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A LENTEN REFLECTION SERIES:

Scripture and African American Sacred Song

By Rev. Deacon Royce Winters

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INTRODUCTION

Scripture and African American Sacred Song

I grew up in the South, where my maternal relatives were immersed in the Black Protestant Church and the old Spiritual and Gospel songs. No matter, the reason for our gathering at “The House” [my maternal grandparent’s home], someone would hum, another would begin to sing, and one of my aunts would meander to the piano, and they would “sang” those songs.

It wasn’t until my own intentional adult formation, that I came to know and believe that through these gatherings, and these particular songs laid the foundations which stirred the faith within me.

As a formed adult, living out the faith, I had a Scripture professor once say, “Find the faith in the story!” It was embodying the sacred songs, now rooted in God’s Word, that I began to express the power of God working in my life. Recently, a cousin from back home who heard me preach and sing on a Facebook post, and she said, “I didn’t even know you could sing!”

Today, as an ordained minister [Permanent Deacon] in the Catholic Church, there is always a song buried deep within that surfaces as I prepare to preach or facilitate a meeting. I never know what song, but after prayer and preparation, the Lord has called me to sing!

During this Lenten Season, The Office of African American Pastoral Ministries has created a Lenten Daily Prayer Reflection Series entitled, *Scripture and African American Sacred Song*. Participants are invited to enter into the Holy Season of Lent using the daily Scripture Readings and selected Sacred Songs. The reflection series is designed to provide another pathway for repentance and self-examination in preparation for celebrating the Easter Mysteries.

Saint Paul wrote to the community of believers in *Rome*, *Jesus, the One*, “*who indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised.*” *Rev. Deacon Royce Winters – Archdiocese of Cincinnati – Director, African American Catholic Ministries*

ASH WEDNESDAY THE ATTITUDE OF PRAYER

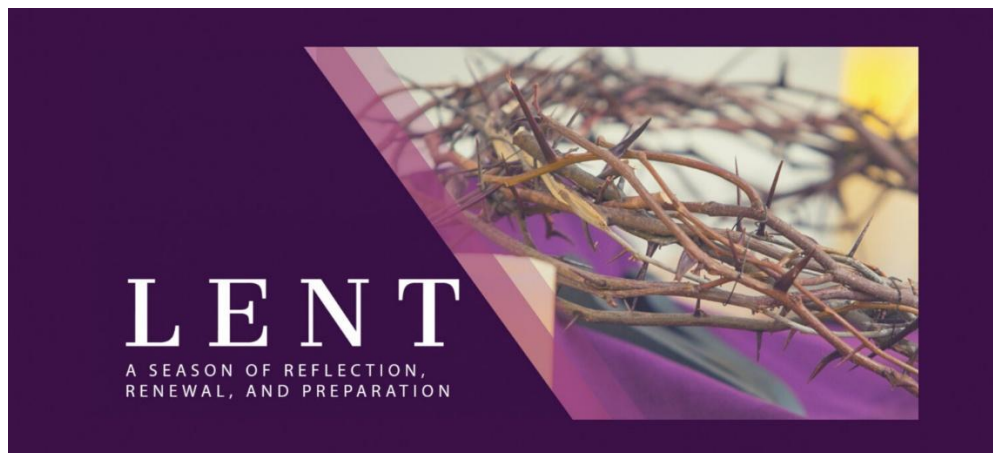
Psalm Response: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned. – *Psalm 51: 3*

"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. - *Matthew 6: 5 – 6*

Lord, give me a praying spirit, a praying spirit. Lord, help me to say, yes, yes, yes, Lord. – Tune: A Praying Spirit - Elbernjta Clark

Let us pray,

Pour out a spirit of guilt, O God, on those who bow before your majesty; and by your mercy may they merit the rewards you promise to those who penance. Amen.



African Akan Proverb:

“The wise is spoken in proverbs, not in plain language.”

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY THE ATTITUDE OF SURRENDER

Psalm Response: Blessed are they who hope in the Lord. – *Psalm 40: 5*

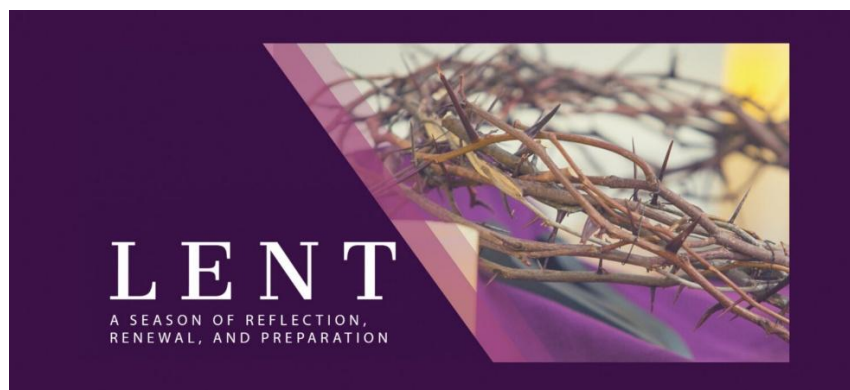
Jesus said to his disciples: “The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised.”

Then he said to all, “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?” – *Luke 9: 22 - 25*

All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give. I will ever love and trust Him, in His presence daily live. I surrender all, I surrender all. All to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all. – *Tune: I Surrender All - Winfield S. Weeden*

Let us pray,

Almighty God, who have made known to your people the ways of eternal life, lead them by that path, we pray, to you, the unfading light. Amen.



FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY THE ATTITUDE OF PREPARATION

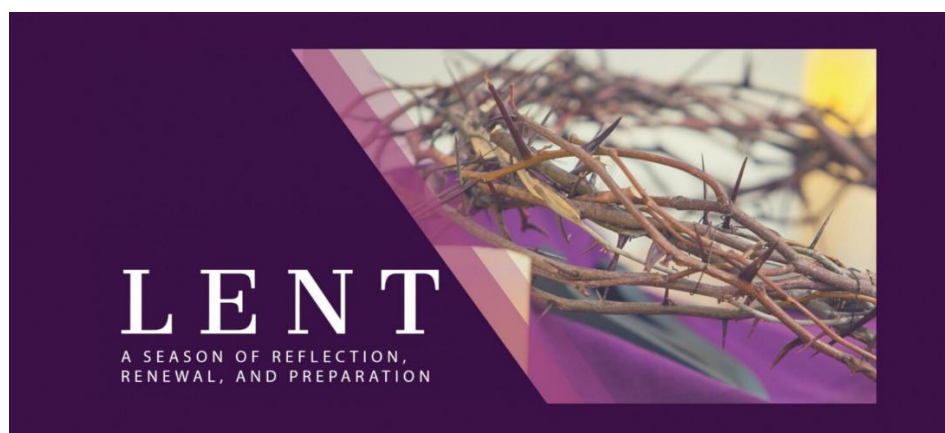
Psalm Response: A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.
– *Psalm 51: 19*

“The disciples of John approached Jesus and said, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast much, but your disciples do not fast?” Jesus answered them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.” – *Matthew 9: 14 - 15*

I wanna be ready, I wanna be ready, I wanna be ready to walk in Jerusalem just like John. I've never been to heaven but I've been told, walk in Jerusalem just like John. He declared he'd meet me there. Walk in Jerusalem just like Joh. – Tune: I Wanna Be Ready - Evelyn Simpson-Curenton

Let us pray,

For your mighty deeds, O God of mercy, may your people offer endless thanks, and, by observing the age-old disciplines along their pilgrim journey, may they merit to come and behold you forever. Amen



Akan Proverb: “It is because of ‘blow the dust off my eyes’ that two antelopes walk together.’

SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY THE ATTITUDE OF REPENTANCE

**Psalm Response: Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth.
– Psalm 86: 11**

Jesus saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the customs post. He said to him, “Follow me.” And leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him. Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were at table with them.

