're unkind to someone. As you sin, the self-atoning arguments can immediately begin. The purpose of the Lenten season is to analyze this sin that led to the need for the suffering and sacrifice of the Savior. Take this time to reflect on why this redemption had to be so extreme, why sin still controls us, and why praying and letting go of sins **routinely** is so critical. Once you have that awareness of sin, don't resist it. It is important to "silence your inner lawyer and all of your self-defending arguments for your righteousness," says Tripp. Protecting your pride can prevent you from relying on God's grace. Trust in Christ's righteousness rather than your own. When you have let go of this need for self-preservation, you can truly enjoy the joy and comfort of Christ's righteousness.

Tripp cites Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." He sums up with this statement: "To see sin clearly is a sure sign of God's grace. Be thankful. "

Christine George

## Day 3 of Lent 2026 February 20, 2026

Lent Book reference: Day 3, p.23-27

We see Tripp advocating for Groaning to be healthy for us. There are two reasons for Groaning - either “we are angry we have not gotten our way or a cry to God would get his holy, loving, wise, and righteous way”. It’s good that we recognize our sin vs letting Pride swallow us in numbness to it, where we are easily tempted to respond in worldly ways of either numbing it to the point of apathy with worldly pleasures or distractions; or indulging to the point of self-worship and surrendering to the enemy and retreating from Him.

Indeed, Sin makes every aspect of our life difficult, Marriage, Child Rearing, our Jobs, our duties as Citizens and responsibilities to our neighbor and family. It is right and a correct assessment that Sin always deceives, divides, and destroys. When we are at the point of sinning, it doesn’t look horrible to us. It turns lust into beauty, gossiping into the buzz of the day, gluttony to the pleasure of the belly, cheating on taxes or watching free movies to justify thievery. The deceitfulness of Sin allows what is destructive to appear attractive. We mourn the corrupted nature of us that festers throughout all of us and damages all of God’s creation which was declared Good - apart from sin and disobeying.

There is hope, though. This sorrow and recognition of Sin’s evil power and the groaning of it for the sake of the Lord’s kingdom and his Glory allow our heart to be tender - to recognize that we are unrighteous apart from Christ, and we aren’t even capable of recognizing our own Sin apart from him. The good Lord promises to meet us in our groaning, as Paul writes of in Romans 8:26-27 “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.”

We groan to the one who invited us to groan, and has promised to hear and answer. We groan to the God who will not stop working on our behalf until we have no more reason to groan. So, let our heart feel the burden of the full weight of sin - not with pride, numbness, or indulgence, but so our sadness may drive us once again to the Cross where our Savior and Lord shed his blood for us and took on the penalty of sin for our behalf, and paid the debt in full to give ultimate victory over what makes us groan. “Yes, Indeed, It is good to Groan.”

Lord, let our hearts not be so hard but soft and tender through your word so we may rejoice and be glad in the work that Christ has done and continues to do for us. Amen

Isaac & Britany Sagert

**Day 4 of Lent 2026  
February 21, 2026  
Luke 5:27-32**

**“Jesus calls sinners not to shame them, but to restore them”**

The Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at Jesus’ disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” And Jesus answered them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” Luke 5:30-32

God is sovereign. He rules over the earth He created and has the power to turn the hearts of those who love Him and those who do not yet love Him. His ways are not our ways. He sent Jesus to teach us who the Father is and how to walk with the Father. Jesus taught by both words and actions. He did not come to condemn sinners. Jesus came to heal and restore the sick and needy and to call sinners to repentance. Who are the sick and needy and sinners? We are. Jesus stands before us with arms open wide and calls to those who know Him and those who do not yet know Him. He stands as Judge and Redeemer, but He offers grace, mercy, and comfort, not condemnation. He does not turn away anyone who calls for help. He is our strength and protector. He can heal our bodies and our lives, and it is His great desire to do that. When we bow before Him, He can change us into His image.

Lord Jesus, we bow before You. Change our hearts to be more like you. We give You our lives. Lead us on. Amen.

Maizie Nelson

## Day 5 of Lent 2026 February 22, 2026

Lenten Devotional – Matthew 4:1–11

In this Scripture, we see Jesus' victory over Satan when He is faced with the temptation to renounce or disobey God. Satan offers Him things that appeal to His physical needs and desires in an attempt to lead Him away from God's will. What strikes me as incredibly profound is that God allows this to happen to Jesus. The Scripture states that Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested. God is preparing Jesus for His ministry.

In much the same way, we can experience temptation in our own lives as we walk out our God-given purpose. A good example of this is seen when Satan accuses us. He will use our past mistakes and failures to accuse us and make us feel guilty and ashamed. A recovering alcoholic may replay past mistakes repeatedly, causing shame and guilt to arise. They may also have a family member who is still resentful and uses those past mistakes against them in an argument when emotions are running high. The recovering alcoholic may also be tempted with alcohol or another substance in times of stress.

The truth is that if you are in Christ, you are a new creation. The past is gone, and the new has come. The fact that we have an enemy—Satan—who has such deep hatred for humanity and wants to steer us away from God is extremely sad. It brings me great sorrow that Satan would like nothing more than to see us suffer in sin.

However, through this reading we see that God overcomes, and we have the power to resist Satan's attempts to harm us. This shows us that while we may still have trouble in this world, God always gives us a way out. We see this in the last sentence of the Scripture, where angels came to minister to Jesus after Satan fled. He had no choice but to flee!

If you are feeling tempted, rest in the fact that God has already won the battle. With God, we can do all things, especially resist temptation. Utilizing God's Word and leaning on Him in times of vulnerability is the key to victory.

Holy Spirit, please help us remember that whenever we are facing temptation, God is near to us. All we need to do is call upon His name, and Satan is no longer a threat to us.

Alyson Usher

**Day 6 of Lent 2026**  
**February 23, 2026**

Dear Lord, please fill us with your love and comfort as we study these verses. Guide us to open our minds and hearts to your word. Amen.

Read Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” This verse sums up today’s Bible readings. This scripture is referred to as “The Holiness Code.” It’s God’s guidelines on how to live as his children. The first two verses inform us that these guidelines were given to all of Israel, his people. That lets us feel confident that, as followers of God, we are set apart from others to reflect and model God’s own heart. We are also called to stay this path in all situations of our lives. The guidelines range from ritual commands to social ethics. We all strive to teach and model a righteous life. We attempt to instill in the younger generations, that you act and think a certain way because it is right and good. You don’t just act righteous in fear of punishment. Sometimes these actions are not always the easiest path to follow. You act that way because you have the love of Christ in your heart. You should approach issues as an opportunity to treat others as you would treat Jesus. How would he treat me? We are also called to pass this message to others.

Dear God, we love you with all our hearts and minds. Please continue to guide us, to know that we are set apart as your children to be kind and give comfort in all situations. Amen.

Missy Bibb

**Day 6 of Lent 2026**  
**February 23, 2026**

Lord God, please give us the wisdom and clarity to study and contemplate these Lenten verses. Amen.

Read Matthew 25:31-46

This scripture spoke to me and also to you. These words are an insight to our future! Our day of Judgement! All of us want to be in that sheep group on that day. Sheep live with hearts transformed by the Holy Spirit. You don't even realize that you are living as a sheep. Our faith fills us with love and kindness, which we automatically spread to others throughout our daily lives. We don't want to think of this drive to be righteous as only good works. We are inclined to be kind and give comfort without effort. We know that when we are kind to our neighbors, we are being kind to our Lord! Goats are people whose hearts haven't been changed by God's love. They only view any kindness and comfort-giving as an effort to do good works and gain salvation. I have seen God's love in my children and grandchildren. As innocent children, I have seen them do acts of love because it is right and good. And even though, we awake every day as sinners in an imperfect world, we can mourn when the temptations of life alter our path as sheep. But then we can find joy that He walks with us every step of the way, giving us the strength to continue to fight the good fight in doing his will!

Dearest Lord, we love you, and we feel your love! We are so thankful for you, in filling our hearts and minds with your love and grace. Please be with us daily, and help us to be good sheep. Amen.

Missy Bibb

## Day 7 of Lent 2026 February 24, 2026

Matthew 6:7-15

“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” - Matthew 6:12

In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus instructs his disciples to pray, asking God to forgive them as they forgive others.

God calls us to acknowledge our sin as Holy Spirit reveals it. “If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” - 1 John 1:9.

In our Lenten book, *Journey to The Cross*, Paul David Tripp speaks of mourning sin as the first step in seeking and celebrating God’s divine grace. Tripp says, "let sin’s sadness drive you once again to the cross where your Savior (Jesus) groans aloud on your behalf as he bears the weight of my sin and the sin of the whole World."

Holy Spirit, help me examine my heart, my thoughts, desires, words and behavior.

Godly sorrow leads to repentance.

