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Washington Cooperative Parish
Mountain View District of
The United Methodist Church

“Ambassadors for Christ”
2 Corinthians 5:20-21

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What is *Lent* and why does it last forty days?

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. Lent comes from the Anglo Saxon word lencten, meaning "lengthen" and refers to the lengthening days of spring. The forty days represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing to begin his ministry.

Lent is a time of repentance, fasting and preparation for the coming of Easter. It is a time of self-examination and reflection. In the early church, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by new converts and then became a time of penance by all Christians. Today, Christians focus on relationship with God, growing as disciples and extending ourselves, often choosing to give up something or to volunteer and give of ourselves for others.

Sundays in Lent are not counted in the forty days because each Sunday represents a "mini-Easter." This is why you will see the designation "Sunday in Lent" rather than "Sunday of Lent" in the naming of these Sundays. On each Lord's Day in Lent, while Lenten fasts continue, the reverent spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful anticipation of the Resurrection.

Ask The UMC, a ministry of United Methodist Communications

A Lenten Greeting from Pastor Jeffery T. White

Grace and peace to you.

Lent is a season set apart, a time to slow down, a time to listen more carefully, and to take an honest look at our lives in the light of God's love. For forty days, we follow Jesus on the road that leads through the wilderness and toward the cross, trusting that God is at work even in places that feel hard, uncertain, or unfinished.

The apostle Paul reminds us, "*If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new*" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Lent is a time to lean into that promise. It is a season for letting go of what no longer gives life and opening ourselves to the new thing God is already doing.

This season invites us to turn again toward God. That turning what the church calls repentance, is not about shame or guilt. It is about grace. It is about remembering who we are and whose we are. It is about making space for God to shape us, heal us, and lead us more deeply into love.

This Lenten book is offered as a companion for the journey. You may use it daily or return to it when you are able. There is no right or wrong way to engage these reflections. Come with your questions. Come with your doubts. Come with your faith, however strong or fragile it may feel. God welcomes all of it.

As you read and pray, you may be challenged to let go of habits, attitudes, or distractions that pull you away from God and from one another. You may also be invited to take on new practices, acts of prayer, generosity, justice, and mercy that help you live out your faith more fully. These practices are not meant to earn God's love, but to help us receive the grace that is already being poured out.

Throughout Lent, we remember that we do not walk this path alone. We are part of a larger community, connected to believers across time and place. Together, we seek to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Wherever this season finds you, hopeful, weary, curious, or unsure, trust that God is present with you. God is patient. God is faithful. And God is always leading us toward new life. May this Lenten journey deepen your faith, renew your spirit, and prepare your heart for the joy of Easter.

Blessings to you on the way.

Pastor Jeff White

Washington Cooperative Parish of The United Methodist Church

Prayer

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we invite anyone reading this book to join us in praying this prayer daily during Lent.

The Fast Life

Fast from judging others;
Feast on Christ dwelling in them.
Fast from fear of illness;
Feast on the healing power of God.
Fast from words that pollute;
Feast on speech that purifies.
Fast from discontent;
Feast on gratitude.
Fast from anger;
Feast on patience.
Fast from pessimism;
Feast on hope.
Fast from negatives;
Feast on encouragement.
Fast from bitterness;
Feast on forgiveness.
Fast from self-concern;
Feast on compassion.
Fast from suspicion;
Feast on truth.
Fast from gossip;
Feast on purposeful silence.
Fast from problems that overwhelm;
Feast on prayer that sustains.
Fast from anxiety;
Feast on faith.

- Author Unknown

Sue Haupert-Johnson
Resident Bishop of the Richmond Episcopal Area
The Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

February 18, 2026

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Joel 2:1-2 is a warning that the day of the Lord is near. It is a call to action, to "blow the trumpet" The command to "blow the trumpet" is an urgent call to alert everyone to imminent danger, requiring immediate attention and preparation.

God uses the terrifying imagery of an unstoppable invading force (like locusts) to represent His judgment, but simultaneously offers a path to salvation through sincere repentance, emphasizing His gracious and merciful nature.

Joel 2:12-17 teaches that when facing judgment or crisis, God desires a deep, honest, heartfelt turning from sin, assuring His people that genuine repentance unlocks His merciful, restoring power.

It requires genuine repentance and total commitment. God offers us a way to forgiveness through His mercy, and even in this time of judgment there is a way back to God's favor.

It is a powerful call from God for His people to repent sincerely and return to Him with their whole hearts, emphasizing genuine inner change in exchange for God's promised mercy, compassion, and potential restoration from judgment. It highlights God's merciful character (gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love) and offers hope that He will relent and bless them if they truly turn back, even amidst impending disaster.

PRAYER: Dear God, we confess our sins and failures as we try to lean on our own strengths. We repent, Lord, and ask You to truly help us to turn back to You through Your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Teresa Edwards
Halesford United Methodist Church

February 19, 2026

Isaiah 58:1-12

The old English meaning of Lent is "spring season" ... 40 days of spiritual prayer, fasting and repentance. In this passage the prophet Isaiah challenges us to examine what is real and what is fake in our faith. Are you practicing "false fasting"? While eliminating a favorite food are you helping the homeless? Are you stopping a bad habit while ignoring the hungry?

We make a faithful commitment during the 40 days of Lenten season, but what happens on day 41, 42, 43, etc.?

In this passage the Lord is telling us to practice true fasting. That means being his earthly hands and feet every day in every way, not just for 40 days. Help where help is needed. Let His light shine through you to spread to others. Let Lent be the beginning of a life serving God daily and spreading His love everywhere.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, Thank you for reminding us what true fasting means. Guide us as we navigate our way into this practice. Prevent us from falling into everyday ways of life. Help us share the gifts you give and show your love to others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Sue Ruple
Epworth United Methodist Church

February 20, 2026

Psalm 51:1-17

FORGIVENESS THAT CHANGES

David asking for forgiveness from God for his sins.

I wonder if you have ever found yourself avoiding looking in the mirror (within), by pointing out the window (towards someone else's faults). I know I have. You and I, we are not to judge—that is God's lane, not ours. We need to examine our own heart, turn toward God and allow God to change us from the inside out—and then we can be in a place to walk alongside others.

Throughout my life, I've had to forgive. Even before I joined the church (and knew the reason I should), I forgave. I look back and see that, for me, forgiveness was the "right" thing to do. I didn't realize that I was being changed by the act.

Every day I ask for forgiveness. Since I joined the church, I have come to understand that forgiveness has layers. Sometimes we can say we forgive and it's over and done with. Sometimes we say the words in prayer, and they take on a deeper meaning. Sometimes we resist saying the words and begin to feel the change that needs to happen in our life so that the resistance falls away and we cry out the words.

In Hebrew, forgiveness involves several words with subtle meanings: Selah signifies divine pardon, God removing guilt; Mechilah means wiping away or canceling a debt, often used for relational restoration; and Nasa means to lift or carry away the burden of sin. Together, these words show forgiveness as God's gracious act of pardoning and restoring.

For all of us, the most profound act of forgiveness came as Jesus was dying on the cross. Remember what he said, "*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*"

Whether the act of forgiveness is small or large, it is the doing of it that will change you.