The Pharisees and their scribes complained to his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus said to them in reply, “Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners.” – Luke 5: 27 - 32

Come, ye disconsolate, wherever ye languish. Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel. Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish. Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal. – Tune: - Come Ye Disconsolate - Samuel Webbe

Let us pray,

Abide graciously, O Lord, with your people, who have touched the sacred mysteries, that no dangers may bring affliction to those who trust in you, their protector. Amen.



FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Psalm Response: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned. – *Psalm 51: 3*

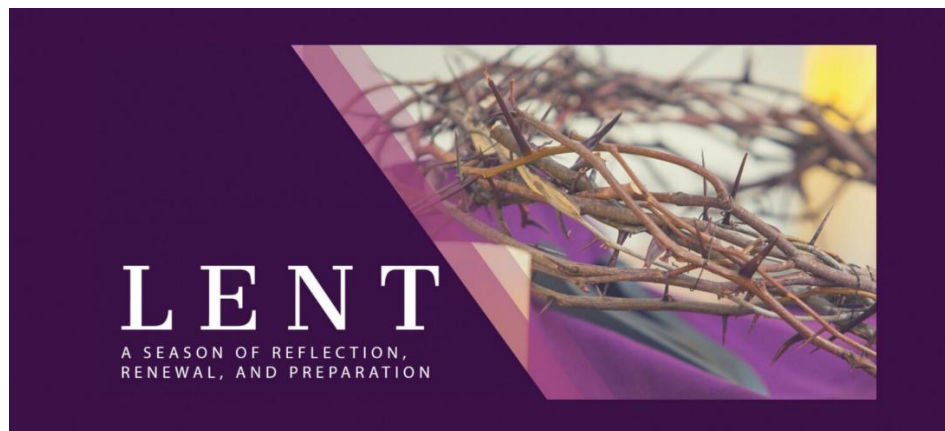
Brothers and sisters: Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned.

For if, by the transgression of the one, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. In conclusion, just as through one transgression condemnation came upon all, so, through one righteous act, acquittal and life came to all. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so, through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous. – Romans 5: 12, 17 – 19

Just as I am, without one plea. But that thy blood was shed for me. And that Thou bidst me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come. I come. Tune: - Just As I Am - Evelyn Simpson-Curenton

Let us pray,

May bountiful blessings, O Lord, we pray, come down upon your people, that hope may grow in tribulation, virtue be strengthened in temptation, and eternal redemption be assured. Amen.



MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT THE ATTITUDE OF ENDURANCE

Psalm Response: Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life. – *John 6: 63*

Jesus said to his disciples: “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. – Matthew 25: 31 – 34

Over my head, I hear music in the air. Over my head, I hear music in the air. Over my head, I hear music in the air. There must be a God somewhere!
– Tune: *Over My Head* - Nolan Williams

Let us pray,

Enlighten the minds of your people, Lord, we pray, with the light of your glory, that they may see what must be done and have the strength to do what is right. Amen.



African Akan Proverb:

“If an animal will bite you, it will be from your cloth.

TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

THE ATTITUDE OF PRAYER

Psalm Response: From all their distress God rescues the just. – *Psalm 34: 18*

Jesus said to his disciples: “In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

“This is how you are to pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

“If you forgive men their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.” – Matthew 6, 7 – 15

Give us this day our daily bread, You said you would. Supply all my needs, according to Your riches.. I have but to ask and I shall receive. To go from here and share this love You gave to me. To show someone who's lost, and help them find their way. The truth and faith so they can be free like me! Free like me! Lord, we need your love. Lord, we need your peace. Lord, we need your joy. Thank you for this day. Lord, we thank You for this day! –
Tune: Edwin Hawkins

Let us pray,

May your faithful be strengthened, O God, by your blessing: in grief, may you be their consolation, in tribulation, their power to endure, and in peril, their protection. Amen.



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WEDNESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT THE ATTITUDE OF REPENTANCE

Psalm Response: A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.
– *Psalm 51: 19*

While still more people gathered in the crowd, Jesus said to them, “This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. At the judgment the queen of the south will rise with the men of this generation and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is something greater than Solomon here. At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is something greater than Jonah here.” - Luke 11: 29 – 32

I heard an old, old story how a Savior came from glory, How He gave His life on Calvary to save a wretch like me; I heard about His groaning, of His precious blood's atoning, Then I repented of my sins and won the victory.

Refrain: *O victory in Jesus, my Savior, forever! He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood; He loved me ere I knew Him, and all my love is due Him. He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood. – Tune: - Victory In Jesus - Eugene M. Bartlett*

Let us pray,

Watch over your people, Lord, and in your kindness cleanse them from all sins, for if evil has no dominion over them, no trial can do them harm. Amen.



THURSDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT THE ATTITUDE OF FORGIVENESS

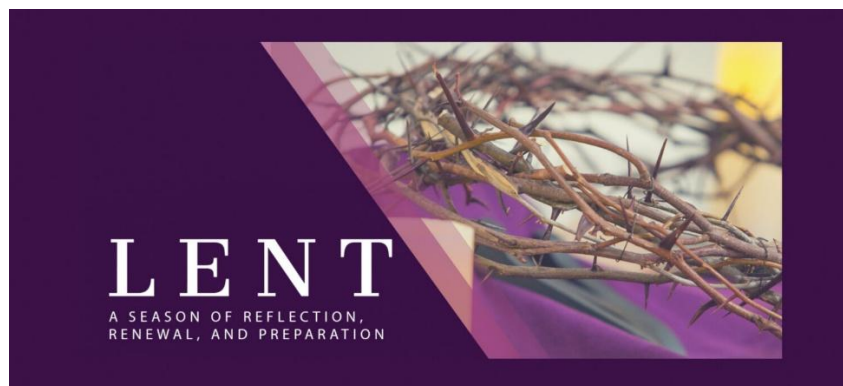
Psalm Response: Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me. -
Psalm 138: 3

Jesus said to his disciples: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asked for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asked for a fish? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him. “Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets.” – Matthew 7: 7 – 12

Pass me not, O gentle Savior. Hear my humble cry. While on others Thou art calling. Do not pass me by. Savior, Savior. Hear my humble cry. While on others Thou art calling. Do not pass me by. – *Tune: Pass Me Not - William H. Doane*

Let us pray,

May the mercy they have hoped for, O Lord, come to those who make supplication to you, and may the riches of heaven be given them, that they may know what it is right to ask and receive what they have sought. Amen.



FRIDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT THE ATTITUDE OF HOLINESS

Psalm Response: If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand? - *Psalm 130: 3*

Jesus said to his disciples: "I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

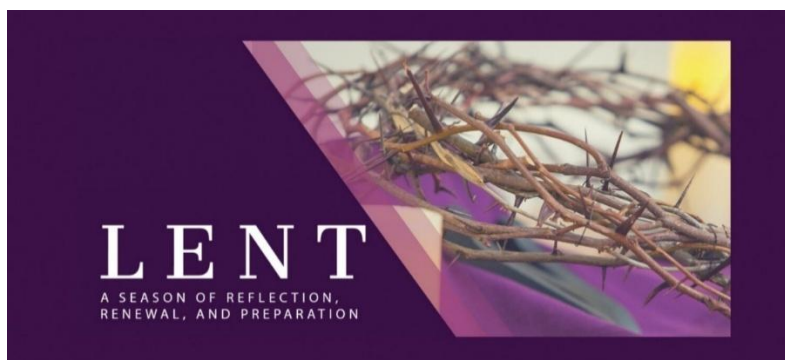
"You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, *You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.* But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, Raca, will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna.

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny." – Matthew 3: 20 – 26

*Change me, oh God, make me more like you. Change me, oh God, wash me through and through. Create in me a clean heart. So that I may worship you. –
Tune: Change Me - Tamela Mann*

Let us pray,

Look with favor on your people, O Lord, that what their observance outwardly declares it may inwardly bring about. Amen.



