

2025
SO SEND I YOU, INC.
LENTEN
DEVOTIONAL





LENTEN DEVOTIONALS

Weekly Call
SUNDAY

7:00 PM (EST) DURING LENT

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



Zoom ID: 542-833-7127

Passcode: 147292



646-558-8656

Passcode: 147292

WWW.EVENSOSENDIYOUWORLD.ORG



LENTEN DEVOTIONALS



Prayer Call

WEDNESDAYS @ 8:00 PM

MARCH 12-APRIL 16, 2025

PRAYING FOR OUR MISSIONARY WORK ON 6 CONTINENTS



DIAL IN EVERY WEDNESDAY



267-807-9605

Passcode: 512125

WWW.EVENSOSENDIYOUWORLD.ORG





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



Daily **PRAYER** 11AM

Call

SO SEND I YOU, INC.
P.O. BOX 1699
LINCOLNTON STATION, NY 10037
WWW.EVENSOSENDIYOUWORLD.ORG

PRAYER LINE INFORMATION

PLEASE JOIN OUR DAILY
CALL BY DIALING:

PHONE# (267) 807 9605
CODE: 512125#



Trip to Baptist World Congress

SYDNEY/BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA



**JOIN SO SEND I YOU, INC. FOR OUR 2025 TRIP TO
BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA
FOR THE BAPTIST WORLD CONGRESS.**

\$ 4943.00 PER PERSON
Premium Economy: Additional \$1348.00
Single Occupancy: Additional \$511.00
TRAVEL DAYS: June 29–July 14, 2025 from JFK Airport



**INCLUDES ROUND TRIP AIRFARE, HOTEL (DOUBLE
OCCUPANCY), BREAKFAST, ALL GROUND
TRANSPORTATION & TRANSFERS**



For more information, contact:
Ann Coleman: 917-913-5280
Noreen Cunningham: 646-721-4283
www.evensosendyouworld.org

CONTENTS



- 01** **About Us**

- 02** **Join Us for the 2025 Lenten Journey**

- 03** **Our Work**

- 04** **The Meaning of Lent**

- 06** **Suggestions for the Lenten Fast**

- 08** **6-Week Prayer Guide**

ABOUT US



01

OUR MISSION

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

02

OUR VISION

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

03

OUR SPECIATIES

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

01

WELCOME TO THE 2025 LENTEN JOURNEY

The Board of Directors at SO SEND I YOU, Inc., Co-Chaired by Dr. William B. Sutton, III, and Dr. John W. McVicker, Sr., join me in inviting and welcoming you to the 40-day journey through the 2025 Lenten Season, which begins on Ash Wednesday, which is March 5, 2025, and ends on Easter Sunday, April 21, 2025. Millions of Christ's disciples around the world look forward to making the 40-day journey with eager anticipation. This year, we hope you will join in the journey.

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

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



A Note From our Founder & CEO

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

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

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

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

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

Again this year, SO SEND I YOU, Inc., will host Ash Wednesday services on our Facebook page and YouTube channel on March 5, 2025, at 7:00 PM EST (6:00 PM CST, and 5:00 PM MST). All of our participating churches across the country are invited to join us as we kick off the 40-day Lenten journey.

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

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

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

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

This is done,
Because of Calvary

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



Here's how you can give:

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

THE MEANING OF LENT

By *Dr. Lisa M. Weaver*

Big events in life are often accompanied by big celebrations. Birthdays, weddings, major holidays, and significant moments in life are usually marked by big celebrations. And, celebrations take time to prepare. People prepare in advance by sending invitations or “Save the Date” announcements. They buy cards, gifts, wrapping paper, special foods, and decorations. Preparations for big celebrations also require lead time. You don’t plan a big party the day before. It takes weeks of planning and preparation. In some ways, the amount of preparation for the event is an indication of how important the event is. Lent is the big preparatory period for the celebration of Easter (Resurrection Sunday). Since the time of the early church, Resurrection Sunday has been understood as a BIG deal. It is the day that Jesus rose from the dead. It is the day that secured humanity’s salvation. It is the day that gives us our identity as disciples of Jesus Christ. Without Resurrection Sunday, there is no salvation, there is no church, and we are not disciples of Christ. Resurrection Sunday is the most important day of the Church calendar year. However, the earliest celebrations of Resurrection Sunday were not preceded by great preparation.

What is Lent?