PRAYER: Holy God, you have offered forgiveness more powerful than our sin. Create in me a clean heart so that I can freely extend forgiveness to those who have wounded me. You are my God. I will freely offer forgiveness until my last breath following the example of Jesus, my Savior. Amen.

Sandra S Fulcher
Stanleytown United Methodist Church, Stanleytown, VA

February 21, 2026

II Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

We are called to be ambassadors for Christ. WOW! What an assume responsibility. So, just like an ambassador for our country must be ready to represent the country in foreign and at times hostile nations, we, also, must always be ready to speak about the love of Christ and the reasons that we are Christians in places that are at times not receptive to the word. Being an ambassador for Christ could be as major as going on a mission trip or doing a prison ministry. Or it could be as small as praying with your family at a restaurant or offering to pray with a lost soul at your workplace or even on the street.

As ambassadors for Christ we must always be ready to help the lost. For me this is tough. It is easy to speak with someone who I know is willing to listen to the word, but much harder for me to just bring it up. This is something that I need to personally work on with my walk with Christ.

On the other hand we must be careful to not put stumbling blocks. In today's world we must be careful. Satan has placed so many paths that lead away from salvation and God has only one path to salvation. A relationship with our Savior Jesus Christ. As Christians we must always strive to be mindful of our actions and words. When out in the world it is easy to go with the crowd and the sins of the world. It is very hard to witness to someone just after complaining about traffic, or a boss or a politician or the thousands of other irritants that we experience on a daily basis.

PRAYER: Our Father in Heaven, thank You for this day and for the opportunity to tell others about Your love and salvation. As we are out in the world please give us the words to help tell others of Your Son Jesus Christ our Savior. Also, please give us the courage and confidence to use those words. In Your Holy name, Amen.

Randy Flippen
Epworth United Methodist Church

February 23, 2026

Ephesians 2:1-10

GOD'S GIFT

God's gift is salvation by grace through faith. A free gift not earned by works, making believers God's masterpiece, workmanship created anew in Christ Jesus. Good works he prepared for them to do, demonstrating his kindness and love.

God, rich in mercy and love, makes the spiritually dead alive with Christ, raising them up and seating them with him in heavenly places, showing his generous grace.

Salvation isn't from human works but is a gift from God, received through faith, preventing boasting.

Believers are God's workmanship, his "Masterpiece". Created in Christ for good works that God planned in advance for them to walk in.

PRAYER: Thank God for his blessings and for the hope and power found in Christ. Amen.

James L. Jordan
Halesford United Methodist Church

February 24, 2026

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

THE DIVINE PLAN FOR LIFE

God's Purposeful Creation

In the early chapters of Genesis, God's creative and intentional work in shaping the world and all living beings is made clear. These verses show that our lives are not random or accidental. Instead, we are purposefully designed by the Creator to reflect His image and bring Him glory.

Human Responsibility and Freedom

God entrusted Adam with the responsibility of caring for the garden and gave him a specific command: not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Importantly, God did not physically prevent Adam from eating the fruit. Rather, He gave Adam the freedom to choose, which meant Adam could choose wrongly. This gift of choice is still present in our lives today. Like Adam, we often make wrong choices. Though these choices can bring pain, they also offer opportunities for growth and learning, helping us make better decisions in the future. Living with the results of our actions teaches us to think more carefully about the choices we make.

Hope during Failure

Genesis chapter 3 highlights that even in failure, there is hope. When Adam and Eve gave in to the temptation of the serpent, it was not just a matter of breaking a rule. Their action broke the trust and close relationship they had with God. The serpent's cunning words led them to doubt God's goodness and to seek fulfillment apart from Him. Eating the forbidden fruit resulted in a painful break in their connection with God. This moment teaches that even those closest to God can make mistakes, illustrating the ongoing human struggle with temptation and the tendency to stray from God's path.

The Need for God's Grace

The story reminds us that we all need God's grace, especially when we stumble. While we cannot always avoid temptation, there is always a way to resist it. God's Word and the support of His people can help us stand firm against temptation, as stated in 1 Corinthians 10:13.

PRAYER: Almighty and Gracious Father, You are the One who has neither beginning nor end. You, O Lord, spoke the world into existence with Your powerful words, declaring, "Let there be," and so it was. You are the Creator who shaped humanity, forming us in your own image. Acknowledging our own weakness and frailty, we humbly invite You into our hearts. May Your presence fill us with hope, grant us liberty, and establish justice among us. We ask for the assurance that comes to all who believe in the name of Christ Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Emeritus Rev. Charles R. Calloway, Sr.
Maple Street Baptist Church, Roanoke, VA

February 25, 2026

Psalm 92

This scripture is saying that it is good to praise God and give God all glory and thanks. Praise him in the morning, praise him in noon time and praise him at night. Give thanks to the Most High because he is faithful. Our good deeds will be recognized and appreciated because of his grace and mercy. When God blesses us, giving Him praise is the good and right thing to do. When we think about how good he is, we have joy on the inside and a song in our heart.

As a child of God, we know how good he is but fools and evildoers do not know or understand. They will be destroyed forever. The righteous will flourish and the good will bear fruit to an old age but the evildoers will not. There is no wickedness in serving God.

PRAYER: Gracious God and Heavenly Father. I give you all honor and praise. I thank you, Heavenly Father for all that you have done for us and all the things that you have protected us from. Thank you for your grace and your mercy. Please protect us from those things seen and unseen, for you are a righteous God. These and all things I ask in your precious name. Amen.

Jimmie Hancock
Halesford United Methodist Church

February 26, 2026

Romans 5:12-19

What a difference Jesus makes!

“One man disobeyed God and many became sinners. But in the same way, one man obeyed God and many will be made right.”
 (“Romans 5:19-20 - Bible.com”) (ERV)

Paul, in this section of his letter to the Romans is developing for us with a noticeably clear image of the greatness of the work Jesus did for us on the cross. He contrasts this with the devastation Adam released into the world with his disobedience in the Garden of Eden.

Paul writes in verse 14: “*death reigned from Adam to Moses even over those who had not sinned...*” reminding each of us that because of one man’s sin all humankind became sinners and are now subject to death. That is a harsh reality, and we cannot change it, but this is the foundational principle of our very salvation. We cannot change it! We are all sinners and death reigns over us.

But, oh, what a difference Jesus makes!

Paul reminds us in verses 15-18 that God sent us, through Jesus, a free gift of his ever-abounding grace. Unlike the one-man, Adam, whose disobedience brought judgement resulting in condemnation, the one-man Jesus’ obedience to the cross, brought justification of life.

Finally, verse 19 of this text lets us know that if we put our trust in Jesus Christ, receive his gift of righteousness our eternal destiny will be in him. Jesus’ righteousness will stand in judgment before God as our righteousness.

PRAAYER: Heavenly Father, guide us with your truth and grace as we journey to the cross through this Lenten season. May we do so with open hearts and minds remembering and reflecting upon the atoning and redemptive sacrifice you made for us. May we never forget that had it not been for you our lives would be lost forever. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.

Grace H. Dean
Jackson Street United Methodist Church, Lynchburg, VA

February 27, 2026

Matthew 4:1-11

This scripture recounts the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, where He faced tests from Satan immediately after His baptism and then a forty-day fast. It contains profound lessons of spiritual growth, practical discipleship, and reliance on God. Jesus resisted each temptation by quoting scripture (Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:16, 6:13) rather than yielding to physical hunger, pride or the allure of world power.