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SATURDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT THE ATTITUDE OF LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR

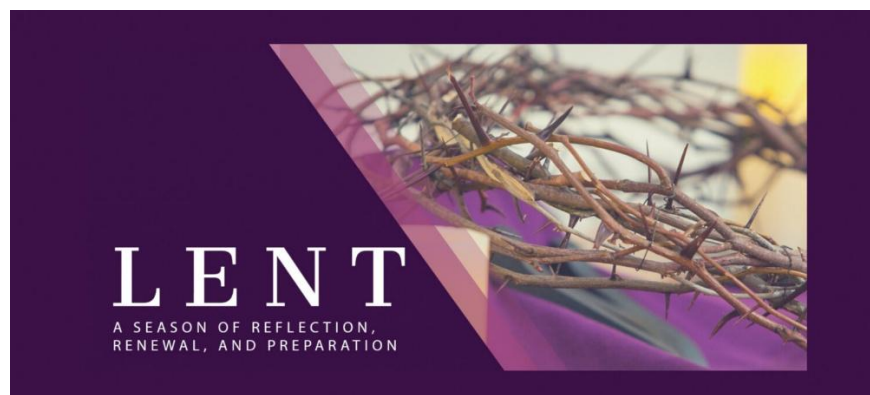
Psalm Response: Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord! – *Psalm 119: 1*

Jesus said to his disciples: "You have heard that it was said, *You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.* But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers and sisters only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect." – Matthew 5: 43 – 48

I need you, you need me, we're all a part of God's body. Stand with me, agree with me, we're all a part of God's body. It is His will that every need be supplied. You are important to me, I need you to survive. You are important to me, I need you to survive. – Tune: I Need You To Survive - Hezekiah Walker

Let us pray,

May the blessing for which they have longed strengthen your faithful, O God, so that, never straying from your will, they may always rejoice in your benefits. Amen.



African Akan Proverb: “Disgrace does not befit the child of an Akan.”

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SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

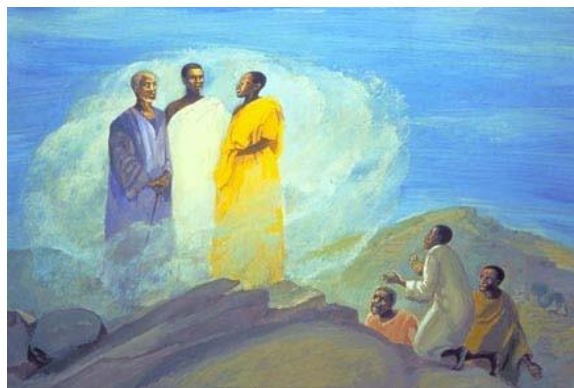
Psalm Response: Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you. – *Psalm 33: 22*

Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and do not be afraid.” And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone. As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, “Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.” – Matthew 17: 1 – 9

Before The Throne is where we come, to offer praise and seek wisdom. You have torn the veil, that separates. No more outside, now in Your grace.

So we bow, as we enter, the Throne Room, and we cast ourselves down at Your feet. We cry, "Holy!" Thou art holy! There's none like Thee. In Your presence, Lord, is where we must be. – Tune: Before the Throne - Shekinah Glory Ministry

Let us pray, Bless your faithful, we pray, O Lord, with a blessing that endures forever, and keep them faithful to the Gospel of your Only Begotten Son, so that they may always desire the beauty of your glory. Amen.



MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT
THE ATTITUDE OF BEING GRATEFUL

Psalm Response: Lord, do not deal with us according to our sins. – *Psalm 103: 10*

Jesus said to his disciples: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

"Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you." "Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you." – Luke 6: 36 – 38

Great is Your mercy towards me. Your loving kindness towards me. Your tender mercy I can see, day after day.

Forever faithful towards me. Always providing for me. Great is Your mercy towards me. Great is Your grace. – Tune: Great Is Your Mercy - Donnie McClurkin

Let us pray,

Confirm the hearts of your faithful, O Lord, we pray, and strengthen them by the power of your grace, that they may be constant in making supplication to you and sincere in love for one another. Amen.

TUESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT THE ATTITUDE OF UNBINDING

Psalm Response: To the upright I will show the saving power of *God*. – *Psalm 50: 23*

Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens hard to carry and lay them on people's shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them. All their works are performed to be seen. They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues, greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation 'Rabbi.' As for you, do not be called 'Rabbi.' You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called 'Master'; you have but one master, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted." – Matthew 23: 1 – 12

*There is power in the name of Jesus. There is power in the name of Jesus.
There is power in the name of Jesus. To break every chain, break every chain,
break every chain. To break every chain, break every chain, break every chain.*

*There's an army rising up. There's an army rising up. There's an army rising
up. To break every chain, break every chain, break every chain. To break every
chain, break every chain, break every chain. – Tune: Break Every Chain - Tasha
Cobbs*

Let us pray, Graciously hear the cries of your faithful, O Lord, and relieve the weariness of their souls, that, having received your forgiveness, they may ever rejoice in your blessing. Amen.



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WEDNESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

THE ATTITUDE OF A SERVANT

Psalm Response: Save me, O Lord in your kindness. – *Psalm 31: 17*

As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the Twelve disciples aside by themselves, and said to them on the way, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee approached Jesus with her sons and did him homage, wishing to ask him for something. He said to her, "What do you wish?" She answered him, "Command that these two sons of mine sit, one at your right and the other at your left, in your kingdom." Jesus said in reply, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the chalice that I am going to drink?" They said to him, "We can."

He replied, "My chalice you will indeed drink, but to sit at my right and at my left, this is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." When the ten heard this, they became indignant at the two brothers.

But Jesus summoned them and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." - Matthew 20: 17 – 20

Make me a servant, humble and meek. Lord, let me lift up those who are weak. And may the prayer of my heart always be. Make me a servant. Make me a servant. Make me a servant, today. And may the prayer of my heart always be. Make me a servant. Make me a servant. Make me a servant, today. - Tune: - Make Me A Servant - Kelly Willard

Let us pray,

Watch over your people, Lord, and in your kindness cleanse them from all sins, for it evil has no dominion over them, no trial can do them harm. Amen.

African Akan Proverb:

“When a child learns how to wash his hands, he eats with adults.”

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THURSDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT
THE ATTITUDE OF KNOWING GOD'S GRACE

Psalm Response: Blessed are they who hope in the Lord. – Psalm 40: 5

Jesus said to the Pharisees: "There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.'

Abraham replied, 'My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.'

He said, 'Then I beg you, father, send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.' But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.' He said, 'Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' Then Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.'" – Luke 16: 19 - 31

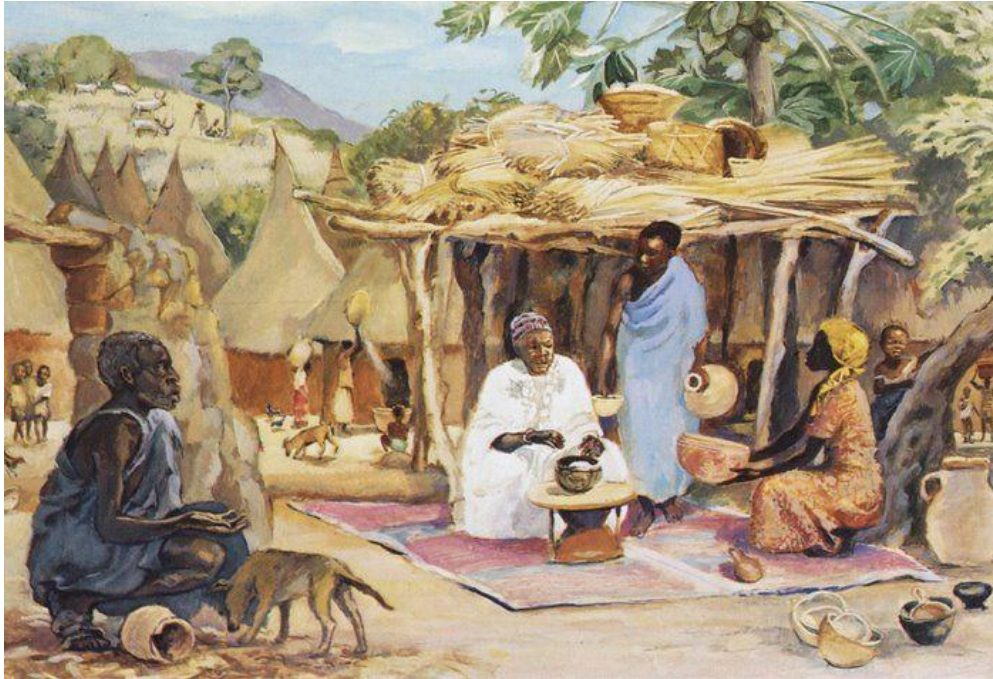
I know something about God's grace. Oh, I know something about God's amazing grace. It could've been me with no food to eat. It could have been me with no place to sleep. but for the grace of God. – Tune: Something About God's Grace - Gaye Arbuckle

Let us pray,

May the mercy they have hoped for, O Lord, come to those who make supplication to you, and may the riches of heaven be given them, that they may know what it is right to ask and receive what they have sought.