For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. — 2 Corinthians 7:10

We mourn over our sin. I have offended you God. Seeking God’s will, he helps me make a conscious choice to release resentment and rely on Holy Spirit to help me move past the hurt, which leads to life.

Worldly response - I choose unforgiveness, vengeance, bitterness which causes further conflict and leads to death.

Jesus prayed from the cross, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” - Luke 23:34.

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. - 1 Corinthians 10:13

Father God, thank you for the gift of your only Son, Jesus. Through his sacrificial death on the cross we receive your forgiveness for sin and an abundant and an eternal life with you forever. We are grateful for your grace that turns our mourning into joy! Holy Spirit, lead us to share the Good News with others. In Jesus's name I ask.

Martha Green

**Day 8 of Lent 2026**  
**February 25, 2026**  
**Jonah 3:1-10 “Warning and mercy”**

Chapter 3, in the book of Jonah, opens with one of the most hopeful phrases in the Bible:

“Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time”. After a spectacular failure and a literal detour into the depths of the sea, Jonah finds that God has not revoked his calling. God is not just the God of second chances; He is the God of restoration who restores disobedient servants to their former status.

Jonah’s message was blunt and brief: “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown”. He didn’t offer a how-to guide for salvation, yet the Ninevites responded with immediate, widespread repentance. From the King on his throne to the animals in the fields, they humbled themselves in sackcloth and ashes. This reminds us that God’s Word has an inherent power that doesn’t depend on the eloquence of the messenger.

Some of the questions that we need to ask ourselves when looking for a second chance are:

“What is the “second chance” God is putting before us today?

Is our repentance marked by a change in behavior, or just a change in emotion?

Are we writing someone off as “too far gone” for God’s mercy?

In the Bible reading where Jonah had famously failed his first assignment, running in the opposite direction and ending up in the belly of a great fish, God did not disqualify him. He didn’t find a “better” prophet: He restored the one who had failed. This reminds us that our failures and brokenness do not end our usefulness to God. He is the God of the “do-over”, recommissioning us with the same purpose despite our past detours. Unfortunately, Jonah never mentioned God’s love or even how to repent~ just a warning of judgement. Remarkably, God took Jonah’s “bare minimum” effort and maximized it. From the King on his throne to the animals in the field, an entire city of 120,000 people turned to God. It wasn’t the quality of the preacher that caused the revival; it was the power of God’s word!

When God sees our actions, not just our words, he always is with us. God’s nature is not to destroy, but to show mercy and compassion to anyone, no matter how “unworthy” they seem, who turns back to Him.

Heavenly Father, thank you for being a God who speaks to us “a second time.” I am grateful that my past disobedience does not disqualify me from Your future purposes. Today, I humble myself before You, just as the Ninevites did. Lord, forgive me for the ways I have prioritized my own comfort over Your commands. I confess my sins and the “violence” of my own heart~ my harsh words, my pride, and my apathy toward those who are lost. Give me the courage to not only say I am sorry but to truly turn from evil ways. I ask for the boldness of Jonah to speak Your truth and the humility of the Ninevites to receive it. May Your mercy, which is broader and more expansive than my sin, lead me into a life of radical obedience.

In Jesus’ Name ~ Amen

Lydia Pizner

## Day 9 of Lent 2026 February 26, 2026

Scripture: Esther 4:1–17

### 1. What is happening in this passage?

In this Scripture, we see Mordecai in sackcloth and ashes, publicly grieving the decree that will destroy the Jewish people. Esther, now queen, is faced with a terrifying choice: remain silent and safe, or risk her life to intercede for her people before the king.

This part stands out to me: “And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” In a moment of crisis, God’s hidden purpose begins to shine through.

### 2. Where is the sorrow (mourning)?

The sadness in this passage is the looming threat of annihilation and the helplessness God’s people must have felt. Mordecai weeps openly. Esther trembles behind palace walls, knowing that approaching the king uninvited could mean death.

We experience something similar when we feel powerless—when injustice seems overwhelming, when illness, loss, or fear presses in, and when speaking up feels risky.

### 3. Where is the hope (joy)?

Even in this situation, God is present—though never named directly in the passage. God is working behind the scenes, positioning Esther long before she realizes why.

This shows us that God is faithful in seasons of silence and sorrow. God’s purposes are unfolding even when we cannot see them.

This points us to Jesus because Christ also stepped forward at great cost to intercede for His people. Where Esther risked her life saying, “If I perish, I perish,” Jesus gave His life so that we would not perish. Lent reminds us that courage and sacrifice, placed in God’s hands, become pathways to salvation and joy.

### 4. What would you say to someone reading this?

If you are feeling afraid, uncertain, or small in the face of something overwhelming, remember: you may be exactly where God intends you to be. For such a time as this, God can use your voice, your faith, your obedience.

### 5. Short Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, please help us to remember that whenever we feel surrounded by mourning and uncertainty, that’s when God is already at work preparing deliverance. Give us courage to trust You and step forward in faith. Amen.

A grateful friend of CtK

**Day 10 of Lent 2026**  
**February 27, 2026**

Scripture: Ezekiel 18:21-28; Matthew 5:20-26

In the passage from Ezekiel, we see that it is as easy for us to cast judgment as it is for us to be judged. Often, we struggle under the weight of guilt. We feel guilty for judging others because we are not perfect ourselves. But we have hope. We understand from the Gospel of Matthew that even though we cast judgment, we can still be forgiven. God is merciful. Even though we have sinned, we can still be part of God's Kingdom, because Jesus has covered us with his righteousness. It's never too late to forgive and it's never too late to be forgiven.

Holy Spirit, please help us to remember that whenever we genuinely ask for forgiveness, God always forgives us. Amen.

Karis Reinicke, McKaylah Steele & Charlie Pierce  
Sr High Youth Retreat

## Day 11 of Lent 2026 February 28, 2026

Lent Day #11  
Matthew 5:43-48

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbors and hate your enemy'. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous. If you love only those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even tax collectors doing that? And if you only greet your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect."

Hatred for one's enemies was an accepted Jewish practice in Old Testament times. Jesus is not teaching the crowd a new way to think and act. He wants us to be like our Father in heaven by loving our enemies and praying for those who persecute us. Prayer is one of the practical ways love expresses itself.

Jesus sets a high standard - to be perfect. We know that we can never be perfect like him, but we can always strive to be better. God loves everyone and that is what Jesus wants us to do.

Jesus died on the cross to purchase God's forgiveness for us. But it does something more - it changes us. We are cleansed by the transforming grace of the blood of Jesus, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we can now be open to living a life directed by a desire to live according to God's laws and for his glory.

Dear God, help us during this season of Lent to focus on the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus, to mourn our own sin, and to find joy in relationship with you. In Jesus's name. Amen.

Debbie Fick

**Day 12 of Lent 2026**  
**March 1, 2026**

Scripture: Matthew 17:1-9

In this passage, Jesus showed the disciples his divine nature. This is a physical example of what happens when we accept his sacrifice on the cross. The problem in this passage is that Peter offers to build memorials to Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. He was keeping the situation earthly when instead he should have focused on Godly actions. God Himself spoke, verifying Jesus's identity. The next time we are terrified, we don't have to be afraid. God is with us.

Holy Spirit, please help us to remember that whenever we are confused or afraid, that's when God draws closer to us. We love you, Lord. Amen.

Lynn Whited and Jake Daniel  
Sr. High Youth Retreat

**Day 13 of Lent 2026**  
**March 2, 2026**  
**Luke 6:36-38 "Mercy"**

In Luke 6:36-38, Jesus calls us to be merciful and generous. We can picture that as such a wonderful thing, but sometimes it's hard to picture what that looks like in real life. I didn't fully understand it myself until something happened to me a couple of months ago that brought this verse to life.

Sometime last year, I met a group of people online. We became friends, and I thoroughly enjoyed spending time with them. Over time, the more I got to know them, the more I started judging them for things that honestly didn't matter, like the shows they watched or the music they liked. I said things that were rude and unfair, and I didn't even realize these comments were offensive.

After I eventually left that group for certain reasons, one of the people reached out and told me something I really needed to hear. They said I shouldn't judge people or dislike them just because I don't like their interests. They reminded me that God loves everyone, no matter what, and that I had been acting judgmental without even noticing it. For a while, they had been trying to overlook it in me, almost acting like they didn't notice. When I thought about all the things I had said, I realized they were right. The more I thought about it, the more I realized something important: what if people judged me for the things I like? How would I feel if someone looked down on me just because my interests were different from theirs? I apologized to them, and later that day, I prayed, asking God to help me stop being so quick to judge. That moment showed me how easy it is to measure others harshly, even when we don't mean to. I imagine that some people my age struggle with the same thing. We judge fast, and we forget mercy fast.

In the end, I learned something that will help me in the future. If I meet new friends later in person, I want to look back on this moment. I want to remind myself not to be judgmental like I was before, but instead to show the same mercy and understanding that Jesus calls us to show. This experience taught me a lesson I can carry with me wherever I go.