The first temptation—turning stones into bread—underscores that spiritual sustenance is superior to merely meeting material needs. The second temptation—throwing Himself from the temple—teaches us not to manipulate God or demand proof of His faithfulness. The third temptation offered all kingdoms in exchange for worship—reminds us that ultimate allegiance must be to God, not to power, success or worldly gain. Jesus showed us that spiritual preparation strengthens resilience against temptation.

PRAAYER: Lord, help us to recognize and seek Your support and community while facing trials. Encourage us and let us be encouraged by fellow believers during difficult times. Remind us to prioritize spiritual disciplines such as prayer, worship and study so we can cultivate a reliance on You in times of scarcity or discomfort. In Your holy name we pray, Amen.

Christine Mosig
Epworth United Methodist Church

February 28, 2026

Genesis 12:1-4a

In reading these verses of scripture I am reminded how the LORD gave Abram an instruction and even when he didn't fully understand what the LORD was doing....in verse 4a we plainly see Abram following as instructed. How many times has the Holy Spirit provided us instructions and our response has been, "Well Lord, give me a sign or can I have more details"? We can learn a valuable lesson from Abram which is the lesson of obedience through faith in the Almighty God.

In the Life Application Bible under Life Lessons for verse 1 it states: God always connects obedience with blessing, even when He does not describe the full details of what that blessing may be.

King Saul learned the hard way about the lesson of obedience which cost him the legacy of his kingdom. We would be hard pressed to learn from the historical account of our biblical ancestors.

PRAYER: Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Lord I give you glory, honor, and divine praise. Lord, as your people help us to grow in obedience by waiting on your timing, by heeding your instructions, and following your voice. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

Elder Shawna Banks
Positive Impact Ministries, Roanoke, VA

March 2, 2026

Psalm 121

A DIALOGUE OF CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE

Its use as a pilgrimage song provides the key to its understanding. Whether the dialogue takes place in a single heart or between individuals in the caravan is of no great consequence, since all would share the same convictions.

This psalm is composed of four couplets, each having an introductory line. Key terms are "the Lord" and "watch over".

The assurance expressed is equally appropriate for the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and for the pilgrimage of life to glory. A confession of trust in the Lord. The one true God the King of all creation. The guardian of Israel. The one in whom the faithful may put unfailing trust.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you for giving me another day's journey. Forgive me that I'm not perfect. I am a sinner. Sometimes I forget to pray and at time I forget to thank you. Thank you for your grace and mercy. Give us another day to start anew. In Christ's name I pray, Amen.

Danny Ferguson
Halesford United Methodist Church

March 3, 2026

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

FAITH OVER WORKS: EMBRACING THE GIFT OF GRACE

“Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness”. The passage from Romans emphasizes that salvation is a gift received through faith, not earned by personal merit or works. Abraham was considered righteous because of his faith in God, illustrating that justification before God is based solely on faith. Works, while important as an expression of our faith, do not contribute to our salvation; rather, they follow as a natural response to Christ’s presence in our lives. This message is especially relevant during the 2026 Lenten Season. As we reflect on the significance of Christ’s sacrifice, we are reminded to share the message of salvation—a gift that brings joy, peace and eternal rest to all who accept it.

PRAYER: Father, thank you for the gift of salvation made possible through Jesus’ sacrifice. We acknowledge that we are saved not by our own efforts, but by faith and your unearned grace and forgiveness. Amen.

Wayne Loomis
Epworth United Methodist Church

March 4, 2026

John 3:1-17

These verses are about Nicodemus and his dire need to know Jesus and about being reborn. How could this be? How could this happen? Nicodemus wanted to see Jesus personally to see what He had to say, to get facts and not rumors. He came at night so he won’t be hassled and/or ridiculed by his fellow Pharisees about his going to see Jesus. Like Nicodemus, we must check and examine Jesus’ teachings for ourselves. No one can do it for us. One must come to Jesus with an open mind and an open heart so you can be taught.

The concept of rebirth was revolutionary and new to Nicodemus. Being born of water and Spirit, water represents the cleansing action of God’s Holy Spirit, who is the Holy Spirit, God in Three Persons, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. God became human in Jesus so Jesus could die for our sins. No one is beyond the touch of God’s Spirit. God is patient and persistent. God’s specialty is finding and changing people we might consider unreachable. But unless we are born again, we can never be part of the Kingdom of God.

PRAYER: Lord, I come seeking Your mercy and grace and asking You to forgive me of my sins and inequities and to thank You for your many blessings seen and unseen.

Lord, help me to utilize the Holy Spirit instilled in me to renew my mind with Your Word so I may tear down the strongholds and every high and lofty thing that is against the knowledge of You, Lord God. This I ask in Jesus’ name, Amen.

Roy Ferguson, Jr.
Halesford United Methodist Church

March 5, 2026

Matthew 17:1-9

In our gospel today, we are invited into a personal moment that Peter, James, and John are experiencing. The Father was revealing Jesus to them as someone greater than Moses or Elijah, and that he is the Son of Man who they had been waiting for their entire lives.

This transformation of Jesus in our text, was not about Jesus, but it is a vision of the glorious future to which we are called.

We may encounter problems and negativities and we may get hurt going through life, but then we have a choice; we can either say negative things or choose to remember who we are, brothers and sisters of Jesus, sons and daughters of God and that the glory of the transfigured Jesus awaits us.

The Bible says in 1 JOHN 3:2, "*we are already children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed. All we know is that when it is revealed, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*"

God's grace has been granted to us before the beginning of time and since the beginning of time, God had you in his plan and had his grace planned for you. Since the beginning of time, God planned to transform you, through his Son Jesus.

The disciples who experienced Jesus transformation had to come down the mountain and return to normality, but they remember the transfiguration. And just like them we live in normality, but we believe and know that God has destined great things for us. So celebrating Jesus' transfiguration early in Lent, reminds us of what comes after the cross, because it reminds us of the glory of Jesus risen from the dead. So in our worst moments, I hope that we remember that God has destined the glory of the transfiguration for each of us in the next life.

PRAYER: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Lord, we thank you for the gift of this time with you. We give it to you as a Lenten offering, a gift of ourselves. We thank you for being with us, for speaking to our hearts, strengthening our faith and reminding us that we are not alone on this journey. We pray "OH GOD," that this transformation that has begun in us, will continue. Amen.

Rev. Roy Gunn, Pastor
Macedonia Baptist Church, Rocky Mount, VA

March 6, 2026

Exodus 17:1-7

First, I want to acknowledge that suffering is hard.

In today's reading, the people of Israel are going through deep suffering. As you read the passage, notice what they do with their suffering. What do their words reveal about what they believe about God?

The first time I experienced real suffering was when I was 27 years old and the theological construct that I had built my life on came crashing down around me. I miscarried my first pregnancy at 20 weeks and because of the unusual cause, I had to consult an oncologist and was directed not to conceive again for an entire year. I was so brokenhearted that I felt that God was punishing me. Through my tears, I asked God, "What have I done to deserve this? Don't you even love me anymore?" It took a few more years and another heartbreak for me to see and name that unconscious, flimsy construct: "Be good and God will love me, follow Jesus, obey my parents and my life will be blessed. If I don't, I can expect trouble." This childish reward/punishment system was informed more by "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" than it was the gospel of Jesus Christ! I had to let all that go and learn to accept that suffering is a part of life, that neither the good things nor the bad things that happen are about deserving, that everything is grace, and there is nowhere we can go where God is not. Even our worst suffering.