African Akan Proverb:

*“If you will find the back of your hand sweet,
it is not as sweet at the palm of your hand.”*



FRIDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT THE ATTITUDE OF STANDING ON THE ROCK

Psalm Response: Remember the marvels the Lord has done. – *Psalm 105: 5*

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: "Hear another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey. When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat, another they killed, and a third they stoned. Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, but they treated them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.' They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?"

They answered him, "He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times." Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures:

*The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
by the Lord has this been done,
and it is wonderful in our eyes?*

Therefore, I say to you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they knew that he was speaking about them. And although they were attempting to arrest him, they feared the crowds, for they regarded him as a prophet. – Matthew 21: 33 – 46

My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus's blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name.

Chorus: On Christ, the Solid Rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand. – Tune: Christ The Solid Rock - Edward Mote

Let us pray, Look with favor on your people, O Lord, that what their observance declares it may inwardly bring about. Amen.

MEMORIAL OF SAINTS PERPETUA AND FELCITY, MARTYRS

Psalm Response: Our soul has escaped like a bird from the fowlers snare. –
Psalm 124: 7

Jesus said to his Apostles: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword. For I have come to set a man 'against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's enemies will be those of his household.' "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." – Matthew 10: 34 – 39

Some folks would rather have houses and land, some folks choose silver and gold, these things they treasure and forget about their souls; I've decided to make Jesus my choice.

Chorus: The road is rough, the going gets tough, and the hills are hard to climb. I started out a long time ago, there's no doubt in my mind; I have decided to make Jesus my choice. – Tune: I've Decided To Make Jesus My Choice - Harris Johnson

Let us pray,

May the blessings for which they have longed strengthen your faithful, O God, so that, never straying from your will, they may always rejoice in your benefits. Amen.

SAINTS FELICITY AND PERPETUA

Feast Day: March 7



Saints Perpetua and Felicity were Christian martyrs who lived during the early persecution of the Church in Africa by the Emperor Severus. In the year 203, Vivia Perpetua, a well-educated noblewoman, made the decision to follow the path of her mother and become a Christian, although she knew it could mean her death during the persecutions ordered by the Emperor Severus. Her surviving brother followed her leadership and became a catechumen as well, meaning he would receive instruction from a Catechist in the Catholic Christian faith and be prepared for Baptism. Perpetua was arrested with four other catechumens, including two slaves, Felicity and Revocatus, and Saturninus and Secundulus. Their instructor in the faith, Saturus, chose to share their punishment and was also imprisoned. The young slave, Felicity was even worse off, for Felicity suffered the stifling heat, overcrowding, and rough handling while being eight months pregnant. Perpetua called out to her brother and other Christians, "Stand fast in the faith, and love one another. Do not let our sufferings be a stumbling block to you." Perpetua and Felicity stood side by side and were killed by sword at Carthage in the Roman province of Africa.

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Psalm Response: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. – *Psalm 95: 8*

Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well. It was about noon. A woman of Samaria came to draw water.

Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" —For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.— Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

The woman said to him, "Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water. "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth."

The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ; when he comes, he will tell us everything." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking with you." Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him. When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days.

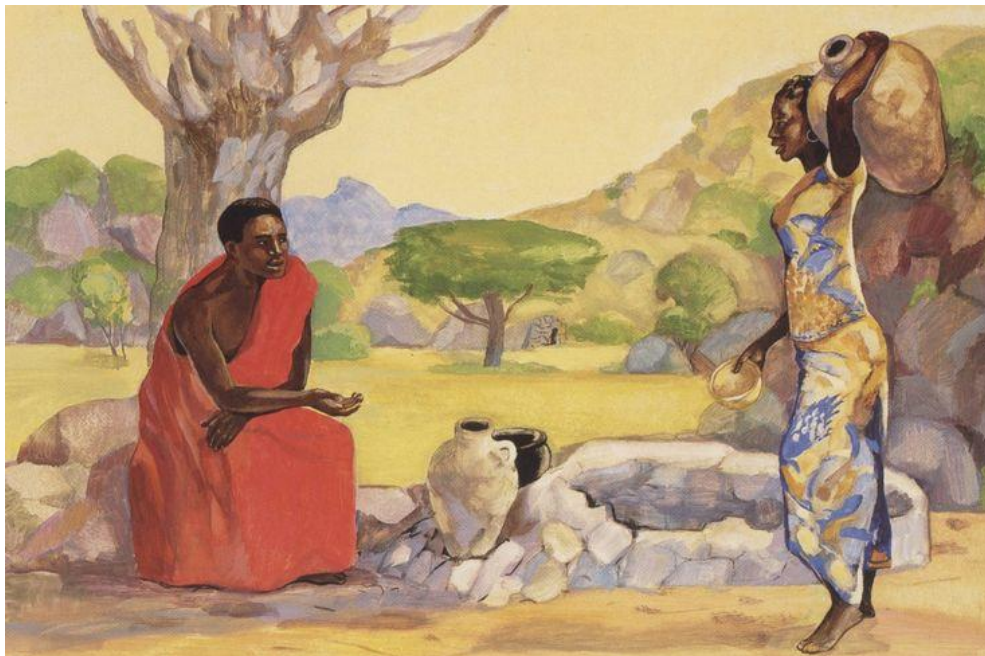
Many more began to believe in him because of his word, and they said to the woman, “We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world.” – *John 4: 5 – 15, 19 – 26, 39 – 42*

Like the woman at the well, I was seeking for things that could not satisfy. And then I heard my Savior calling, “Draw from My well that never shall run dry.”

Refrain: *Fill my cup, Lord; I lift it up Lord; Come and quench this thirsting of my soul! Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more. Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole. – Tune: Fill My Cup, Lord - Richard Blanchard*

Let us pray,

Direct, O Lord, we pray, the hearts of your faithful, and in your kindness grant your servants this grace: that, abiding in the love of you and neighbor, they may fulfill the whole of your commands. Amen



MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

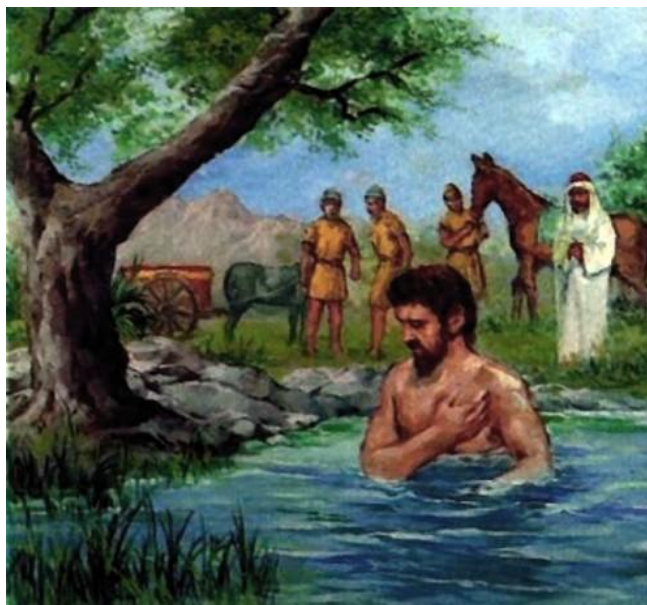
ATTITUDE OF GRATEFULNESS

Psalm Response: Athirst is my soul for the living God. When shall I go and behold the face of God? - *Psalm 42: 3*

Jesus said to the people in the synagogue at Nazareth: “Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. But he passed through the midst of them and went away. – Luke 4: 24 – 30

God has not promised me, sunshine. That's not the way it's going to be. But a little rain. Mixed with God's sunshine, a little pain. Makes me appreciate the good times. Be grateful. – Tune: Be Grateful - Walter Hawkins

Let us pray, May your right hand, we ask, O Lord, protect this people that entreaty to you: graciously purify them and give them instruction, that, finding solace in this life, they may reach the good things to come. Amen.