Ranae Remillard

**Day 13 of Lent 2026**  
**March 2, 2026**  
**Daniel 9:3-10 "Mercy"**

In Daniel 9:3-10, Daniel and Israel acknowledge that they have sinned against God, having broken God's laws despite knowing them. Daniel asks God to show compassion even though they don't deserve it. He admits their guilt with complete honesty, making no excuses. He appeals to God's mercy, not Israel's goodness.

In the same way today, my generation, Gen Z, also knows right from wrong, but we often choose our own way. Like Israel, we break God's laws, get distracted, and drift from what we know is true. We are not different from them; we struggle in the same way. Despite our mistakes, God is compassionate, patient, and ready to forgive. Daniel's prayer shows us that the way back to God begins with honesty. When we admit that we have sinned and turn to Him, He meets us with mercy, not rejection. Even though we break God's laws, He never stops offering forgiveness to those who return.

Mikal Remillard

**Day 14 of Lent 2026**  
**March 3, 2026**

Isaiah 1:16-20; Matthew 23:1-12

In the Matthew passage, we see injustice by “teachers,” even while they are reminding us to turn away from worldly things. This reminds us that we all struggle with sin. But God is King and He loves us. Because of Jesus, He forgives us. If you’re feeling guilty or sad because of your sin, repent. God will forgive you.

Holy Spirit, please help us to remember that whenever we sin, you will forgive us unconditionally. Amen.

Lizzy Plaia & Samariae Jackson  
Senior High Youth Retreat

**Day 15 of Lent 2026**  
**March 4, 2026**  
**Matthew 20:17-28 “Servant King”**

We have all heard the term “put on your listening ears and now turn them on”. This verse reminds me of that little phrase. Jesus has just explained for the third time what He is about to do, that is journey to Jerusalem to be mocked, flogged, and crucified.

At some point in our lives we can relate to those with Jesus tuning out the bad parts and paint our own version of wants and needs to a lovely outcome. We especially do this with good intentions but do not understand the rules that have already been established.

Here we see God the creator has made the rules of heaven and earth. We also see Jesus God’s only Son who was the perfect one to correct the sin that all humanity had created is obeying His Father’s will. Jesus is humble, without sin, yet full of love and willing to suffer for all of humanity.

Jesus in his humility simply implies again the severity of the situation, and that it won’t be a king’s glory ride but a servant’s walk. But still they want more something that only the Father can give.

So, what do we learn from this passage? Listen to God’s voice, follow His rules, stay humble, do everything with love from God above.

Matsy Remillard

**Day 15 of Lent 2026**  
**March 4, 2026**  
**Jeremiah 18:1-11 “Servant King”**

In early years of my life during art classes I worked at a potter’s wheel, it is a wonderful tool to create something useful. The artisan’s intent when he sits at the wheel is to express beauty in an object that will often be used for good intent in everyday life.

In this passage we see God as the potter and just as the everyday artisan he seeks a good outcome from what He creates.

If the clay is wet and new the artisan can destroy and rebuild his work until it is pleasing. God is different. The product can be at any stage of life, and He can tear it down and rebuild it until it is useful and pleasing.

Why does the artisan and God labor over their work? God placed a gift in the heart of the artisan to love his creation so the world can see the beauty of that love. God loves His creation in a mysterious, powerful way that we cannot understand. He creates in us a place for Him to desire His love. He is God.

Matsy Remillard

**Day 16 of Lent 2026**  
**March 5, 2026**

Scripture: Jeremiah 17:5-10; Luke 16:19-31

In both of these passages, God issues a warning. Living as if God does not exist leads to destruction. Our world is full of things that would seek our undivided attention and lead us to forget who we are and whose we are, God's children. But God also issues a promise to us. God is our life source, our comfort, and our hope. When we are rooted in Him, we will withstand the hardships of life like a tree planted near water, a tree that always bears fruit. If you are feeling discouraged, take heart. God has promised to strengthen and nourish our roots through the hearing of His Word. Sit under it and know that He loves you the most.

Almighty God and Father, your Name is above all names. You are above every trial and tribulation. You have promised to give us abundant life and you have fulfilled that promise in Christ Jesus. We praise and thank you! Amen.

Amanda DeGreen

## Day 17 of Lent 2026 March 6, 2026

“Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus’ honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.” He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. “Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.” Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.”  
John 12:1-11 NIV

At the heart of this passage is the profound act of love and devotion by Mary, who takes a pint of expensive perfume, pure nard and pours it on Jesus’ feet. This gesture is not merely a lavish display but a symbolic expression of her deep reverence and worship for Jesus. The costly perfume signifies the value she placed on Him, while the act of wiping His feet with her hair demonstrates humility and personal sacrifice, painting a vivid picture of genuine adoration.

As the fragrance of the perfume fills the house, we are reminded that the far-reaching impact of acts of true worship and devotion to Christ have power to influence and inspire those around us. Jesus himself acknowledges the significance of Mary’s act, proclaiming that she had unknowingly prepared Him for His impending death and burial. Highlighting the prophetic nature of her actions.

Dear Heavenly Father,

Help us to follow Mary’s example challenging us to reflect on our own commitment to faith and the depth of our love for Jesus. As the fragrance that lingered in the house, let our own acts of worship and devotion have the potential to leave a lasting impression on those around us.

In Christ’s name we pray, Amen

Martha Jones

## Day 18 of Lent 2026 March 7, 2026

Micah 7:14-20

In Micah 7, we see God remaining faithful to His people. He “delights in showing unfailing love.” Israel was alone, cast out. We often feel the same way. We separate ourselves from God and/or society. Even in this situation, God is FAITHFUL. He shows us that he will never fail or abandon us. Jesus is our immovable rock. If you are feeling abandoned, remember God is faithful and promises in His word that He will never leave us.

Holy Spirit, please help us to remember that whenever we feel lost or abandoned that’s when you reach out and remind us that you are all we need. Amen.

An extra devotion based on the second scripture for Day 18: Luke 15:1-3; 11-32

In Luke 15, we see God celebrating the lost sheep returning. Heaven rejoices more over one redeemed sinner than the ninety-nine who haven’t strayed. The sorrow in this passage is that many of us are led to think that earthly wealth will bring true and everlasting joy and won’t fail us. This passage is not saying we cannot have things, but reminding us that true joy and everlasting joy is only found in Christ. If you aren’t feeling filled, ask God to examine your heart and reveal what your heart is filled with. It probably isn’t God, because God is the only true and everlasting joy.

Caden DeGreen  
Senior High Youth Retreat

**Day 19 of Lent 2026**  
**March 8, 2026**  
**John 4:5-42 “Mercy”**

I was at a work event last month and was offered something to drink. Water please. Sparkling or flat? Flat (I detest bubbly water). I was handed a can labeled Liquid Death.

So many things are wrong with water in a can, let alone the name. After my first sip I was highly disappointed. I was thirsty so I kept drinking. Nothing about it was enjoyable. All I could focus on was the next portion of the evening where I could get some better water.

The woman at the well had water. It filled a need. Liquid Death. She did not realize it wasn't truly satisfying her needs. Jesus spoke of living water. In that moment, she realized there was more than the simple well had to offer. He offered Liquid Life.

What really speaks to me in this scripture is verse 39: many believed because of the woman's testimony and 42: we no longer believe just because of what you said, but we have seen for ourselves.

The woman at the well knew her faults. So did everyone else. That did not stop her from speaking to Jesus. Our faults/struggles are part of us. It can be a powerful tool to connect with others in sharing the word of God.

What is the Liquid Death in your life? What is filling a need but feels lacking? This can be so many things... snacks, video games, alcohol, pills, secular music, the internet... It doesn't have to be the obvious/traditional traps that everyone recognizes. The devil often works in small/quiet spaces.

Are you pouring out liquid death or liquid life? Do people see Christ reflected in you? Are you the first step in someone's belief? The fields are ripe for harvest. Harvest time is now.

Karen Pierce

**Day 20 of Lent 2026**  
**March 9, 2026**

Scripture: 2 Kings 5:1-14; Luke 4:24-30

In the Luke passage, Jesus is reminding the people in his hometown that God sends his prophets out with purpose, just like he did with Elijah in 2 Kings. God's ultimate purpose is always salvation. The people in Jesus's hometown just wanted Jesus to prove that he could perform the miracles he had performed other places. They wanted him to heal all of their diseases for the present time, but Jesus knew that God had sent him to heal peoples' hearts. God didn't just send Jesus to heal some people of some diseases in a certain period of time. God sent Jesus to heal people from their sin forever, so that one day there will be no more illness. The next time we are discouraged because God hasn't responded to an illness or situation the way we want Him to respond, we can still be encouraged. The challenges we experience here are temporary. Jesus has already won for us the greater healing, and one day we'll be freed from all temporary stuff too.