Today's reading makes me wonder if the suffering that the people of Israel were going through revealed some ideas about God they needed to let go of and how they needed to mature in their faith.

As you study the life and death of Jesus this Lent, notice what he does and doesn't do with his suffering. Pay special attention to his words from the cross, "Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing." How does Jesus teach us by example to deal with suffering? What does his resurrection teach us about what God does with suffering?

INQUIRY: Do I have any unconscious theological constructs about suffering that I need to let go of? What would it mean to follow Jesus' way through suffering? Is there new life where I have endured suffering in the past?

PRAYER: Holy God, through your tender mercy, have compassion on all who suffer today. Teach us to walk the path of Jesus through our suffering and to grow into mature faith. Amen.

Rev. Leigh Anne Taylor (she/her)
Mountain View District Director of Connecting Ministry
The Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

March 7, 2026

Psalm 95

Doesn't it make you excited and cheerful when you have something to celebrate? It does me. I love music and instruments with all their different sounds. When they come together (the more the better) it is very powerful. When I read the beginning of this Psalm (verses 1-3) my first vision was of a marching band coming down the street with bass and snare drums, cymbals, trumpets, tubas, trombones, flutes, saxophones and clarinets. All following the Conductor in sync, knees lifting high, arms swishing left and right, including those with batons and flags. I see in this marching band, each one of us and our part in celebrating with thanksgiving and praise to our Lord; the Rock of our salvation!

The other thing I love is God's creation! (NRSV) ⁴ "in his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. ⁵ The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed." When my husband John & I go hiking in the woods he has to stop and wait for me while I take pictures of the tall trees, shapes of different leaves, holes in the trees and wondering if something is sleeping inside, caves (I wonder if a bear is in there), moss growing on rocks, picking up different rocks from the creeks and admiring them, wildflowers, birds and other creatures; my eyes and spirit can't get enough. I always feel God's presence in nature, and I feel like He leaves me special gifts along the way. I have a collection of them. The song "How Can You Not" by Leanna Crawford comes to mind.

(NRSV) ⁶ "O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! ⁷ For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand." The footnotes state: "A call to praise the Lord for creation of and care for the community". Verses 8-11 speak to me in that I need to trust, follow, and praise the Lord and not harden my heart because if I do, I will not have peace or rest.

The New King James Version footnotes for 95:11 states "The satisfying result of being in God's presence by means of praise is **rest**. Grumbling, complaining, and unbelief destroy that rest" (Hebrews 3:7-5)

PRAYER: LORD, please continue to lead us alongside the marching band of believers as we praise and worship you with thanksgiving, the "Rock of our salvation". Thank you for all your wondrous creation. Help us to stay focused and trust that You will provide, keeping us at peace and rest. In Jesus name, Amen.

Cindy Lollar
Epworth United Methodist Church

March 9, 2026

Romans 5:1-11

This Scripture tells me that faith brings joy and with joy also comes peace. In my life, as I share God's glory with others, trials and tribulations don't seem to be as big, and at some point I gain strength through having faith in Jesus Christ which gives me great joy. And knowing God loves me and will never leave or forsake me.

PRAYER: Thank you God for your Son Jesus Christ and faith that one day we will raise up and be with you in glory. Amen.

Michael Goad
Halesford United Methodist Church

March 10, 2026

John 4:5-26

While skiing in New York, at the start of a big 8-day ski swing through the Northeast, I lost my driver's license. While pulling out my telephone from my pocket while riding the ski lift, the license fell out of my pocket. Of course, I didn't know that I had lost it off the ski lift. When two of the three cards came out with my phone, I patted all my pockets. Nothing. That cold realization hit me harder than the twenty degree temperatures. My license was gone.

It's interesting how nothing else matters when you lose something of vital importance. I didn't think about the stock market. I didn't think about the rains falling on the plains in Spain. I didn't think about how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. All I could think about was "where is that driver's license?" Losing it initiated a search. I retraced my ski tracks around the mountain (Good luck finding a white Virginia license in the snow). I beat feet over to customer service asking if they'd found one (Sorry, sir; we haven't). I walked across the parking lot twice, scouring my car, looking in every nook and cranny (Nothing in all the nooks and all the crannies). While skiing, inquiring, and scouring, in my head I was thinking, "what am I going to do?" In my mind I was berating myself: "this is such a bad time to lose a license, at the start of a long awaited trip!"

What have you lost of importance? Have you ever lost it at an opportune time? Honestly, nothing that you lose ever gets lost at an opportune time. The keys are nowhere to be found when the kids are already late to school. The nose hair trimmer is misplaced when you're about to go on a date. The remote control is who knows where just when the game is starting. It's never a good time to lose anything.

Afterwards, we can laugh about remote controls and hair trimmers; but some losses carry a weight that settles in the marrow of our bones. In John 4, we meet a woman who wasn't looking for a license; she was looking for a life.

In this story of the Woman at the Well, we see a woman who has lost so much. She has lost her standing in her community - coming to the well at noon would be a signal that she couldn't go at busier times. She has lost her friends - dipping from the well like most things is better done together than alone. And she has lost 5 husbands, pointing to a life that likely hasn't gone according to plan.

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She's got a yearning for faith, yet she believes it is too far off. So much has been lost for her. And then she is found.

She tells this strange man speaking to her: "*I know that Messiah*" (called Christ) "*is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.*" The woman was looking ahead to someone else. And then, Jesus looks at her directly and says, "*it's me. I am the Messiah.*"

Jesus Christ, the Messiah, finds her, as he does all of those who are lost. He's the Good Shepherd, finding the lost sheep. He's the Longing Father, finding the lost son. He's the Faithful Woman, finding the lost coin. He's the Living Water, springing up to meet the desiccated and dried out souls, like this woman's.

What rejoicing she has when Jesus meets her, when Jesus *finds* her.

How do we know she rejoices? She does some leaving of her own. After he meets her, she leaves her water jug and goes to tell her fellow townspeople that she has met the man who knows everything about her. How interesting that she comes empty in her heart to the well and upon being filled, she leaves an empty jug, representing her old life of emptiness is now in the past. It's like the song, "*and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.*" Nothing else mattered, but being found. She arrived with a physical jar to fill a physical need, but she left it behind because her spiritual thirst—a thirst she'd tried to quench with five husbands and a life of hiding—had finally been met by the Living Water."

P.S. I eventually found the license in the snow under the lift. It was a huge relief, but it couldn't compare to the "lift" of being known and claimed by the One who never loses track of us.

PRAYER: When we feel lost or empty—searching for what's missing in the "nooks and crannies" of our lives—thank You for being the One who finds us. Like the woman at the well, help us to leave our old jars behind and find our true worth in Your living water. Thank You for knowing everything about us and loving us still. May we walk today in the relief and joy of being fully known and forever claimed by You. Amen.