A Lenten Series: Scripture and African American Sacred Song
Rev. Deacon Royce Winters – January 2026

TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

THE ATTITUDE OF FORGIVENESS

Psalm Response: Remember your mercies, O Lord. – Psalm 25: 6

Peter approached Jesus and asked him, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the Kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.’ Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan.

When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair.

His master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?’ Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart.” – Matthew 18: 21 – 35

If I have wounded any soul today, If I have caused one foot to go astray, If I have walked in my own will full way - Good Lord, forgive!

If I have uttered idle words or vain, If I have turned aside from want or pain, Lest I myself should suffer through the strain - Good Lord, forgive! – Tune: Evening Prayer - Charles Gabriel

Let us pray, O God, founder and ruler of your people, drive away the sins that assail them, that they may always be pleasing to you and ever safe under your protection. Amen.

WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT THE ATTITUDE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Psalm Response: Praise the Lord, Jerusalem. - *Psalm 147: 12*

Jesus said to his disciples: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the Kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the Kingdom of heaven.” – Matthew 5: 17 – 19

Refrain: *Done made my vow to the Lord, and I never will turn back. O, I will go, I shall go to see what the end will be.*

Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down, to see what the end will be. But still my soul is heav'nly bound, to see what the end will be. – Tune: Done Made My Vow - Evelyn Davidson White

Let us pray,

Give to your people, our God, a resolve that is pleasing to you, for, by conforming them to your teachings, you bestow on them every favor. Amen.



THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT THE ATTITUDE OF BEING SURRENDERING

Psalm Response: If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. –
Psalm 95: 8

Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute, and when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke and the crowds were amazed. Some of them said, "By the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he drives out demons." Others, to test him, asked him for a sign from heaven. But he knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house. And if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that it is by Beelzebul that I drive out demons.

If I, then, drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I drive out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man fully armed guards his palace, his possessions are safe. But when one stronger than he attacks and overcomes him, he takes away the armor on which he relied and distributes the spoils. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters."
– Luke 11: 14 – 23

All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give; I will ever love and trust Him, in His presence daily live.

Refrain: *I surrender all, I surrender all. All to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all.* – Tune: *I Surrender All* - Evelyn Davidson White

Let us pray,

We call on your loving kindness and trust in your mercy, O Lord, that, since we have from you all that we are, through your grace we may seek what is right and have strength to do the good we desire. Amen.

FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT THE ATTITUDE OF LOVE

Psalm Response: I am the Lord your God: hear my voice. - *Psalm 81: 11*

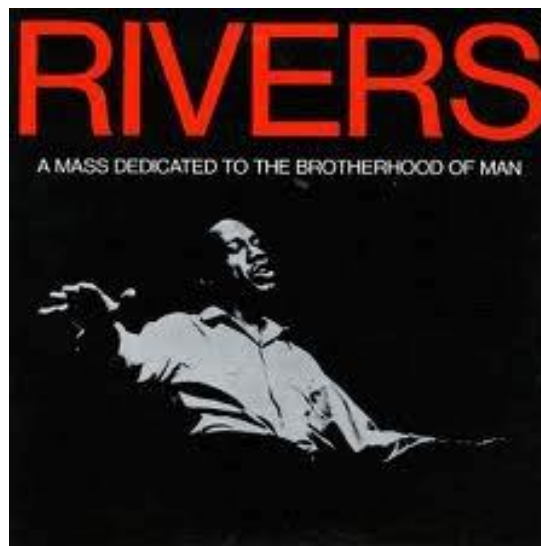
One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "The first is this: *Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.* The second is this: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* There is no other commandment greater than these."

The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, *He is One and there is no other than he. And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself* is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding, he said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." And no one dared to ask him any more questions. – Mark 12: 28 – 34

*God is love, and he who abides in love, abides in God, and God in him. –
Tune: God Is Love - Rev. Clarence Joseph Rivers*

Let us pray,

Look graciously, O Lord, upon the faithful who implore your mercy, that, trusting in your kindness, they may spread far and wide the gifts your charity has bestowed. Amen.



A Lenten Series: Scripture and African American Sacred Song
Rev. Deacon Royce Winters – January 2026

SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

THE ATTITUDE OF HUMILITY

Psalm Response: It is mercy I desire, and not sacrifice. – *Hosea 6: 6*

Jesus addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. “Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, ‘O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity — greedy, dishonest, adulterous — or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.’ But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’ I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” – Luke 18: 9 – 14

Refrain: *Your grace and mercy brought me through. I'm living this moment because of You. I want to thank You and praise You too. Your grace and mercy brought me through.*

Thank You for saving a sinner like me. To tell the world salvation is free. There were times when I just didn't do right. But You watched over me all day and night. Your grace and mercy brought me through. – Tune: Your Grace and Mercy - Franklin D. Williams

Let us pray, hold out to your faithful people, Lord, the right hand of heavenly assistance, that they may seek you with all their heart and merit the granting of what they ask. Amen.



FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Psalm Response: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. –
Psalm 23: 1

As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth. He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, “Go wash in the Pool of Siloam” — which means Sent —. So he went and washed, and came back able to see. His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said, “Isn’t this the one who used to sit and beg?” Some said, “It is,” but others said, “No, he just looks like him.” He said, “I am.”

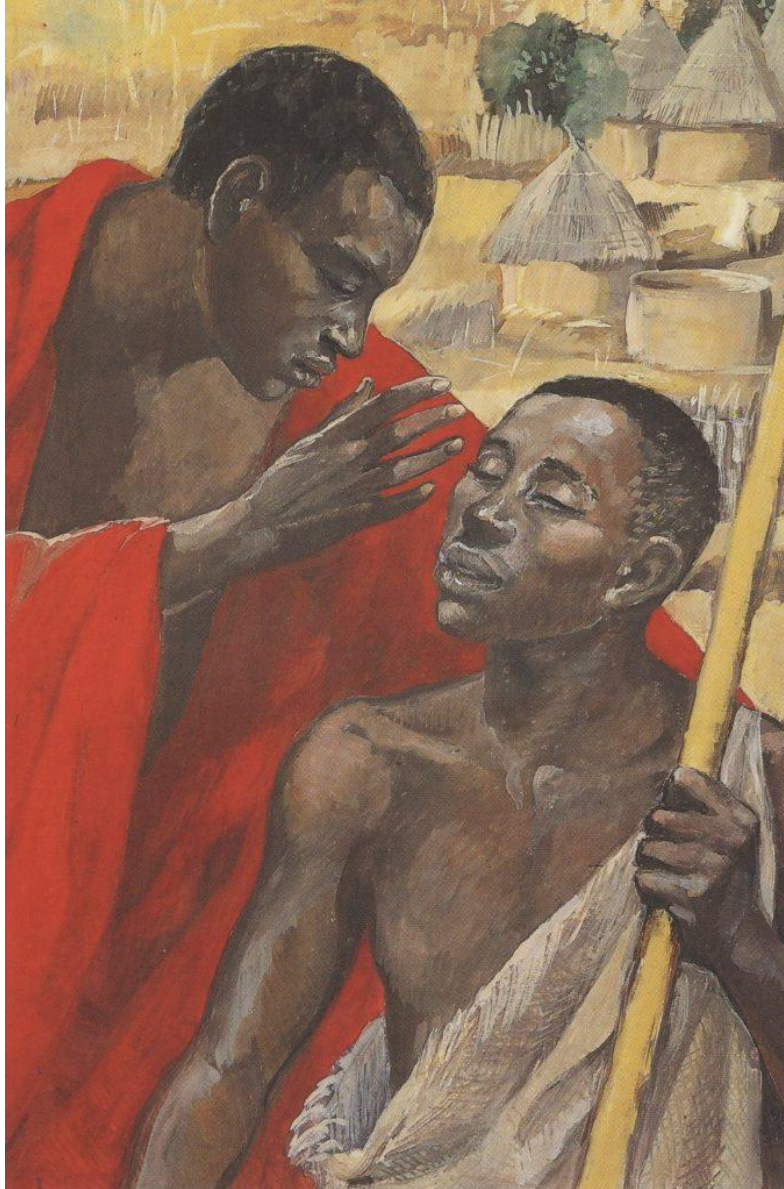
They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees. Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a sabbath. So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. He said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see.” So some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, because he does not keep the sabbath.” But others said, “How can a sinful man do such signs?” And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man again, “What do you have to say about him, since he opened your eyes?”