Merciful Father, thank you for being faithful to give us what we need most, even when we can see the need. When we are discouraged by the diseases of this world, encourage us with your promise that our greater need has been fulfilled and all our lesser needs will be too. Amen.

Amanda DeGreen

## Day 21 of Lent 2026 March 10, 2026

Scripture: Daniel 3:16-30; Matthew 18:21-35

In Daniel 3, we see God deliver Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the blazing fire after they refuse to worship any other god than God Himself. In Matthew 18, we see how a servant was forgiven of his debt, but didn't give the same grace to others. The part that stands out to me is when Jesus says that the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a master having mercy on his servant and forgiving his massive debt. God delivers us from our debt just as He delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fire. The problem in the Matthew passage is shown in the unforgiving servant when he doesn't show another the same forgiveness and mercy that he has just received. We are guilty of the same. We are prone to hold grudges and resentments against those who have hurt us. It's okay to be angry and hurt, but we need to ask God to teach us how to forgive others as He forgives us. God is reminding us that if we worship Him and Him alone, just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did, that He will show us mercy and forgiveness when we repent. This shows us that God truly wants us to be saved and rest with Him in Heaven forever. This points us to Jesus because God sent His Son to die for us so that our relationship with Him is centered around this forgiveness, mercy, and deliverance. So if you're feeling weighed down by resentments, remember that God can help you to forgive others as He forgives us. Even if you don't want to forgive that person, ask God to carry that burden of resentment and soften your heart.

Holy Spirit, please help us to remember that whenever we need to forgive ourselves that's when you step in and teach us how to show mercy and forgiveness to ourselves and others, and through this, you remind us of the forgiveness you cover us with every single day through your deliverance. Amen.

Emma DeGreen

## Day 22 of Lent 2026 March 11, 2026

Scripture: Deuteronomy 4:1,5-9; Matthew 5:17-19

In Deuteronomy, we see the Lord speaking through Moses to His people about taking possession of the promised land. We then see Jesus proclaim that He is coming to fulfill the law of the Old Testament. If we follow the law that Jesus came to fulfill, others will see Him through us because of the wisdom and understanding He gives us. Jesus proclaims that those who don't follow the law and teach others to break the commandments will be least in the Kingdom of Heaven. We experience something similar when we see others lead people toward the wrong path. We have to be careful of what we are teaching and what teaching we are receiving. Even in this situation, God is promising that if we do follow his commandments we will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. This shows us that God fulfills his promise from Deuteronomy 4:7 that God is near to us when we call on Him. This points us to Jesus because God sent himself to us through Jesus to fulfill all these promises to us! How amazing! If you are feeling betrayed by someone who broke a promise to you, remember that God will forever fulfill His promises to us and He planned since the very beginning to save us through His Son.

Holy Spirit, please help us to remember that whenever we are hurt by others and the world, that's when God steps in and encourages us that if we live our life to follow Him, and call to Him, He will always draw near to us. We are not alone through the Lord's faithfulness to keep His promises.

Emma DeGreen  
Senior High Youth Retreat

## Day 23 of Lent 2026 March 12, 2026

Neutrality toward Jesus is not an Option

Have you ever wondered how a Detective would have investigated this statement?  
So let's call this an investigation.

Case points: stubbornness, jealousy, hard heartedness.

Using Tripp's statement as a starting point, and using case points as a starting point.  
We look for evidence to support our theory.

Stubbornness. Do we refuse to look at a way of doing something differently because "I didn't think of it" even though it is a better way? Then I have to think how this contributes to being neutral towards Jesus.

After reading Luke 11:14-23, and the various associated readings, one fact stands out, and that is that all stubbornness or most stubbornness is caused by the Devil. Who is gleeful that anything that goes contrary to the will of God can lead to mental or physical harm?

Case point number 2. Being jealous of someone when they do something better than you. This hurts our pride, but Jesus says there is no room for such a feeling.  
So when we feel this way, we need to remember all the gifts that God has given us through Jesus Christ. Gifts that the other person doesn't have.

Case point number 3. Hardheartedness is when we keep saying "no!" to someone that keeps pestering you to do something that you don't want to do. Do we do this to Jesus when he puts something on our hearts, and we keep refusing to do it?

This is Satan trying to put enmity between us and Jesus. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to protect us by cleaning our minds and putting us in the frame of mind to hear and obey Jesus's voice.

Dear Lord Jesus, turn us from being neutral to you, and help us with learning yours and Father God's wishes for our wellbeing and the wellbeing of our family, and our church family. We ask this in your name. Amen

Robert Johnson

**Day 24 of Lent 2026**  
**March 13, 2026**

Scripture: Hosea 14:1-9

In this passage, God is telling His people that if they repent of their sins, they can return to Him. The people were practicing idolatry (putting anything before God), just like we do. We put things like football, money, time, and substances before God. But God is faithful. He calls for repentance so He can bless His people. He loves us even when we are messing up. It is because of Him that we can be forgiven. God is forgiving and loving. He actively wants to forgive us. We just have to ask. So if you are feeling far from God, He is just a prayer away.

Holy Spirit, please help us to remember that, whenever we stray, you want to help. Remind us to ask. We love you. Amen.

Jake Daniel and Lynn Whited  
Senior High Youth Retreat

**Day 25 of Lent 2026**  
**March 14, 2026**

When so many people of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, had succumbed to Baal worship, God called a resident there, Hosea, to be his prophet and call his beloved people, Israel, back to himself. This was forty years before their invasion by Assyria. God called Hosea to marry Gomer who was soon to be found unfaithful and had three children from other men.

Poor Hosea! He had a very hard road to travel! He certainly must have mourned his situation!

He was trying to call Israel back to God, and his own wife was estranged from him! But God talked with Hosea and compared Gomer to Israel. They were both in the same situation!

“I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings.” God told Hosea to pay a very high price for Gomer also! So Hosea humbled himself and reconciled with Gomer and bought her back. In this way God comforted Hosea and turned his mourning into joy. God showed through Hosea that he has a persistent promise to restore his people and show his compassion and desire for genuine repentance and a renewed relationship with his people.

Holy Spirit,

Please help us to remember whenever we have problems of any kind, you are there to help us find solutions to anything that is robbing us of our peace of mind. You helped Hosea thousands of years ago, and you will help us in this age. Thank you!! In Jesus' name we pray.

Sharon Grimes

## Day 26 of Lent 2026 March 15, 2026

Scripture: John 9:1–41

### 1. What is happening in this passage?

In this Scripture, we see Jesus healing a man who is blind, and the Pharisees questioning how Jesus did it.

This part stands out to me: the man who now sees stood up to the Pharisees and called them out for not accepting and believing his testimony several times.

### 2. Where is the sorrow (mourning)?

The sadness, struggle, or problem in this passage is when the Pharisees cast out the man who was healed because they didn't want to believe.

We experience something similar when we encounter nonbelievers who resist the evidence of the Lord's love and miracles.

### 3. Where is the hope (joy)?

Even in this situation, God is reminding us that He helps us to see what we cannot see if we ask Him. This shows us that God wants us to see the truth, and He wants us to help others see it as well.

This points us to Jesus because He was sent to heal us from spiritual blindness and to be the point of reconciliation between us and God.

### 4. What would you say to someone reading this?

If you are feeling lost or confused, remember that you can pray, asking God to reveal Himself to you and open your eyes to something you've been resisting or closed off to.

### 5. Short Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, please help us to remember that whenever we encounter a nonbeliever, that is when You can speak through us to share Your Word and love with them.

When we share Your Word, we learn more about it ourselves and what it means to us personally. Amen.

Emma DeGreen

**Day 27 of Lent 2026**  
**March 16, 2026**

John 4:43-54

In this passage, Jesus has left Samaria and has gone to Cana in Galilee. He was preaching in the outskirts of Israel because the religious leaders wanted to kill him. Having been rejected even by his hometown, Jesus was reaching out to the people. An official came to Jesus and asked him to heal the official's son. Jesus questioned the official to see if he was just seeking another sign, but the official asked Jesus to hurry and come to his home to save his son. The official was truly seeking help from Jesus because he had heard of his power and knew it would help his son. Having compassion for the man, Jesus said, "Go; your son will live." When the official returned home, he was greeted by his servants telling him that his son was recovering. To see if the recovery was because of Jesus' Word, he asked when his son started recovering and it was the time Jesus spoke. Because of this healing, the official and his household began to believe that Jesus was sent from God. Did he understand that Jesus was God? I am not sure, but John says that he believed and his household believed.

In this scripture, John reveals the signs that Jesus performed so that all who read this account will understand that Jesus is God and his death and resurrection gave us eternal life. The official's son received physical life because the official had faith that Jesus had the authority to make him well. When we believe through faith in Jesus Christ, that he is the son of God, we too are forgiven of our sins and can live eternal and everlasting joy. There is a sadness in this scripture in that we know the religious leaders did not believe that Jesus was God, and many who heard and witnessed the signs did not believe, but the joy is that this official and his household did believe and many believed and many are still finding Jesus today. Believe that Jesus was sent by God to take our place and to bear the burden of our sins. He conquered sin and rose again to life everlasting, and we will also live forever with God in his kingdom.