Lent is the 40-day preparatory period leading to the celebration of Resurrection Sunday. However, Lent was not always a 40-day season. Remember, the earliest annual celebrations of the resurrection were not preceded by any preparation or preparatory activity. As time went on, the church realized that the celebration of Easter was a big deal, and its significance for the church, for those who were to be baptized at the Easter vigil, and for those who were already disciples of Christ required that there be some period of preparation. So the earliest Lenten period that we know of historically was three days in length, beginning with what we would know as Holy (or Maundy) Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. It should be noted that these days correspond with significant final days in the life of Jesus: His Last Supper with the disciples, His crucifixion, and the day in which Jesus is believed to have descended to the dead and wrested the keys of death, hell, and the grave from Satan. These were the days in which the church prepared for the celebration of Easter. Over time, the church realized that three days were not enough. The preparation for the celebration was lengthened, from three days to one week. Beginning with Palm/Passion Sunday, this iteration of the Lenten season encompassed the last week of Jesus’s earthly life, beginning with His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and concluding with his death and burial. We now know this week as Holy Week. As time went on, the church increasingly expanded the Lenten season to three weeks, then to six weeks, and finally adding on Ash Wednesday and the remainder of the days for that week to the six weeks of Lent. Minus Sundays, this gives us the 40-days of Lenten preparation for Easter. This is the current shape of the Lenten season for most traditions in the Church.

(continued)

THE MEANING OF LENT

The Lenten Season

Ash Wednesday begins the forty-day season of Lent. It is forty days because the Sundays in Lent are not included in the calculation. Historically, this day marked the beginning of the final preparations for those to be baptized at the great vigil of Easter.

So, the Lenten season is primarily marked by its very baptismal character. Consistent with the baptismal character of Lent, themes of repentance and conversion are dominant in this season, completely consonant with the journey of those who will soon be baptized. In addition to Lent being the time when those who will be united with the church through baptism are in the final stages of preparation (which historically included teaching, prayer, and scrutinies[1]), Lent is also the annual opportunity for we who are already baptized, that is, the faithful, to dial down the microscope and re-examine Jesus' humanity and our own. It is the time of self-inventory and deep interior reflection.

In the Old Testament reading on Ash Wednesday, we hear the prophet Joel calling God's people to repentance with urgency. "Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing" (Joel 2:12). Lent summons the people of God to deep introspection about their lives of discipleship and challenges them to come to a deeper level of sobriety and commitment to it. In addition to this interior work of introspection, the Gospel with which Ash Wednesday begins (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21) beckons us also to the exterior acts of charity (also known as "almsgiving"), prayer, and fasting. In this text, Jesus is exhorting His hearers on how these disciplines are to be exercised ("So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you...but when you give alms.... And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites...but whenever you pray....And whenever you fast, do not look dismal.... But when you fast...."). These penitential postures are embraced by the people of God in a deeply intentional and sacrificial way during Lent, in a more dedicated way than at other times of the year.

So during Lent, we and those who will become part of us at the Easter Vigil are called to intense examination and scrutiny of our lives and commitments to Christ. Lent reminds us of our baptism and the declarations and vows we made and then challenges us to live into and live out those declarations and vows. It is the season in which we ask ourselves, "How satisfied is God with my discipleship?" "Where have I missed the mark?" "How am I being challenged to a deeper, more faithful life of discipleship and walk with God?" The question is not if, but how. Like Jesus in the wilderness, the people of God are tempted by the devil. However, unlike Jesus, we succumb to temptations that most often lead us into spiritual wilderness places rather than being carried into the wilderness. If one engages the season of Lent openly, honestly, deeply, and prayerfully, God will show a person him/herself, not in harsh judgment but in profound love and extend a new invitation to become new again. Lent is the time for the people of God to be renewed in their relationship with God, and as a result have a renewed witness for Christ in the world. It is truly the season that calls for newness of life, both in baptism and recommitment to the life of Christ. So this year, as my beloved late pastor, the Rev. Dr. Nathaniel Tyler-Lloyd would exhort us each year, "Let's keep a holy Lent."

05

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE LENTEN FAST

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

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

What is a Fast?

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

The Spiritual Benefits of Fasting

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

The Techniques of Fasting

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

Preparations for Fasting

- *Seek God’s will for you regarding the fasting regimen you should choose.*
- *The week prior to the beginning of your fast, begin eliminating snacks and eating after 7:00 PM.*
- *Increase your intake of fruits, vegetables, fish, and water.*
- *Reduce or eliminate sweets, breads, meats, sugary drinks, and other “pleasurable” food and drinks.*
- *Begin to pray for daily strength, discipline to be focused, and faithful adherence to your Lenten fast.*

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE LENTEN FAST

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

- *“If you are pregnant, diabetic, taking prescribed medications, under a doctor’s care, or have experienced illness on a previous fast, be careful to consult your physician before starting the fast.*

Additional Fasting Hints

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

Lenten FASTER’S Prayer

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

SIX-WEEK PRAYER GUIDE

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

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

Each Wednesday evening during Lent, we invite you to join us in prayer for the work on six of the seven continents of the world where there is current missionary activity. The call is at 8:00 PM each Wednesday evening beginning on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, and ending on Wednesday, April 6, 2025. The prayer dial-in number is 267-807-9605, with the access code of 512125. Please do not announce yourself, but just wait a few minutes to allow others to join the call, and the prayer leader will give the call to prayer. The Six-Week Prayer Call will be as follows:

First Week: Wednesday, March 12, 2025, North America Prayer Concerns

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

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

Second Week: Wednesday, March 19, 2025, South America

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

Third Week: Wednesday, March 26, 2025, Europe

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

Fourth Week: Wednesday, April 2, 2025, Australia

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

SIX-WEEK PRAYER GUIDE

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

Fifth Week: Wednesday, April 9, 2025, Asia

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

Sixth Week: Wednesday, April 16, 2025, Africa

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

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



Children and staff at the W.W. Brown Daycare Center located in Johannesburg, South Africa.