He said, “He is a prophet.” They answered and said to him, “You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?” Then they threw him out. When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him and said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered and said, “Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” He said, “I do believe, Lord,” and he worshiped him. – John 9: 1, 6 – 9, 13 – 17, 34 – 38

Amazing grace shall always be my song of praise. For it was grace that brought my liberty. I do not know just why He came to love me so. He looked beyond my faults and saw my need.

I shall forever lift mine eyes to Calvary, to view the cross where Jesus died for me. How marvelous the grace that caught my falling soul. He looked beyond my faults and saw my need. - Tune: Amazing Grace - Londonderry Aire

Let us pray, Hold out to your faithful people, Lord, the right hand of heavenly assistance, that they may seek you with all their heart and merit granting of what they ask. Amen.



MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT
THE ATTITUDE OF FAITH

Psalm Response: I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me. – *Psalm 30: 2*

At that time Jesus left [Samaria] for Galilee. For Jesus himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his native place. When he came into Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, since they had seen all he had done in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves had gone to the feast. Then he returned to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. Now there was a royal official whose son was ill in Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, who was near death.

Jesus said to him, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe.” The royal official said to him, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” Jesus said to him, “You may go; your son will live.” The man believed what Jesus said to him and left. While the man was on his way back, his slaves met him and told him that his boy would live. He asked them when he began to recover. They told him, “The fever left him yesterday, about one in the afternoon.” The father realized that just at that time Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live,” and he and his whole household came to believe. Now this was the second sign Jesus did when he came to Galilee from Judea. – John 4: 43 – 54

*Never knew my life could be this way. I never knew the sun could shine all day.
 Never thought I'd live beyond my past. Until I found Jesus, I never thought I'd
 be in this place. Oh I'm glad, so glad, I'm living my life in this place.*

*Never knew my heart could feel again. Never knew the pain would let me
 stand. Never thought my tears could go away. Till I found Jesus, I never
 thought I'd be in this place. Oh I'm glad I'm living my life in this place. – Tune:
 This Place - Tamela Mann*

Let us pray,

Renew your people within and without, O Lord, and, since it is your will that they that they be unhindered by bodily delights, give them, we pray, perseverance in their spiritual intent. Amen.

TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

THE ATTITUDE OF FAITH

The Lord of hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob. – *Psalm 48: 8*

There was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem at the Sheep Gate a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda, with five porticoes. In these lay a large number of ill, blind, lame, and crippled. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been ill for a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be well?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am on my way, someone else gets down there before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your mat, and walk." Immediately the man became well, took up his mat, and walked.

Now that day was a sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who was cured, "It is the sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to carry your mat." He answered them, "The man who made me well told me, 'Take up your mat and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who told you, 'Take it up and walk'?" The man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away, since there was a crowd there. After this Jesus found him in the temple area and said to him, "Look, you are well; do not sin any more, so that nothing worse may happen to you." The man went and told the Jews that Jesus was the one who had made him well. Therefore, the Jews began to persecute Jesus because he did this on a sabbath. – John 5: 1 – 16

Refrain: *Can't nobody do me like Jesus. Can't nobody do me like the Lord. Can't nobody do me like Jesus. He's my friend.*

He healed my body and told me to run. He healed my body and told me to run. He healed my body and told me to run. He's my friend. – Tune: Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus - Andrae Crouch

Let us pray, Grant, O Merciful God, that your people may remain always devoted to you and may constantly receive from your kindness what is for their good. Amen.

MEMORIAL OF SAINT CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, BISHOP AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Psalm Response: The judgments of the Lord are true, and all of them are just. – *Psalm 19: 10*

Beloved: Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God, and everyone who loves the Father loves also the one begotten by him. In this way we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith. Who indeed is the victor over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? – 1 John 5: 1 – 5

When I think about the hour. Then I know what I must do. When I think about what God has done for me. I will open up my heart, to everyone I see. And say, Jesus Christ is the Way.

No one knows the day, nor the hour. May be morn, night or noon. But just rest assured, time will be no more He is coming soon. I will open up my heart, to everyone I see. And say, Jesus Christ is the Way. – Tune: Jesus Christ Is The Way - Walter Hawkins

Let us pray, O God, who through the Bishop Saint Cyril of Jerusalem led your Church in a wonderful way to a deeper sense of the mysteries of salvation, grant us, through his intercession, that we may so acknowledge your Son as to have life ever more abundantly. Amen.



SOLEMNITY OF SAINT JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Psalm Response: The son of David will live for ever. - Psalm 89: 37

Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ.

Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. – Matthew 1: 16, 18 – 21, 24

Bless the Lord, O my soul! And, all that is within me, bless His holy Name. He has done great things! He has done great things! He has done great things! Bless His holy Name! – Tune: Bless The Lord - Gene Rice

Let us pray,

Grant, we pray, Almighty God, that by Saint Joseph’s intercession your Church may constantly watch over the unfolding of the mysteries of human salvation, whose beginnings you entrusted to his faithful care. Amen.



FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT
THE ATTITUDE OF SEEING WITH THE EYES OF FAITH

Psalm Response: The Lord is close to the brokenhearted. – Psalm 34: 19

Jesus moved about within Galilee; he did not wish to travel in Judea, because the Jews were trying to kill him. But the Jewish feast of Tabernacles was near. But when his brothers had gone up to the feast, he himself also went up, not openly but as it were in secret.

Some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem said, "Is he not the one they are trying to kill? And look, he is speaking openly and they say nothing to him. Could the authorities have realized that he is the Christ? But we know where he is from. When the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from." So Jesus cried out in the temple area as he was teaching and said, "You know me and also know where I am from. Yet I did not come on my own, but the one who sent me, whom you do not know, is true. I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me." So they tried to arrest him, but no one laid a hand upon him, because his hour had not yet come. – John 7: 1- 2, 10, 25 – 30

Do you know me? Can you really recognize me? Do you know me? Can you see me in your life? Do you know me? Can you hear that I love you? Do you know me, can really, really see!

Can you say, Yes, Lord, I see you. Yes, Lord, I hear you. Yes, Lord, I feel you. If you can say, yes. Then just leave the rest to me. Do you know me? – Tune: o You Know Me - James E. Moore

Let us pray,

Look upon your servants, O Lord, and in your goodness protect with heavenly assistance those who trust in your mercy. Amen.

SATURDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT THE ATTITUDE OF SEEKING TRUTH

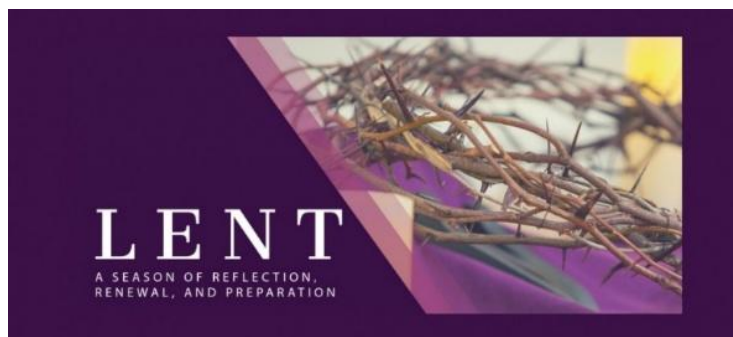
Psalm Response: O Lord, my God, in you I take refuge. Psalm 7: 2

Some in the crowd who heard these words of Jesus said, "This is truly the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But others said, "The Christ will not come from Galilee, will he? Does not Scripture say that the Christ will be of David's family and come from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?" So a division occurred in the crowd because of him. Some of them even wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

So the guards went to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why did you not bring him?" The guards answered, "Never before has anyone spoken like this man." So the Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, which does not know the law, is accursed." Nicodemus, one of their members who had come to him earlier, said to them, "Does our law condemn a man before it first hears him and finds out what he is doing?" They answered and said to him, "You are not from Galilee also, are you? Look and see that no prophet arises from Galilee." Then each went to his own house. – John 7: 40 – 53

Lord, you are good and your mercy endureth forever. Lord, you are good and your mercy endureth forever. People from every nation and tribe from generation to generation. We worship you! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! We worship you for who you are. – Tune: Lord You Are Good - Israel Houghton

Let us pray, look upon your people, O Lord, and, as they draw near to the coming festivities, that, helped by the consolations of this world, they may be impelled more readily towards higher goods that cannot be seen.. Amen.



FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Psalm Response: With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption. –
Psalm 130: 7

The sisters of Lazarus sent word to Jesus, saying, “Master, the one you love is ill.” When Jesus heard this he said, “This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was ill, he remained for two days in the place where he was. Then after this he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.” When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise.”

Martha said, “I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.” He became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Sir, come and see.” And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him.”

But some of them said, “Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?” So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the dead man’s sister, said to him, “Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me.”

And when he had said this, He cried out in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth.

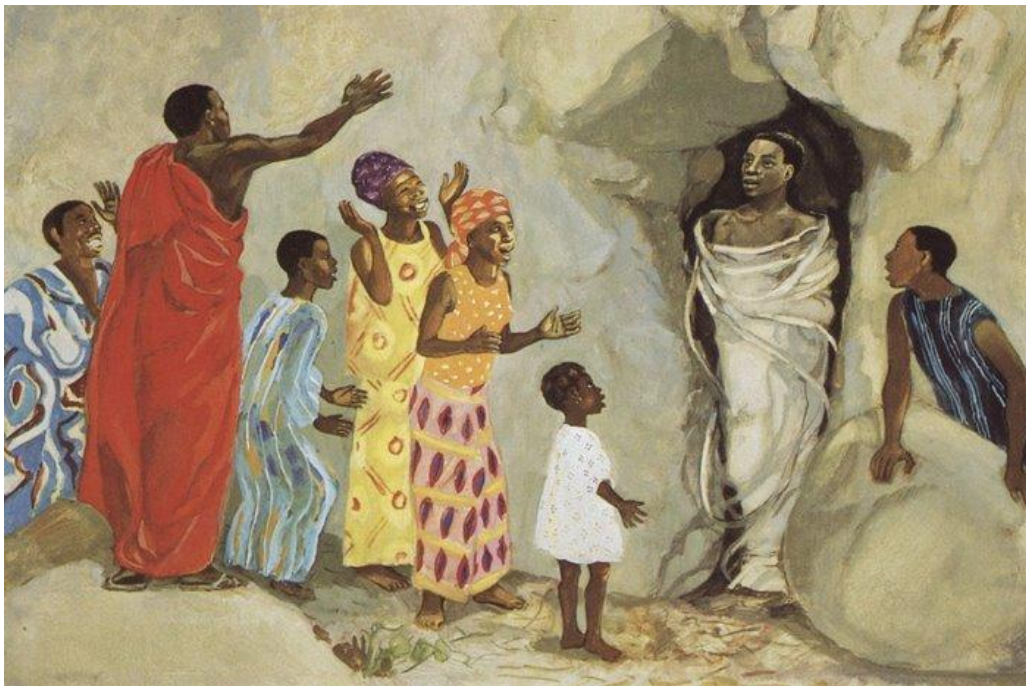
So Jesus said to them, “Untie him and let him go.” Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him.
– John 11: 3 – 7, 17, 20 – 27, 33 – 45

Why do you cry? He has risen Why are you weeping?, He's not dead, He paid it all on that lonely highway, and His anointing I can feel. He shed his blood for my transgressions, and by his stripes we are healed.

Don't cry, wipe your eyes, He's not dead! Oh, don't weep, He's not asleep. Jehovah, He's not dead! Oh, don't cry, wipe your eyes He's not dead! – Tune: Don't Cry - Kirk Franklin

Let us pray,

Bless, O Lord, your people, who long for the gift of mercy, and grant that what, at your prompting, they desire they may receive by your generous gift.
Amen.



MONDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT
THE ATTITUDE OF SEEKING MERCY

Psalm Response: Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side. – *Psalm 23: 4*

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. But early in the morning he arrived again in the temple area, and all the people started coming to him, and he sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”

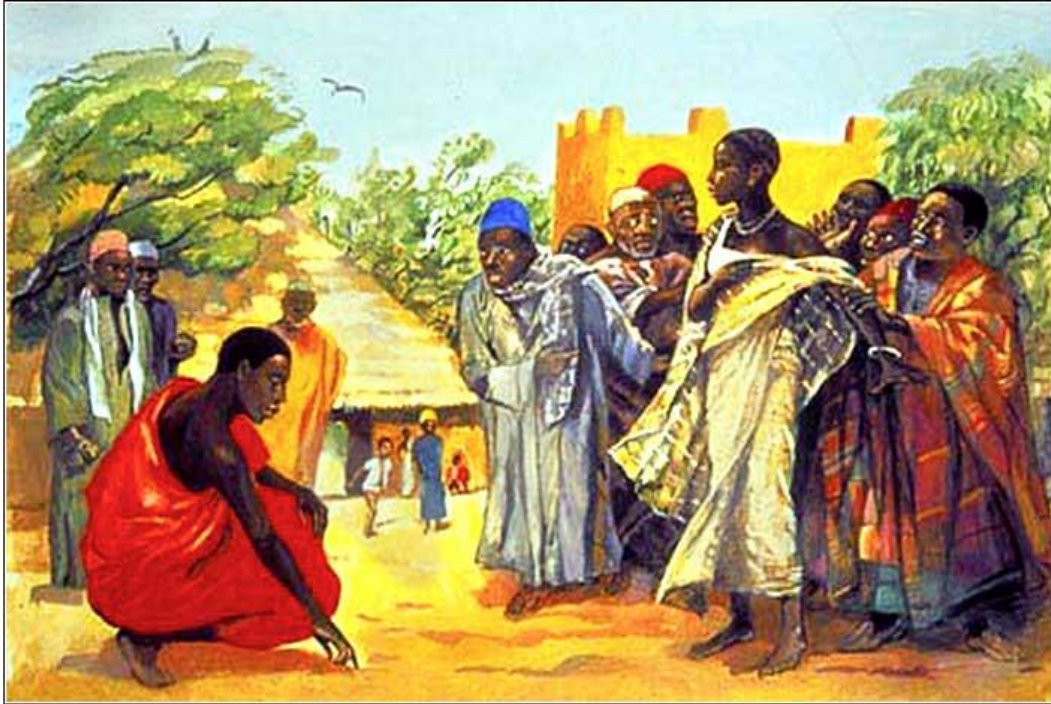
Again he bent down and wrote on the ground. And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She replied, “No one, sir.” Then Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more.” – John 8: 1 – 11

The room grew still as she made her way to Jesus. She stumbles through the tears that made her blind. She felt such pain, some spoke in anger. Heard folks whisper, "There's no place here for her kind."