Holy Spirit, help us to believe, even when our burdens are heavy and we are dying physically, mentally, or spiritually. Strengthen our faith. Fill our hearts with the joy that comes from faith in God and in knowing that God is with us, now and forever. Amen.

John & Judy Roberts

**Day 28 of Lent 2026**  
**March 17, 2026**  
**“Operation Refreshment”**

**Scripture:** Book of Ezekiel 47:1–9

---

In this Scripture, Ezekiel is given a vision of water flowing from the temple of God. At first, it is just a small trickle coming from beneath the threshold. But as the angel leads Ezekiel farther out, the water grows—ankle-deep, knee-deep, waist-deep—until it becomes a river too deep to cross. This river flows into the Dead Sea, and, in so doing, the water from the Temple turn salty, lifeless water into fresh water filled with fish and life. Trees start to grow along its banks, bearing fruit each month, and their leaves bring healing. What stands out is how something small becomes unstoppable. A trickle from God’s presence becomes a river of restoration.

---

The sorrow in this passage is found in the setting. Ezekiel is prophesying to a people in exile. Jerusalem has been destroyed. The temple—the symbol of God’s dwelling place—lies in ruins. The people feel cut off, displaced, and spiritually dry.

The Dead Sea itself is a picture of mourning: barren, lifeless, unable to sustain growth.

We experience similar seasons when life feels dry or broken—when prayers seem unanswered, when hope feels distant, when our hearts feel like wastelands instead of gardens.

---

The hope is in the river.

Where the river flows, everything lives. God’s presence brings renewal to what seemed permanently dead. What no human effort could fix, God restores completely.

This points us to Jesus. During Lent, we remember that Christ is the true Temple, and from Him flows living water. Through His death and resurrection, He steps into our dry and lifeless places and brings new life.

God specializes in transformation. Mourning does not get the final word. The river of God’s grace keeps flowing, deeper and stronger than we expect, turning deserts into places of joy.

---

If you feel spiritually dry or stuck in a season that seems lifeless, don’t lose heart. God’s river may begin as a small trickle—a quiet prayer, a simple act of obedience, “Operation Refreshment”—but He can grow it into something life-giving and powerful.

Step into the water. Trust that where God’s presence flows, life will follow.

---

Holy Spirit, when our hearts feel dry and weary, let Your living water flow through us. Restore what feels broken. Grow joy where there has been mourning. Help us trust that Your river brings life wherever it goes. Amen.

CtK Youth

## Day 29 of Lent 2026 March 18, 2026

To my brothers and sisters in Christ, I thank you for your kind attention as we turn our thoughts and minds to Christ. As we gather in this Lenten season to offer our hearts to Him, let us take a moment and truly let it all in.

Personally, I try to push all my sin into a closet and lock it away. I hide behind Scriptures such as Luke 9:62, which tells us not to dwell on or cling to our past. Then I simply pray for forgiveness, throw my sin in the closet, and move forward in Christ, claiming His atoning grace. It makes it easy for a while to carry on with my head down, going about my daily tasks—until one day that closet bursts open. It seems like everything comes to light all at once, and there we are, faced with the reality that we are still carrying the weight of our past like a ship's anchor. That closet becomes nothing more than a tortured soul that longs for forgiveness, yet we find it so difficult to accept the mercy and grace freely offered through the redemptive power of Jesus Christ.

This is why the Lord, in His wisdom, gave us this Lenten season. Yes, in this season we are to offer homage and praise to Jesus Christ, who gave us a means not only to be forgiven but to be justified before God the Father. However, to quote from our text: “You can't repent what you haven't confessed, you can't confess what you haven't grieved, and you can't grieve what you haven't seen.”

In this Lenten season, I encourage each of you to make some personal time and open that closet. Step in there and lay it all out before your Heavenly Father, who is waiting for this moment. Trust me when I say that you will not catch Him off guard; He has been patiently waiting all your life.

Go today to your private place and verbally confess to Christ what you cannot fix, or that issue that is too painful to mention, even though it is tearing you apart inside. Be assured your Father, our God, already knows about it and is waiting with open arms for you at this very moment.

Then something amazing will take place. That closet you have kept locked up tight for so long will become your sanctuary because you have allowed Christ to come in, and now all things will become new. Suddenly, you will be taking the door off that closet because what was once a place to hide from the light has become a testimony to the true Light.

What better gift could you offer to Christ in this Lenten season than what He truly desires—and, furthermore, the very things you truly need to let go of?

Moving forward in this Lenten season, let us no longer be slaves to sin, but children who walk in the Light of Christ.

Amen.

Tim Champion

## Day 30 of Lent 2026 March 19, 2026

**Scripture:** Book of Exodus 32:7–14; Gospel of John 3:31–36

---

### 1. What is happening in this passage?

In Exodus, God tells Moses that the Israelites have turned away quickly. While Moses was on the mountain receiving the commandments, the people made a golden calf and began worshiping it. God is angry at their idolatry and tells Moses what has happened.

But instead of stepping aside, Moses intercedes. He reminds God of His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. Moses stands in the gap for the people, asking God to show mercy—and God relents.

In John's Gospel, we read that Jesus comes from above and speaks the very words of God. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Jesus is the true and faithful One who reveals the Father perfectly. What stands out is this: when the people failed, someone stood before God on their behalf.

---

### 2. Where is the sorrow (mourning)?

The sorrow in Exodus is the people's unfaithfulness. They grew impatient. Instead of trusting God, they created an idol. Their misplaced priorities led them away from the Lord who had just rescued them from slavery.

We experience something similar when we put other things before God—success, popularity, comfort, or control. When we turn from Him, it creates distance, guilt, and brokenness in our hearts.

There is also sorrow in knowing that sin has consequences. It angers the Lord because He loves His people deeply and desires their faithfulness.

---

### 3. Where is the hope (joy)?

The hope is found in intercession and mercy.

Even in this situation, God listens to Moses' prayer. He gives the Israelites another chance. This shows us that God is merciful and responsive to repentance. His anger does not cancel His covenant love.

In John 3, we see the greater hope: Jesus. This points us to Jesus because He is the ultimate intercessor.

Moses stood before God for the people, but Jesus stands before the Father for us perfectly and forever.

Through Him, we are forgiven and given eternal life.

Lent reminds us that even when we turn away, God is eager to forgive when we return. Mourning over our sin can lead to the joy of restored relationship.

---

### 4. What would you say to someone reading this?

If you are feeling distant from God or weighed down by mistakes, remember this: He is loving and ready to forgive. You do not have to hide. You can pray honestly, just like Moses did.

God gives second chances. Turn back to Him. He is eager to receive you.

---

### 5. Short Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, please help us to remember that whenever we turn from You and chase other things, You are still eager to forgive when we repent. Remind us not to make idols in our hearts. Draw us back to Jesus, our perfect intercessor, and restore us to joy. Amen.

Jake Daniel & Lynn Whited

## Day 31 of Lent 2026 March 20, 2026

Friends, the message of this story is victory. Jesus' entire life was a victory. His miraculous conception and birth were a victory. His ministry was a victory as He showed us the power of faith and love. His death was a victory as He freed us from sin and condemnation through His suffering. His resurrection was a victory over death because death could not hold Him. And His ascension was victorious! It was all done for us—to free us from sin and its consequences and to provide for us while we are here in the land of the living. His death on the cross was a victory. The world may not consider these things victorious, but the world is looking at them through human eyes, while we are looking at them through spiritual eyes.

Let us not be found minimizing the power or the work of Jesus. Let us not waste the wisdom and authority that He has given us to help us walk victoriously now. Let us not get hung up on the law and the letter of the law, but rather let us live by love—treating others with love and doing good works, which do not earn our salvation. They are expressions of our faith and our desire to please the Lord.

Let us be found listening for His voice. Let us be quick to obey when He says, “Go here,” “Go there,” “Turn right,” or “Turn left,” wherever His path may lead us, so that we might do His work as we go about our lives. Let us walk in boldness, freely sharing His love and His name, and doing His work as He guides us. Let us not be afraid. He came to defeat fear as well as sin. Let us be found trusting Him, standing on His finished work and the power of His name, and claiming all His promises, which are all true—every one—for those who fear the Lord.

Let us pick up our shield of faith and our helmet of salvation, along with all the other pieces of protection He has given us, and let us live victoriously with Him now on earth until we join Him in the heavenly realms, for we are the soldiers of God's heavenly army!