Rev. Will Waller, Pastor
Rocky Mount United Methodist Church

March 11, 2026

John 4:27-42

What stood out the most to me in this passage was that when the woman went back to her village. She told the people what Jesus had said to her, and that she believed that he was the messiah. Not only did they believed her, but they also believed that he was the messiah, even though they never met Jesus, and knew nothing of him. Then after they met him, and he stayed with them, he proved to be who they believed him to be. Oftentimes we need tangible evidence to support the claims and beliefs of others. Likewise as believers we're often challenged as to why and how we believe without tangible evidence.

The word tells us that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. When you hold strong to your faith, and your conviction, he will reveal himself, oftentimes when you're not even expecting it. Other times he will reveal himself, and you won't even realize it. But at the end of the day, once you ask him to come into your heart, and you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, you'll no longer require tangible evidence. His spirit flowing through you will be all that you ever need.

PRAYER: Father, my prayer today is that you renew our belief in you daily. Those who are unbelievers, give them the conviction to believe. Those whose faith is wavering, steady the ship in their lives, and give us a peace of mind that our faith will never be shaken. Amen.

Marques Wilson
Halesford United Methodist Church

March 12, 2026

I Samuel 16:1-13

In today's scripture, God tells the prophet, Samuel, to go to Bethlehem and visit a man named Jesse there. His instructions are to anoint one of Jesse's sons to become Israel's next king.

Samuel assumes he will anoint Jesse's oldest and strongest son, Eliab, and is surprised when the Lord instructs him to anoint Jesse's youngest son, David. As God explains when he rejects Eliab, "*The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart*". (1 Samuel 16:7)

This particular verse made me ask myself: How often do I judge people based on outward appearances rather than what is inside? Instead of making snap judgments, what would it be like to view others the way God sees them? I have worn glasses the majority of my life. They are the first thing I put on in the morning, and the last thing I take off at night. I found myself imagining doing the same with "God Spectacles", putting them on during my waking hours of Lent in an effort to see friends, family, co-workers, along with strangers, the way God sees them. Through Jesus' example, prayer, scripture, and nudges from the Holy Spirit, such a change in viewpoint is possible, enriching all our relationships. What an adventure to make an honest effort to see the heart of others!

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank you the gift of your son, Jesus, who saves us from our sins. Open our hearts during this season of Lent so that we may be transformed to see the heart of others and to live and love like Jesus. Amen.

Cheryl Garrett
Ward Church, Farmington Hills, MI

March 13, 2026

Psalm 23

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

That first statement alone says it all for me. If I truly believe that the Lord is my shepherd, then I should know that I will be fine and all of my needs will be met because he said *“I shall not want”*.

Psalm 23 is a promise from God to let us know that he has us! He creates for us green pastures and he restores our souls! (Especially when we feel lost and hopeless).

And we must know that whatever trials, tribulations and evils of the world we may face, even death, he reminds us that he is always with us, protecting us, comforting us, and anointing us with his oil until our cup runs over. (What an honor!). Best of all, he promises that his goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives and when we die, we will be with him in his kingdom forever!

PRAYER: Lord, help me to accept God’s promises and grace and to be a worthy servant of the Lord so that when I see him face to face, he will say *“Well done good and faithful servant”*. Amen.

Valerie Jordan
Halesford United Methodist Church

March 14, 2026

Ephesians 5:8-14

AWAKE, O SLEEPER

“For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light.” — Ephesians 5:8

Lent is a season when we slow down and take an honest look at our lives. We often think of it as a time to give things up or try harder to do the right thing. But in this passage from Ephesians, Paul reminds us that Lent is also about remembering who we already are in Christ.

Paul says something surprising: *“you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.”* He does not say we simply walked in the dark; he says we *were* darkness. And now, through Christ, we *are* light. This means following Jesus is not just about better behavior. It is about being changed from the inside out.

Even so, people who belong to the light can still fall asleep spiritually. We can go through the motions of faith - coming to church, saying prayers, doing good things - without really being awake to what God is doing in us and around us. That is why Paul says, *“Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”*

God’s light shows us the truth about our lives, not to embarrass or punish us, but to heal us. When things are brought into the light, they lose their power over us. In the light of Christ, we can grow fruit of the Spirit like goodness, honesty, and love.

Lent is not about becoming someone else. It is about waking up to the life God has already given us. This season invites us to open our eyes, step into the light, and let Christ shine on us again.

PRAYER: Loving God, You have called us out of darkness and given us your light. Wake us up when we grow tired or distracted. Shine your light on the parts of our lives that need healing and hope. Help us live as children of light, showing your goodness and truth in the world. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Sarah Calvert
District Superintendent, Mountain View District
The Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

March 16, 2026

John 19:1-41

The Jewish leaders demanded Jesus to be crucified, claiming he made himself son of God. Pilate found no basis for a charge but the Jewish people insisted, saying they had a law he must die! Pilate didn't want to crucify Jesus for he feared him, for Jesus said his power comes from above. Pilate tried to free Jesus but the Jews shouted you're no friend of Caesar's; anyone who says he's a king opposes Caesar. So Pilate had no choice – he had a crown of thorns placed on his head, dressed him in a purple robe and placed a sign on his cross, King of the Jews.

The soldiers flogged him, made fun of him, and made him carry his cross. They went to Golgotha where they crucified him with two sinners. They tore his clothes and divided them.

Near the cross of Jesus were his mother Mary and his disciple. He gave his mother and his beloved disciple to each other. Later, knowing all was completed he said, "*I'm thirsty*". When he received the drink he said, "*it is finished*", bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Jesus paid the ultimate price for you and me.

PRAYER: Father God, it is always so difficult to read this description of Jesus' passion and death on the cross. But we understand that without this great suffering and sacrifice there would be no grace. We thank you, Father, for loving us so much that you were willing to give your Son in atonement for our sins. Amen.

Melissa Toney
Epworth United Methodist Church

March 17, 2026

Isaiah 7:10-14

From my perspective when I read this scripture it shows the LORD will present a sign upon you. A sign of a path or direction that you have to follow. A sign you should trust. Even if that sign feels incorrect or unsuitable. The LORD knows best. The LORD knows what you are meant for and capable of. The LORD knows what will make you genuinely happy and successful in your journey. In this case a sign from him is a gift. You should take that gift, do what the LORD has planned for you and be thankful for that gift that was given by him.

PRAYER: Lord, we thank you for the signs and gifts you will and have given us, and Lord forgive us for the day by day imperfections and mistakes we make. Lord, we come to you today to thank you for your unconditional love you give us, the opportunities and enjoyments given to us that we are able to live through and experience in our journey. Thank you Lord for the paths you give and the blessing we receive. In your name Lord, we say Amen.

Jason White
Halesford United Methodist Church

March 18, 2026

Psalm 45

This book tells how we should see God in our lives; how He is the King forever. It tells of how he is the King of Kings and how he should have a place in our hearts for us to enter into His Kingdom.

PRAYER: I pray for my family, my church family, and the nation. Amen.

Kenneth Banks
Halesford United Methodist Church

March 19, 2026

Psalm 40:5-10

During the Lenten season, we begin to consider God's desires for us. In Psalm 40:5-10, the psalmist David speaks to the awesome works the Lord provides for us. He encourages us to acknowledge that the depth of God's works on our behalf is truly beyond our comprehension. Our awareness of God's grace suggests a posture of humility as we consider what we should "give up or add on" at Lent. Our offerings are small in comparison to what we receive from Him.