*Still on she came through the shame that flushed her face. Until, at last, she knelt before His feet. And though she spoke no words, everything she said was heard. As she poured her love for the Master from her box of alabaster. And I've come to pour my praise on Him. Like oil from Mary's alabaster box. –
 Tune: Alabaster Box - CeCe Winans*

Let us pray,

Set free from sins. O Lord, we pray, the people who call upon you, that, living a holy way of life, they may be kept safe from every trial. Amen.



TUESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT
THE ATTITUDE OF SEEKING MERCY

**Psalm Response: O Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry come to you. -
*Psalm 102: 2***

Jesus said to the Pharisees: “I am going away and you will look for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going you cannot come.” So the Jews said, “He is not going to kill himself, is he, because he said, ‘Where I am going you cannot come?’” He said to them, “You belong to what is below, I belong to what is above. You belong to this world, but I do not belong to this world. That is why I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins.” So they said to him, “Who are you?” Jesus said to them, “What I told you from the beginning. I have much to say about you in condemnation. But the one who sent me is true, and what I heard from him I tell the world.” They did not realize that he was speaking to them of the Father.

So Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM, and that I do nothing on my own, but I say only what the Father taught me. The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do what is pleasing to him.” Because he spoke this way, many came to believe in him. – John 8: 31 – 30

*All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give; I will ever love and trust Him,
 in His presence daily live.*

***Refrain: I surrender all, I surrender all. All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
 surrender all. - Tune: I Surrender All - Winfield S. Weedon***

Let us pray,

O God, who choose to show mercy not anger to those who hope in you, grant that your faithful may weep, as they should, for the evil they have done, and so merit the grace of your consolation. Amen.

SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

Psalm Response: Here I am Lord, I come to do your will. - *Psalm 40: 8 -9*

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end."

But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her. – Luke 1: 26 – 38

*Hail, Holy Mother, who gave birth to the King, who rules heaven forever. –
Tune: Hail, Holy Mother - M. Roger Holland*

Let us pray,

O God, who willed that your Word should take on the reality of human flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary, grant, we pray, that we, who confess our Redeemer to be God and man, may merit to become partakers even in his divine nature. Amen.



THURSDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

THE ATTITUDE OF PRAISE

Psalm Response: The Lord remembers his covenant for ever. – Psalm 105: 8

Jesus said to the Jews: “Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever keeps my word will never see death.” So the Jews said to him, “Now we are sure that you are possessed. Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.’ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? Or the prophets, who died? Who do you make yourself out to be?” Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is worth nothing; but it is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’ You do not know him, but I know him. And if I should say that I do not know him, I would be like you a liar.

But I do know him and I keep his word. Abraham your father rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad.” So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM.” So they picked up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid and went out of the temple area. – John 8: 51 - 59

Let the people the praise Him, rejoice in all his goodness, and be thankful for all God has done. Tell the generations from the mountains to the valley, by His spirit is victory is won!

For the Lord is worthy to be praised, His hand of salvation redeems us this hour! So the Lord, beyond the balance of our days. Be glory and honor, dominion and power! – Tune: Glory to Glory to Glory - Fred Hammond

Let us pray,

Be gracious to your people, Lord, we pray, that, as from day to day they reject what does not please you, they may be filled instead with delight at your commands. Amen.

FRIDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT
THE ATTITUDE OF BEING RELEASED

Psalm Response: In my distress I called upon the Lord, and he heard my voice. – *Psalm 19: 7*

The Jews picked up rocks to stone Jesus. Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from my Father. For which of these are you trying to stone me?” The Jews answered him, “We are not stoning you for a good work but for blasphemy. You, a man, are making yourself God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, ‘You are gods’”? If it calls them gods to whom the word of God came, and Scripture cannot be set aside, can you say that the one whom the Father has consecrated and sent into the world blasphemes because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? If I do not perform my Father’s works, do not believe me; but if I perform them, even if you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may realize and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” Then they tried again to arrest him; but he escaped from their power.

He went back across the Jordan to the place where John first baptized, and there he remained. Many came to him and said, “John performed no sign, but everything John said about this man was true.” And many there began to believe in him. – John 10: 31 – 42

There is power in the name of Jesus. There is power in the name of Jesus. There is power in the name of Jesus. To break every chain, break every chain, break every chain, to break every chain. – Tune: Break Every Chain - Tasha Cobbs Leonard

Let us pray,

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that your servants, who seek the grace of your protection may be free from every evil and serve you in peace of mind. Amen.

SATURDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

THE ATTITUDE OF FAITHFULNESS

Psalm Response: The Lord will guard us, as a shepherd guards his flock. –
Jeremiah 31: 10

Many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what Jesus had done began to believe in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and said, “What are we going to do? This man is performing many signs. If we leave him alone, all will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our land and our nation.” But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing, nor do you consider that it is better for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish.” He did not say this on his own, but since he was high priest for that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but also to gather into one the dispersed children of God.

So from that day on they planned to kill him. So Jesus no longer walked about in public among the Jews, but he left for the region near the desert, to a town called Ephraim, and there he remained with his disciples. Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before Passover to purify themselves. They looked for Jesus and said to one another as they were in the temple area, “What do you think? That he will not come to the feast?” – *John 11: 45 – 56*

He's been faithful, faithful to me. Looking back, His love and mercy I see. Though in my heart, I have questioned, even failed to believe. But, He's been faithful, faithful to me. – Tune: Faithful, Faithful - Carol Cymbala

Let us pray,

Have mercy, mercy, Lord, on your Church, as she brings you her supplications, and be attentive to those who incline their hearts before you: do not allow, we pray, those you have redeemed by the Death of your Only Begotten Son, to be harmed by their sins or weighed down by their trials. Amen.

PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Psalm Response: My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? - *Psalm 22: 2*

Jesus stood before the governor, Pontius Pilate, who questioned him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You say so." And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he made no answer. Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they are testifying against you?" But he did not answer him one word, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Now on the occasion of the feast the governor was accustomed to release to the crowd one prisoner whom they wished. And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had assembled, Pilate said to them, "Which one do you want me to release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus called Christ?" For he knew that it was out of envy that they had handed him over. While he was still seated on the bench, his wife sent him a message, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man. I suffered much in a dream today because of him." The chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas but to destroy Jesus. The governor said to them in reply, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They answered, "Barabbas!" Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified!" But he said, "Why? What evil has he done?" They only shouted the louder, "Let him be crucified!" When Pilate saw that he was not succeeding at all, but that a riot was breaking out instead, he took water and washed his hands in the sight of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood. Look to it yourselves." And the whole people said in reply, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." Then he released Barabbas to them, but after he had Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus inside the praetorium and gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped off his clothes and threw a scarlet military cloak about him. Weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spat upon him and took the reed and kept striking him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucify him.

As they were going out, they met a Cyrenian named Simon; this man they pressed into service to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha — which means Place of the Skull —, they gave Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall. But when he had tasted it, he refused to drink. After they had crucified him, they divided his garments by casting lots; then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And they placed over his head the written charge against him:

This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left. Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, if you are the Son of God, and come down from the cross!" Likewise the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him and said, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. So he is the king of Israel! Let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" The revolutionaries who were crucified with him also kept abusing him in the same way.

From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Some of the bystanders who heard it said, "This one is calling for Elijah." Immediately one of them ran to get a sponge; he soaked it in wine, and putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink. But the rest said, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him." But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit.

And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, rocks were split, tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And coming forth from their tombs after his resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many. The centurion and the men with him who were keeping watch over Jesus feared greatly when they saw the earthquake and all that was happening, and they said, "Truly, this was the Son of God!"