Thank You, blessed Trinity, for victory through Jesus and for the amazing love that You have poured out upon us through His victorious life, death, and resurrection. Give us a hunger for the Word, the wisdom to understand it, and the faith to believe every single word of it, as well as a burning desire to do Your work wherever and however You lead us. Thank You for loving us so much.

In Jesus' mighty name, Amen.

Connie Kasper

## Day 32 of Lent 2026 March 21, 2026

Scripture: Book of Jeremiah 11:18–20

---

### 1. What is happening in this passage?

In this Scripture, the prophet Jeremiah becomes aware of a plot against his life. God reveals to him that the very people of his hometown—those he trusted—are planning to silence him. Jeremiah describes himself like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter, unaware of the schemes being whispered behind his back.

What stands out is Jeremiah's response. Instead of taking revenge, he entrusts his cause to the Lord: "Lord Almighty, you who judge righteously and test the heart and mind..." Even in betrayal, Jeremiah places his life in God's hands.

---

### 2. Where is the sorrow (mourning)?

The sorrow in this passage is deeply personal. Jeremiah is not just rejected—he is targeted. The pain of betrayal cuts deeply, especially when it comes from those who should know and love us.

We experience similar mourning when friendships fracture, when we are misunderstood for standing up for truth, or when doing the right thing makes us feel isolated. There is grief in being faithful when faithfulness costs us something.

---

### 3. Where is the hope (joy)?

The hope in this passage is found in trust. Though Jeremiah's life is threatened, he knows God sees everything. God is not distant from injustice. God is the righteous judge who knows the heart.

This points us to Jesus because Christ, too, was betrayed and plotted against. Like Jeremiah, He was innocent. Like a lamb led to the slaughter, He entrusted Himself to the Father. During Lent, we remember that what looked like defeat on the cross became victory through the resurrection.

God transforms betrayal into redemption. Mourning into joy. What feels like the end is often the beginning of God's greater purpose.

---

### 4. What would you say to someone reading this?

If you feel misunderstood, hurt, or alone because you are trying to follow God, take heart. God sees you. God knows your heart. You are never suffering unseen.

Entrust your situation to Him. The same God who carried Jeremiah—and who raised Jesus—will carry you too.

---

### 5. Short Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, when we feel wounded or betrayed, help us to trust You as Jeremiah did. Remind us that You are the righteous Judge who sees every heart. Turn our mourning into joy as we place our lives in Your hands.

Amen.

CtK Youth

## Day 33 of Lent 2026 March 22, 2026

John 11:1-45

The Death of Lazarus

This scripture about Lazarus, Mary and Martha's brother, shows how Jesus intentionally delays his journey in order to show God's glory through the miracle of Jesus.

"Jesus wept," being the shortest verse in the Bible, it shows Jesus being human with empathy.

Jesus grieves with Mary and Martha. And Jesus grieves with each one of us who grieves.

We experience something similar when we stop to be present in someone else's life who is hurting or going through something that we may not understand. When we take time to pray for one another and show compassion and empathy, we show Christ-like character.

The joy is knowing the truth and promises of God's words:

John 15:7-8

"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

Anything that you ask and believe, it will be done for you--in God's timing and God's way.

In other words, God's timing may seem delayed just like the miracle of Lazarus' death, all working out for HIS GLORY, so hang in there, and know that HE IS GOD. Lean not on your own understanding.

This shows us that although our situation may look grim at times, you will feel HIS presence when you remain in HIM. In His time, His way, and for His Glory!

God shows up through other sisters and brothers in Christ. The Lord will put people in front of you that you may not know who are hurting, unless you ask.

If you don't feel HIS presence, call another believer and pray together with that person, and experience the fullness of God's love for you.

Holy Spirit, please help us to remember that you are with us always. All we have to do is call upon your Holy name, Immanuel, Yahweh, Father God, The Almighty, Jesus, Holy One. Be our guidance in this sad, corrupt and unworthy world. Forgive us, renew us and make us whole.

In Christ Jesus-  
Amen!

Daphne Phillips

## Day 34 of Lent 2026 March 23, 2026

Scripture: Daniel 3 and John 8:1-11

The transition from mourning to joy can be clearly seen through both of these passages. In each, the story begins with about-to-happen, imminent death of the main characters. How mournful indeed! Mourning manifests in both stories through recognition of needed redemption.

In the Old Testament passage, King Nebuchadnezzar's mournful pride leads to killing Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Yet their very joy in God, their belief, their trust that He will save them, prompts King Nebuchadnezzar's own transition to joy through experiencing God's sovereignty. They know that God will redeem the situation, whether through their death or through sparing their lives from fire. In the end, even the king supports their God! In God, there is fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11).

In the New Testament passage, the Pharisees' mournful judgment leads to killing an adulterous woman. However, Jesus prompts the accusers to examine their own hearts, setting the adultress free! "Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5b).

In these stories, while mourning turns to joy in different ways and in very different types of people, how gracious for God to show us all of this! By His Holy Spirit, He reveals how hope and humility cause mourning to morph into joy. Praise be to God!

Peg Lawrence

## Day 35 of Lent 2026 March 24, 2026

**Scripture:** Gospel of Matthew 26:36–46

---

“In this Scripture, we see Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane praying in deep anguish before His arrest and crucifixion. He asks Peter, James, and John to watch and pray with Him, but they fall asleep.

This part stands out to me: ‘Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.’”

Jesus is preparing to drink the cup of suffering. At the very moment He seeks prayerful support, His closest friends cannot stay awake. He warns them about temptation even as they are already giving in to weakness.

---

“The sadness, struggle, or problem in this passage is the disciples’ failure. They want to be faithful, but they are tired, distracted, and spiritually weak.

We experience something similar when we lose focus in our walk with God—when we intend to pray, to serve, to share our faith, but instead grow weary or distracted.”

How easy it is to drift. We may begin with zeal, wanting to glorify God and use our spiritual gifts, yet fatigue, doubt, and the subtle whispers of the enemy pull us away. As the Catechism reminds us, God tempts no one to sin, but we pray that He would guard and protect us from the devil, the world, and our sinful nature.

---

“Even in this situation, God is faithful.

This shows us that Jesus remains obedient, even when His friends fail Him.

This points us to Jesus because He willingly goes to the cross, knowing we will falter, stumble, and give in to temptation.”

The beautiful truth is this: Jesus does not abandon the disciples. He goes to the cross anyway. He endures humiliation, suffering, and death. He sheds His blood for our forgiveness and rises again to give us victory over sin and the grave. Our salvation rests not in our focus, but in His faithfulness.

---

“If you are feeling distracted, weary, or ashamed of your spiritual weakness, remember that Jesus already knows—and He loves you still.”

During Lent, come close. Listen for the whisper of the Holy Spirit: *You are My child. You belong to Me. Your sins are forgiven.* Take up your cross again. Encourage another believer. Share your story. We are more than conquerors—not because we are strong, but because He is good.

---

“Holy Spirit, please help us to remember that whenever we are weak and tempted to lose focus, that’s when Jesus’ faithfulness holds us fast. Guard and protect us from temptation, and lead us in Your way. Amen.”

Jim Palan

## Day 36 of Lent 2026 March 25, 2026

Lenten Day 36 reading from *Journey to the Cross* focuses on a well-known event in Jesus' ministry alternately called the "Cleansing of the Temple" or "Jesus Drives Out the Money Changers". This event is recorded in all four Gospels with variations in depth of description and timing of occurrence in Jesus' ministry. However, consistently, we see three aspects of the event that are clear in all four representations:

- 1) Live animals were being sold to temple visitors,
- 2) A variety of money was being exchanged for coinage used at the temple, and
- 3) Jesus clearly exhibits anger over what he is seeing in the temple courtyard.

Briefly, before we consider Jesus' anger, let's deal with the question of why items 1) and 2) were occurring.

Faithful law-keeping males were required to "appear before the LORD GOD" three times each year (see Ex. 23:17) irrespective of where they called home. If you lived within a day's journey to the temple, you were likely able to bring a live, unblemished (see Lev. 1:1-7) animal to the entrance of the tent of meeting. However, the farther you lived from Jerusalem, the more difficult it became to transit a live animal and keep it in an "unblemished" condition. So, as a matter of convenience, a live animal market developed at the temple courtyard entrance to accommodate the faithful traveler.

But what was going on with the money changing? As it turns out, each region that traveling worshippers might come from tended to have their own local or Roman currency. The problem with many of these currencies is that idolatrous images were often displayed on the coins; e.g. the crest of Caesar not unlike G. Washington on U.S. coins. So, pocket money would often have to be exchanged (for a small exorbitant fee) for shekels (see Ex. 30:13) that did not have images on them and were specifically called out to pay the annual temple tax. Furthermore, most of the livestock sellers would only accept coinage useful in the temple so it was likely a pilgrim would first change his local money for shekels then buy the needed animal sacrifice for his worship practice.