Throughout this Lenten season, God seeks from us more than just religious observance. David reminds us that God doesn't require burnt offerings or sin offerings. Rather, verses 7-9 urge us to consider the obedience, willingness, and attentiveness we offer in our spiritual lives. Are our spiritual acts habitual, or truly a response from the heart to what we hear from God? Our behavior is meant to be an outward display of His will. We must show a listening heart and a caring spirit. From us, God wishes a life that demonstrates a willingness and delight to do his will. We must be willing to use the season of Lent to testify to God's steadfast love for us. As we walk through the season, we must demonstrate an obedience that flows from our love of God.

PRAYER: Lord God, help us to willingly share the impact your grace has on us each day during the season of Lent, sharing his will for us with those around us. Amen.

Charlene Dell
Crossings Church, Oklahoma City, OK

March 20, 2026

Hebrews 10:4-10

We don't need to offer sacrifices to be saved—what a relief! For “*we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*” (Hebrews 10:10). Jesus teaches us that God does not want burnt offerings, but people who will do the will of God. In Lent, we often make extra sacrifices. We don't do it to be saved—that was already done for us by Jesus.

This Lent, I will try to “sacrifice” (or “give up”) the things that distract me from the will of God. I think that is the purpose of Lent. We make sacrifices not to convince God to love us, but to remove the things that get in the way of us loving God.

PRAYER: God, may I always and only seek to do your will. Amen.

Sarah Rings Morris
St. Peter Catholic Church, Charlotte, NC
Halesford United Methodist Church

March 21, 2026

Luke 1:26-38

Luke 1:37 “*For with God nothing shall be impossible.*”

When Gabriel, the angel, was sent by God to inform the Virgin Mary of her blessing, conceiving the Son of God, she was shocked and confused because how could such a thing happen?

Luke 1:34-35 “*Then Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her. The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*” Gabriel then informed Mary of her cousin Elisabeth, who had conceived a son in her old age.

This story also reminds me of Abraham and Sarah in the book of Genesis. When God promised them a son, and informed them that the time had finally come, they laughed, thinking it was too late because of Sarah's old age since they had been waiting for so long. But, as always, God kept His promise. He did the impossible by giving them a child in their old age, and the unthinkable by making Abraham the father of many nations and Sarah the mother of many kings.

My parents have always told me, “God doesn't think like us.” Isaiah 55:8 says, “*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, for my ways are not your ways, saith the Lord.*” Sometimes we may think it's too late like Abraham and Sarah. Sometimes we think it can't be done, like Mary. Or even we may feel like we aren't worthy of the blessing, but God ALWAYS keeps His promises to us, and that's where our faith comes in. There may be trials and tribulations while we wait, but He could be preparing us for what He has promised, and we have to be ready to receive it. Never lose faith. Remember Jeremiah 29:11.

Like the old saying goes, “He may not come when you want him to, but he's always right on time.” His plans are always better than we could ever imagine. Not only did Mary have a son, but she had the Son of God. Not only did Abraham and Sarah have a son, but Abraham became the father of many nations and Sarah, the mother of many kings.

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If God could do the impossible through Mary, and fulfill His promise to Abraham and Sarah, then He can surely do it for us too.

Our job isn't to understand the "how," "why," or "when," but to trust the "Who." It's in God's hands, and he will always fulfill his promises, no matter how they come.

PRAYER: Thank you Lord, for Your word. Thank You for being a God who keeps His promises. Help us to continue to have faith and to continue to seek You daily. Help us to trust You when we don't understand the timing, the process, or the path ahead. Strengthen our faith in our times of doubt, give us peace in our waiting season, and prepare our hearts for what You have planned for us. We know that Your ways, are not our ways. We place our hope in You, believing that nothing is impossible with You. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

Taylor White
Halesford United Methodist Church

March 23, 2026

Ezekiel 37:1-14

This scripture is the exact reading I had for Journey with Jesus through Lent 2023. **"Who knew?"**

The prophet Ezekiel was deported with other Jews into Babylonian exile. There was no escaping the painful consequences of their sins, and they needed to repent.

Ezekiel was on the rough side of the mountain, in the valley of dry bones. In a vision, he was carried away by the Spirit of the Lord. Ezekiel was asked the question, "*Can these bones live?*" His reply, "***O Lord God, you know.***"

Though the exile lasted 70 years, God did restore Israel, giving them hope for their future.

Lent is a time of repentance, forgiveness, and restoration. A time of hope and healing. This was God's message through the prophet to the Israelites in exile. New life from God, through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God—living and powerful.

Who knows, in 2029, I may get Ezekiel again. **Only God knows!**

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, though valley experiences seem exceptionally long and uncomfortable, we do grow and trust You even more. You always bring us through, making us stronger. Thank You for sacrificing Your only Son to rescue us. For moving us forward, being ever so close, and giving us hope for the future. In our Savior, Lord Jesus' name. Amen!

Linda Devlin
Epworth United Methodist Church

March 24, 2026

Psalm 130

REDEMPTION

Psalm 130 speaks of the redeeming power of God, His willingness to forgive. David had many reasons to seek God's forgiveness and was thankful God was willing to forgive him of his iniquities. He prayed not only for the forgiving of his sins but also those of Israel, for they were many.

When God forgives us of a sin, it is forever removed from our record, never again to be remembered. When we as mortals forgive, we say we forgive but we don't forget. We can tell someone that he is forgiven, but twenty years later if a conflict arises, we can recall every detail of the forgiven offence.

The American Indian had a term: "Bury the hatchet." When a conflict was resolved, the warring or disputing parties would demonstrate their forgiveness of the offence by burying their weapon (hatchet). But they would always bury it with the handle sticking up above the ground. That made it easy to find and recover if the conflict would return. Forgiven but not forgotten!

Psalm 130:7 states: *"For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is abundant redemption."* Abundant mercy and redemption! The Lord is always there in our time of need for mercy and redemption.

PRAYER: Our Father in heaven, I thank you for your tender mercy and forgiving spirit. We would be souls lost without these traits that You possess. Thank you for overlooking my faults and seeing my needs. Amen.

George Wilson, Jr.
Full Gospel Holiness Church, Montvale, VA

March 25, 2026

Romans 8:6-11

These verses are trying to tell us that there are two mindsets described here. One is of the flesh and the other one of the Spirit. The one of the flesh leads us to death, but the one of the Spirit will lead us to life and peace.

The realm of the flesh is bound up with death, hostility to God, insubordination, and unacceptability to God. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ they do not belong to Christ.

Your body is subject to death because of sin and even a Christian's body is subject to physical death, the consequence of sin.

Christians are indwelt by the life-giving Spirit as a result of their justification.

PRAYER: Lord, help us always to be faithful to you and do what's right and may we feel your presence in our lives leading us to eternal life. In your precious holy name we pray. Amen.

Sandra Ruby
Quaker Baptist Church, Bedford, VA

March 26, 2026

John 11:1-45

This scripture tells the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Jesus shows his disciples that he has power over life and death. Death is not to be feared by those who believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. He tells Martha and all those present (11:25-26): *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Will you believe this?"*

To me, this is what Lent is about. Trusting in the Word and confessing that Jesus is our Savior and the Resurrection and the Life.