But why was Jesus angry? These practices had likely been going on since the construction of the first temple about 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE. A well-established regimen. Was it because of the usury rates being charged or the profit-taking of the livestock sellers? Reading each Gospel account carefully, you see phrases like "den of robbers" or disparaging references to turning the house of prayer into a market. But maybe there was something else going on.

Recognize, that in the synoptic versions of this telling, Jesus knew that the animal sacrifices would soon be no longer necessary! He was about to become the one sacrifice for all people, for all time! And as much as he knew this was God's plan, the human Jesus had to be troubled by what he was being asked to do. A clear statement at odds with heretical views (e.g. the Marcionites, and others) that held that Jesus was not a "real" man. So, instead of challenging Jesus's humanity, today, Christians, are grateful for his willingness to go to the cross. Remember this especially in this time of Lent. Thank you, LORD, Amen.

Marlin & Lee Stoltz

**Day 37 of Lent 2026**  
**March 26, 2026**

Genesis 17:3-9

In Genesis 17, we see Abram fall on his face before God Almighty, an act of complete and ultimate surrender. He is coming from a position of mourning, confession, and acknowledgement of his own helplessness. Abram realizes that he should not have tried to fulfill God's promises on his own, but rather yield to His perfect timing. Abram's sorrow came from a realization of his human inadequacy, doubts, and impatience. We, too, experience similar sorrows in our lives. We are often impatient, doubting God's faithfulness, and leaning on ourselves, rather than surrendering to God's will.

God then turns that sorrow to joy, with the establishment of an everlasting covenant. Changing his name from Abram to Abraham, God promises the barren, 100 year old that he will be the "father to many nations". He promises to always be "your God", bringing complete security and great joy. God gives the joy of future hope, that surpasses any current difficulties. This covenant is rooted in the divine, rather than human effort, and is ultimately fulfilled in our Lord, Jesus Christ.

This passage serves to remind us, in this Lenten season, that true joy isn't just a passing emotion. True joy is the profound assurance of God's presence, and faithfulness to His word.

Holy Spirit, our lives can feel overwhelming at times. We fret over difficult, worldly decisions, and often make mistakes before asking for Your guidance. We know that You always want to hear from us. You may not literally give us answers in Your presence, as You did with Abraham in this passage, but You are speaking, nonetheless. Father, please help us to be better listeners so that we may submit fully to Your will. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Sterling & Celeste Barbour

## Day 38 of Lent 2026 March 27, 2026

Scripture: Jeremiah 20:10-13; John 10: 31-42

Upon reflecting on the words of Jeremiah and of Jesus from our scripture passages for today, we find assurance of hope which can only lead to joy no matter the situation.

In Jeremiah 20:10-13 we see the prophet Jeremiah's concerns. Despite his closeness with God, he is in anguish, feeling betrayed, mocked and surrounded by those he calls friends. He cries "every side" wants to see his downfall and take revenge on him due to his obedience in sharing God's words. His feelings of grief are deep, as ours can be sometimes too. Yet in the middle of his mourning he acknowledges that the Lord Almighty is with him, as a "mighty warrior." So he is confident his persecutors will not prevail. Praise rises from pain. Confidence in God interrupts his despair. Though his circumstances have not changed, his focus has. He moves from despair to proclaiming the faithfulness of the Lord Almighty. God is also present with us and on our side protecting us too.

In John 10:31-42 we see similar tension surrounding Jesus. The crowd picks up stones to kill Him, accusing Him of blasphemy, misunderstanding His identity and rejecting Him. Jesus quotes scripture and points them to the evidence of the Father's work through Him. He tells them that "even if you don't believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand the Father is in me and I in the Father." God's presence is evidenced by Jesus's miracles performed among them. Though threatened with death, He does not retreat in fear, instead He continues in obedience and confidence in His relationship with God. Confrontation does not result in mourning but gives way to joy as hearts are opened to the truth and many come to believe in Him. Just as Jesus is rescued from his accusers and the miraculous signs rescue others from sickness or sin we too are rescued by God's presence.

Both passages remind us that we may face sorrow, betrayal, misunderstanding and deep emotional pain, yet mourning is not the destination. For Jeremiah, joy came from remembering that the Lord was with him. For those who believed in Jesus, joy came from recognizing Him in their midst and also from miracles rescuing from sickness and sin. Both remind us to not lose hope because God is present with us and rescues us.

When we feel surrounded by discouragement or rejection, instead of focusing on negative things intent to cause us harm, we can shift our focus on the Lord God Almighty. When the world says we have every reason to mourn, to worry, to fear our enemies and situations, we can faithfully stand strong in confidence that God is with us. God transforms sadness into praise and opposition into opportunity. Nothing we ever face is too difficult for God. As we trust Him our mourning transforms into joy.

Almighty Lord,

We praise you, for you are God. You have made heaven and earth. All things are under your control. We give you the worries of our hearts, the sadness of our situations and the difficulties we face. We know your word says that you are our mighty warrior, our miraculous healer, and our ever-present protector. We have no one to fear. You have already won the battle and overcome sin, disease, death and the grave. Forgive us for losing sight of You. Help us to keep our eyes focused on You so that we may experience Your presence, rescue, miracles, hope, and joy, in Jesus's name. Amen.

Karen & Kendall Cross

**Day 39 of Lent 2026**  
**March 28, 2026**

John 11:45–56

Time and again we learn how Jesus sacrificed and loved under threat and in the face of scorn. *“If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation”* (John 11:48). Caiaphas actually prophesied about Jesus’ sacrifice for the world. And yet, the territorial instinct of Caiaphas and the Pharisees, preferring what is limited and known rather than mournfully living into Jesus’ promises... an ominous warning for us all! And yet, Jesus teaches by his actions, we can and must persevere.

Search yourself today for the ways you let fear and control in this limited world occupy your mind and dictate your destiny. And pray for the courage to fix your eyes on Him and join the wise few whose hearts are anchored in eternity.

Holy Spirit, cause us in every way to stumble headlong into your will.

David and Kori Cecil

**Palm Sunday**  
**Day 40 of Lent 2026**  
**March 29, 2026**

Matthew 21:1-11

Today we see Jesus intentionally prepare to walk into Jerusalem. He sends two disciples to get the donkeys to ride into the city. As he comes in, the people gather into a crowd and excitedly cheer him in, believing he is coming to overthrow Rome with militant power. Jesus knows this excitement is misplaced as he is coming in a different role, for another purpose, namely to fulfill the role as our Savior. The crowd further demonstrates this misunderstanding when they answer, “Who is this?” with “Jesus, the prophet.” Not “Jesus, our Messiah”, “Jesus, our Lord”, or “Jesus, our Savior.” Despite this misunderstanding, Jesus continues forward, with a mission of salvation for all people. According to Bible scholars, there is a significance in Matthew’s recounting that Jesus rode on both the donkey and her colt. The donkey represents Israel, and the colt, the Gentiles. Together, they represent all people! Including us! This is the most joyous news for us, knowing that Jesus was headed towards the cross, with our salvation in mind.

Heavenly Father, thank you for intending to include us in your saving mission from the beginning. May we respond in confidence to your invitation, knowing you invited us directly. We can now rightly shout, “Hosanna! To Jesus, our Messiah, our Lord, and our Savior!” In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Calley & Jess Gober

**Monday of Holy Week**  
**Day 41 of Lent 2026**  
**March 30, 2026**  
**Isaiah 42:1-7 “Servant King”**

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope.” This is what God the LORD says— the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: “I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

The above scripture is one of four distinct passages in the book of Isaiah known as “Servant Songs” describing God’s chosen servant, widely understood as an Old Testament prophecy of the coming Messiah.<sup>1</sup> The passage emphasizes the Servant’s gentle mission to bring justice, healing, and spiritual freedom. It portrays a transition from despair, brokenness, and darkness to hope, restoration, and light.

It alludes to the “bruised reed” and the “smoldering wick” which are metaphors representing people in deep mourning, despair, or spiritual exhaustion, those whose hope is almost gone, and who cannot live a life apart from God. It is sure to make clear that Jesus will not allow that fragile person to break or that person’s hope to be extinguished.

Instead, Jesus will gently care for those who are broken down and hopeless, bringing them out of that pit of darkness. Jesus not only *represents* the light, HE IS the light, the joy, and the hope. Jesus is the one and only servant who through his earthly ministry opens blind eyes and turns darkness into light, leading believers from sorrow to joy.

Just as a mother giving birth suffers greatly but soon rejoices upon the birth of her child, putting that pain in the past, God transforms our suffering into joy through his one and only son, Jesus Christ, who he sent to redeem us, paying the penalty for sin through his death and resurrection.

Angela Dunn

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://oxfordbiblechurch.co.uk/bible-commentary/isaiah-421-7-the-1st-servant-song/>

**Tuesday of Holy Week**  
**Day 42 of Lent 2026**  
**March 31, 2026**

Scripture: John 12:29-36

In this Scripture, we are in the final days before Jesus' crucifixion. We see Jesus tell the crowd that he must be willing to lay down his life and lose it in order that he might fulfill God's purpose and that the light will only be with them a little while longer. That in order for them to follow they must also be willing to do the same and to walk while the light is with them.