The other verse in this scripture that stands out for me is verse 11:35: *"Jesus wept"*

Our Savior loved Lazarus, Martha and Mary. He felt moved and had compassion for their grief. He understands when life is hard and painful and he has compassion for our pain and sorrow. We are not alone in our feelings. He understands our situation and our pain. Jesus loves us and will answer our prayers in Gods perfect time.

Will you believe? Will you confess and accept Jesus as Lord? It is never too late to answer Jesus' knock, just open the door and accept him as your Savior today, our Resurrection and Life.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, you are good and merciful. I confess that Jesus is Lord, our Resurrection and Life. Please help me to trust in your Word and live this life according to your purpose. Amen.

Marie Flippin
Epworth United Methodist Church

March 27, 2026

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

TO GOD BE THE GLORY

Verses 1-2

David (the second king of Israel) is believed to be the writer of this Psalm. He is calling the people of Israel to glorify God and to acknowledge the Great things He has Done.

Verses 19-29

These verses recognize that as a righteous person (David), he will be the way, the truth and the life—paving the way for others to enter the gate of salvation of the Lord, his Rock and Salvation.

PRAYER: Hear our prayer O Lord. Thank you for the day that you have made and make us glad in it. Give us your forgiveness, your love and your peace that we may live each day worthy of your great calling as Christians. Amen.

Alice Prather
Halesford United Methodist Church

March 28, 2026

Matthew 21:1-11

This was the day of Palm Sunday, celebrating Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. In everyday life, this meant choosing a path of courageousness, love, and justice over worldly power.

Jesus riding a donkey was a symbol of peace and service. It was being against earthly kingdoms and inviting us to make room in our hearts for God's peaceful transformative way of life.

On Jesus' journey, many people spread their coats and laid palm branches on the road. Some of them were in front and some were following Jesus. Today we need to follow Jesus with truth, belief, and faith.

Palm Sunday shows us we choose God's way of life with mercy, love, humility, faith, and justice.

On Jesus' journey into our own hearts and everyday life, we should welcome Him. He is Hosanna. Our provider. Follow Him. He knows the way.

PRAAYER: Jesus, there are many temptations in this world. Thank you for not letting me stray. The changes of life can be a dangerous path for us all. Be with us with every step we take and every prayer that we say. We believe and have faith in you. Amen.

Brenda Goad
Halesford United Methodist Church

March 30, 2026

Isaiah 50:4-9a

This text provides the Christian year with a particular understanding of Jesus' journey to resurrection through the cross. As we get closer to Holy week, the passage reminds the faithful of the cost of discipleship. There will be times in the Christian life when living into God's calling comes at a price. Today's reading helps us to frame such issues through the particular historical experience of Isaiah's suffering servant, who is confronted with the lingering effects of exile life in Babylon.

It is important to point out that the servant does not receive this suffering passively; but he actively chooses to accept the conflict that arises through his proclamation. This last point emphasizes that suffering, in and of itself, is not vicarious. It is a byproduct of speaking truth to power. Moreover, the servant always remains an agent in relationship to his enemies' abuse.

In the final section (verses 7–9a), the LORD God vindicates the honor of the servant in language that evokes a legal hearing. Thus, the LORD, who is the source of the servant's calling in verses 4–5, is also the agent of the prophet's vindication in this second unit. Because of God's help, the servant will "not be put to shame" (verse 7) and his enemies will not be able to "contend" (verse 8) against him or declare him guilty (verse 9).

In the LORD's court of opinion, the servant is righteous. Though suffering is the thematic and structural center of Isaiah 50, the LORD's calling (verses 4–5) and vindication (verses 7–9) of the servant frames the passage on either side. It is the LORD's initiative that defines both the vocation and destiny of the faithful. God's help is the source of their confidence and hope in the midst of suffering.

PRAAYER: Thank you, Lord, for this scripture about the "Suffering Servant". It emphasizes the servant's mission to sustain the weary. We can visualize Your instructing Jesus each morning as he moves toward Holy week and the time of trial and passion. We thank you for the confidence and hope it brings at difficult times and the finding that your servant is indeed righteous as he does your will. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Christine Mosig
Epworth United Methodist Church

March 31, 2026

Psalm 31:9-16

In these verses they are saying, have mercy for I'm in trouble. My life is spent with grief. My enemies and neighbors flee from me. They talk about me and make plans to take my life. But I trust in God.

I put my trust in God that he will deliver me from those who persecute me. Those that trust in God shall have His goodness.

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, I want to thank you for being there when I'm in need. I put my trust in you for all your goodness. Amen.

Diane Taylor
Halesford United Methodist Church

April 1, 2026

Philippians 2:5-11

A good gospel pattern is our Lord Jesus Christ. It is necessary for us to bear a resemblance to His life if we would have the benefit of His death. If we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are not His. Christ was humble, meek, and lovely in heart. We must walk in the same spirit and the same steps with the Lord Jesus.

He not only took on upon Him the likeness and fashion of a man, but the form of a servant. He was not only God's servant, but He came to minister to men. His lowest step of His humiliation was His dying to the death on the cross. He not only suffered but was actually and voluntarily obedient.

His exaltation was the reward of His humiliation. He exalted His whole person, the human nature as well as the divine. He has a title of dignity above all the creatures, men, and angels. Every knee must bow to Him. The whole creation must be in subjection to Him. Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

PRAYER: Lord, help us to be more like Jesus in every aspect of our lives. Cover us with the blood of Jesus that we may bring love and healing to our torn world. Amen.

Rev. Pink Wimbish, Pastor
Bellevue Missionary Baptist Church, Hardy, VA

April 2, 2026

Matthew 27:11-26

The scene of Jesus standing before Pilate is familiar to many of us as a central part of the Passion story. To fulfill prophecy and God's redemptive plan, Jesus willingly accepted the judgment and condemnation of the priests and the crowd. The innocent Jesus was substituted for the guilty Barabbas, a notorious criminal. In this profound exchange, Jesus—the sinless one—suffered and died for all of us, the descendants of those who condemned Him. Even centuries later, the injustice and cruelty of this moment feels deeply unfair and painful.

As children, we learn about fairness early on. Everyone gets a turn on the slide; everyone's piece of cake should be the same size. We wait in line and practice patience. But almost as soon as we grasp fairness, we begin to notice unfairness all around us. One of my earliest life lessons came from my mother: "Life is not fair, and no one ever promised you it would be. You have to act fairly and do your best anyway." As a four-year-old, I found this hard to understand, but my parents repeated it often enough that it stuck with me. The world is indeed full of unfairness, and it causes immense pain. Humans are imperfect, and the devil actively works to distort and destroy. Yet as Christians, we are called to strive for fairness in our actions and to do our best to make the world a better place, even in an imperfect world.

At Jesus' trial, the ultimate injustice occurred: He sacrificed Himself and suffered so that humanity's sins could be washed away. What was profoundly unfair became the means of our greatest good. Jesus knew He had to allow this terrible injustice to take place.

When unfair things happen in our own lives—whether it's a devastating health diagnosis, a lost opportunity, or any other hardship—it is natural to want to defend ourselves, our loved ones, our pride, our livelihood, our property, or our community. These things feel so important. Yet we are invited to look to God and trust His promise: even when something seems obviously unfair, He can and will use it for our ultimate good (Romans 8:28).

In the end, the greatest unfairness in history—the condemnation of the innocent Son of God—became the source of our deepest mercy and hope. May we, like Jesus, learn to surrender to God's perfect plan amid life's imperfections.