This part stands out to me: Jesus is being glorified and lifted up while also losing his life in order that we all might be able to do the same.

The sadness, struggle, or problem in this passage is that he must die in order to fulfill God's plan. We experience something similar when we also must be willing to lay down all we are as well to follow Christ.

Even in this situation, God is merciful. This shows us that God provided the light for us for our own walk. This points us to Jesus because he is the light among us and that by laying it all down we may see and walk with Jesus.

If you are feeling lost, remember Jesus is with us and shines through us to light our way, lay down with him and lose yourself to his path and you will find yourself where you need to be.

Holy Spirit, please help us to remember that whenever we're lost or don't know where to turn, that's when God provides the light through Christ the Lord and that by surrendering to him, we allow ourselves to find the right path again.

Amen.

Nikki Wahl

## Wednesday of Holy Week Day 43 of Lent 2026 April 1, 2026

### The Transformation at the Altar Navigating the Shadows of Matthew 26

Lent is frequently described as a journey through a spiritual desert—a time of stripping away the superficial to confront the essential. The journey from mourning to joy is the definitive arc of this season, yet this transition is rarely a straight line. In Matthew 26:14–25, we find ourselves in the darkest crevice of that arc. Here, in the upper room and the corridors of power, mourning is not merely a feeling; it is a profound realization of human frailty and the high cost of redemption.

### The Anatomy of Betrayal

The narrative opens with a jarring contrast between devotion and greed. While the atmosphere should be one of sacred preparation for the Passover, Judas Iscariot negotiates a price for the Messiah: thirty pieces of silver. This is the beginning of the "mourning" phase—the grief of a fractured brotherhood. There is a specific, stinging sorrow found in the realization that one who "dipped his hand into the bowl" with Jesus would also be the one to deliver Him to His enemies.

When Jesus announces at the table, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me," the text notes that the disciples were "very sad." This sadness is a collective mourning. It is the death of their certainty. Each disciple is forced to look at their own capacity for failure, asking, "Surely you don't mean me, Lord?" In this moment, the "joy" of their three-year journey with Christ seems to evaporate, replaced by the heavy fog of suspicion and self-doubt.

### The Purpose in the Pain

However, the theme of "Mourning to Joy" suggests that sorrow is not a dead end, but a passage. Even as Jesus speaks of the "woe" awaiting the betrayer, He is simultaneously setting the stage for the greatest act of love in human history. The mourning of the Last Supper is the "godly sorrow" that precedes transformation.

Jesus does not shield the disciples from the reality of the betrayal; He invites them to sit in it. By doing so, He demonstrates that joy is not the absence of suffering, but the presence of God within it. The very meal they share—the bread and the wine—becomes the ultimate symbol of this transition. What begins as a meal overshadowed by death becomes the "Eucharist," a word that literally means "thanksgiving." The instruments of His death are reclaimed as the instruments of our life.

### Embracing the Lenten Arc

For the modern believer, Matthew 26:14–25 serves as a mirror. Lent calls us to identify with the "deep sadness" of the disciples. We must mourn the ways we have bartered our values for comfort or remained silent when we should have spoken. We must ask the uncomfortable question: "Is it I, Lord?" Yet, we do not stay in the upper room of mourning. The Lenten promise is that the darkness of betrayal and the silence of the tomb are precursors to a joy that the world cannot give. The "thirty pieces of silver" lose their power in the face of the "precious blood." We move from the mourning of our sin to the joy of His grace—a joy that is made deeper and more authentic because we have dared to look at the shadows first. As we conclude our Lenten fast, we realize that the transition from mourning to joy is a transformation of the soul, where the heavy impurities of our failures are turned into the gold of HIS Resurrection HOPE.

Pastor John Weed

**Maundy Thursday**  
**Day 44 of Lent 2026**  
**April 2, 2026**

Based on Exodus 12:1~14 and John 13:1~17 and 31b~35 (Maundy Thursday)

As we reflect on the Passover story, we see God's incredible plan of redemption unfolding. The unblemished lamb, whose blood protected the Israelites from death, foreshadowed Jesus, the ultimate Passover Lamb. Just as the Israelites put their faith in God's promise of protection through the lamb's blood, we too are called to place our faith in Christ's sacrifice.

Today, consider how Jesus has become your Passover Lamb. How has His sacrifice covered you and brought you from death to life? Have you placed your faith in the finished work of Christ? In what areas of your life is the finished work of Christ? In what areas of your life do you need to renew your trust in Him? Take time to thank God for His perfect plan of salvation and ask Him to deepen your faith in Christ's finished work.

Lydia Pizner

**Good Friday**  
**Day 45 of Lent 2026**  
**April 3, 2026**

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

How blessed we are that we have the Scriptures readily available in our own language and at our convenience in a book we can have in our homes! This scripture is the prophecy of Isaiah about Jesus and how he was rejected by the people of Israel, beaten and put to death by crucifixion. The scripture relates that he was “marred, beyond human semblance”. The prophecy says that Jesus grew like a young plant, nothing remarkable about his childhood, yet he became despised and rejected by men, “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”. He often had to hide from the religious leaders who wanted to kill him until God determined that it was time for him to face his accusers.

The prophecy says he was pierced and crushed. Jesus endured a spear in his side to see if he was close to death. As he could no longer hold himself up, his lungs were crushed such that he could not breathe. He said nothing much during his trial to save himself. It even predicts that his garments would be divided using lots, a game of chance. Even the fact that Jesus was buried in a rich man’s tomb is mentioned. The scripture itself is one of mourning and sadness at how such a man would die for those who are so sinful. He was without sin.

Yet the scriptures turn and praise God for his eternal covenant of peace. He gives us this covenant, not because we deserve it, but because of the death of Jesus. People from all over the world will share in this covenant because God calls to all people to believe and receive his forgiveness. God sent Jesus to die and then overcome death through his resurrection to bring us salvation and everlasting peace and participate in an abundant life with God forever. “For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who had compassion on you.” How can we have joy on Good Friday when we recount the crucifixion and the horrible suffering Jesus experienced? We can because we know that Easter is coming and that God’s redemption is at hand. Jesus will rise and join God in heaven, and we will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us live a life of promise and joy now and to eternity.

Holy Spirit, help us to believe God at his Word, that Jesus is his beloved Son and we should listen to him. Help us to stay strong in our faith, even when we face death or devastation. Hold us close to you. Wipe our tears, ease our pain, comfort our sorrow, and bring us to everlasting joy in your kingdom. Amen.

John & Judy Roberts

**Holy Saturday/Easter Eve**  
**Day 46 of Lent 2026**  
**April 4, 2026**

Matthew 28:1-10

In this Scripture we see Mary Magdalene and others go to see Jesus' body at the tomb where they met an angel instead of the guards guarding the tomb. The angel explained to them that Jesus had risen from the dead and they left the tomb feeling overjoyed because Jesus had fulfilled his promise of rising from the dead. They later met the risen Jesus in person.

This part stands out to me: the fact that the tomb was open and an angel of God was sitting on the stone when the women walked up to the tomb. Because the angel had rolled this heavy stone out of the way that was too heavy for the women to move and because there were no longer guards blocking their access, the women were able to see into the tomb and see that Jesus' body was indeed absent from the tomb. The fact that it was clearly an angel sharing this message with them that Jesus was risen from the dead, and not just some regular man, made it even more believable that Jesus had risen from the dead.

The sadness found in this passage is that Jesus, someone very beloved to them, had passed away. I experienced something similar when my Uncle Adam died. It also made me very, very sad. I couldn't understand why this would happen, and what motivated his death.

The joy found in this passage is that, even in this situation, God is faithful because He keeps His promises. Jesus said he would die and come back after three days, and he did. Why does this matter to you and me? The significance of his death is that God made us to be His friends, but sin estranged us from God, so that we couldn't be close friends with God anymore. Because we deserve punishment for our sins, including the punishment of death, God sent His Son Jesus to be the ultimate perfect sacrifice, once for all time, to take the punishment for all our sins. Jesus chose to die for our sins instead of saving himself.

Where is there joy despite this sadness we feel? The significance of Jesus' resurrection is that when we die, or when our friends who believe in Jesus die, we can expect to also be resurrected to eternal life and live with the Holy Trinity in heaven. And this is the promise that God made to us that we have yet to see happen.

This points us to Jesus because we can trust in all of the promises that He made, not just you and me, but anyone who doesn't yet believe in Jesus. If you're feeling sad, then remember Jesus will always be with you by your side no matter what.

Holy Spirit, please help us to remember that whenever something bad happens God will always be by our side and help us when we need Him to. Amen

Aria Shelley