PRAYER: Dear Lord – Thank you for your promise to always use what is meant to harm us for our ultimate good. Thank you for sending your Son Jesus Christ to earth as an example for us and to take away our sins. In difficult times, please help us to trust you as we do our best to live up to Jesus' example. Amen.

Rebecca Mosig-Purpera
Epworth United Methodist Church

April 3, 2026

Matthew 27:27-44

JESUS CRUCIFIED

Isaiah 53:5 – *"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed."*

Jesus lived life on earth doing good; healing and feeding the hungry and spreading the gospel everywhere. He encountered the same problems we do today, but that did not stop Him from trying to save people from their sins.

St. Luke 2:7 – Jesus lived a humble life from the time of His birth until His death. He had no fancy hotels to sleep in as He traveled from place to place. No bed and breakfast to lay His head. No hot food or someone to wait on Him hand and foot. *"He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and was found lying in a manger, because there was no room for Him at the inn."*

St. Matthew 26:48 – Jesus lived on earth as a human. He encountered the same as everyone else. He had disappointments, experienced hunger, temptations, death and betrayals just as we have. *"Now he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying 'Whomever I shall kiss, that same is He; hold Him fast.'*

St. Matthew 26:39 – Jesus had emotions just as we all do and He fell on His face and prayed, saying *"O my Father if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."* Up until the end Jesus endured ridicule from the people. They platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head and a reed in His right hand; and they bowed their knee before Him and mocked Him, saying "Hail, King of the Jews."

St. Luke 23:43 – Despite of what Jesus went through, He always had compassion on everyone, and that is what He wants of us today. Jesus said unto the thief crucified beside Him *"Verily I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."*

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank You for your suffering and pain that You went through for my sins. I ask that I be made stronger each and every day, to have compassion for others, and to let love show through me at all times. Amen.

Dorothy Wilson
Full Gospel Holiness Church, Montvale, VA

April 4, 2026

Matthew 27:45-56

From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness covered the land. In the middle of that darkness, Jesus cried out—not in quiet resignation, but with a raw, aching question: “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*”

This moment stops us short. We are used to hearing about Jesus’ compassion, His authority, His miracles. But here, on the cross, we encounter Jesus in profound vulnerability—suffering, abandoned, and exposed to pain and death. The Son of God enters fully into human despair.

The darkness is more than a backdrop; it mirrors the weight of what is happening. Sin, fear, injustice, and cruelty converge at the cross. Yet even here, God is at work. When Jesus breathes His last, the temple curtain is torn in two from top to bottom. What once separated humanity from God’s presence is ripped apart—not by human hands, but by God Himself.

This tearing matters deeply for us today. We live in a world still marked by darkness—violence, division, grief, loneliness, and doubt. Many of us know what it is to cry out to God with unanswered questions. We may feel forsaken in moments of loss, overwhelmed by responsibilities, or exhausted by the brokenness around us.

The cross assures us that God does not stand at a distance from our suffering. Jesus knows what it is to feel abandoned. He knows what it is to suffer unjustly. And because of the torn curtain, we no longer approach God from afar. We come boldly, honestly, and imperfectly, trusting that God meets us right where we are.

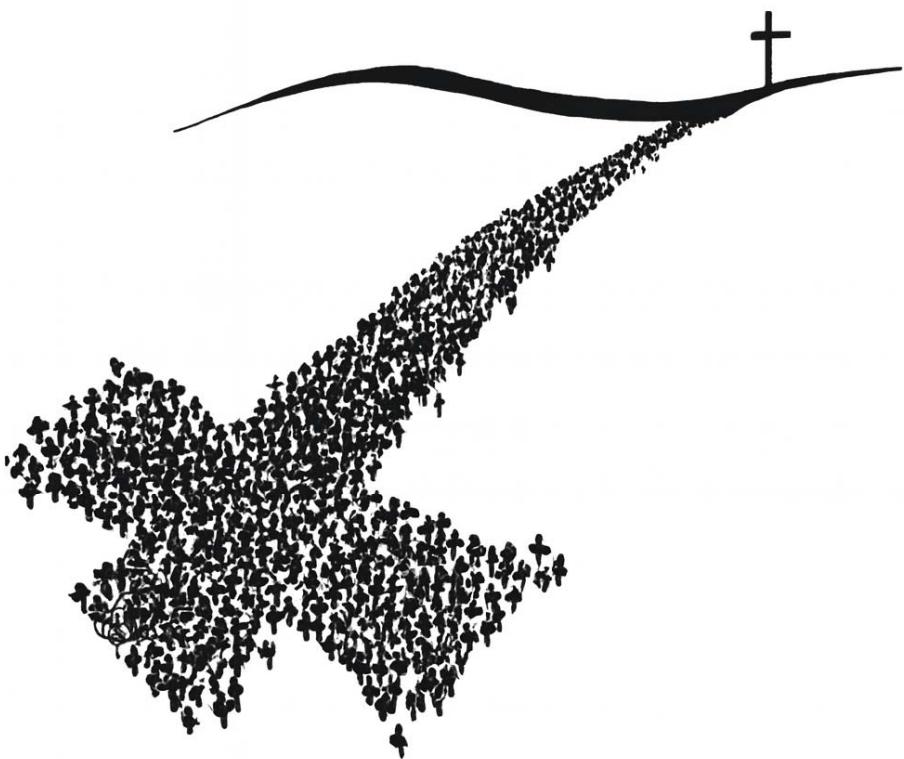
Even the centurion—a Roman officer, an outsider—recognizes the truth: “*Surely he was the Son of God.*” In the midst of death and darkness, faith is born. God’s love breaks through unexpected hearts and places.

Lent invites us to sit with the discomfort of the cross, not to rush ahead to resurrection. It asks us to acknowledge the darkness in our own lives and the world, while trusting that God is still present, still tearing down barriers, still drawing us closer.

PRAAYER: Gracious and loving God, in the shadow of the cross, we bring You our fears, our doubts, and our unanswered questions. When we feel overwhelmed by darkness or distant from You, remind us that You are near. Thank You for Jesus, who entered fully into our suffering and opened the way for us to draw close to You. Tear down the walls we build between ourselves and Your love. Help us live with humility, compassion, and courage, trusting that even in the darkest moments, You are at work. Amen.

Key Dates for Lent 2026

- **Ash Wednesday: February 18**
Marks the beginning of Lent with the imposition of ashes, focused on repentance and humility.
- **Palm Sunday: March 29**
Celebrates Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem, starting Holy Week.
- **Holy Thursday: April 2**
Commemorates the Last Supper, leading into the Sacred Triduum.
- **Good Friday: April 3**
Observes the crucifixion and death of Christ; a day of fasting and abstinence.
- **Holy Saturday: April 4**
Day of reflection and vigil before the celebration of the Resurrection.
- **Easter Sunday: April 5**
Celebrates Jesus’ Resurrection and the culmination of the Lenten season.



***"If anyone would come after me,
let him deny himself and
take up his cross and follow me."***

Matthew 16:34



Thank you to each of our Lenten devotional writers. We appreciate the time, care, and spiritual insight you poured into every entry. May you be blessed for blessing all who will read these reflections.

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Reflection
Commitment
Repentance