DAY 1

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2025

TAKE ME TO THE CROSS

Rev. Dr. Joe Albert Bush, Sr

1 Corinthians 1:18

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

While walking his beat, a police officer heard the sound of a crying child. Turning in the direction of the sobbing child, the officer found a 6-year-old lad sitting on a milk crate, weeping. Approaching the child, the officer asked, "Why are you crying?" to which the child, looking up with tearful eyes responded, "I am lost. Can you please help me find my way home?"

The officer asked the child if he knew his home address, to which the child replied, "No, sir!" The officer then asked if he knew the street on which he lived, and again the answer came, "No, sir!" The officer then started naming the streets in the immediate vicinity, trying to jog the child's memory, but with no success. Then the officer tried naming the different shops and notable businesses in the area, but without success.

Suddenly the child looked up, with a bright smile on his tearful face, and pointed to a large white steeple with a cross standing and towering high above the surrounding landscape. Looking in the face of the tall officer with a certain assurance and excitement, the lad said, "If you just take me to that cross, I can find my way home."

The world must know that the cross of Christ still stands high above all the pain and tragedy of human history. The hymn writer reminds us that the cross of Christ stands "Towering o'er the wrecks of time." This is what Lent is all about: Finding our way back to that bloody cross, where through His sacrifice, Jesus Christ became the only mediator between a loving God (the Creator) and lost humanity. If by God's grace we are able to find our way back to that cross, we'll find ourselves right at home! His sacrificial death and vicarious suffering, followed by His glorious resurrection has made our salvation and redemption absolutely certain. Glory be to His matchless Name!

Prayer: O God, thank You for the Cross of Your Son, Jesus Christ, by which you bring us safely home to You, from Whom we never should have roamed. Help us to never more roam. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 2

THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2025

THE OFFENSE OF THE CROSS

Rev. Dr. Demetrius K. Williams

Galatians 6:14

14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

When Paul made his bold declaration that he would “never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,” the symbol of the cross was not a celebrated religious and cultural icon. It was a symbol of Roman oppression and death, on the one hand, and human foolishness to the Greeks, on the other (1 Corinthians 1:23). To the Jew, it was a stumbling block representing shame and the curse of God (as in Deuteronomy 21:23— “Cursed is anyone who hangs on a tree.”)

Today, the cross is outwardly worn by many who do not even publicly proclaim the name of Christ. All kinds of folk with no commitment to Christ or his church, and certainly no commitment to the cross, consider it a popular and fashionable cultural symbol to wear around their necks or to have tattooed upon their bodies. For me, the meaning and power of the cross is more profound and enriching than an external adornment to be displayed upon the outward person. I think there is too much of this kind of social profiling in our world today – that is, falsely created personas for public consumption and celebration, but lacking any real substance. Thus, such outward manifestations provide no evidence of inward transformation or personal commitment to Christ.

This is what makes Paul’s bold declaration in the ancient world so profound and meaningful. It was evidence of his personal transformation and full commitment to Christ, despite the shame and offense of the cross. Thus, when he states, “the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world,” he clarifies that the offense of the cross has cancelled out the values of the world; indeed, even the personal values he once held as an Israelite descendant has been transformed (Phil. 3:1-4, especially v. 7- “Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Jesus Christ.”). He no longer lives by the world’s values, nor does he desire the world’s approval. His boast is in what God has accomplished in and through the cross of Christ. May we too recognize that the power of the cross for both human transformation and full commitment to Christ as our ground of boasting. May our lives continuously show clear and decisive evidence of such.

Prayer: During this season of reflection and introspection, may we display in our lives and interactions with others that the cross is more than a symbol of adornment to be worn upon the body, but a reality that is to manifest in our lives. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 3

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2025

NOTHING HIDDEN FROM HIM

Rev. Brandle C. Morrow

Hebrews 4:13

13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

One of the predominant themes in the epistle to the Hebrews is Christ as the supreme revelation of God. "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word" (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus is the embodied intelligence of God. Just prior to our designated verse the writer says, "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). The word of God appraises our spirit and exposes our deficiencies. Since Christ is the word, He analyzes and offers a spiritual assessment. It is no coincidence that the subsequent verse reminds the reader nothing is hidden from His sight.

The Hebrews suffered with an intellectual, and an ethical immaturity. Contingents are engaged religiously, but disengaged spiritually. Thus, there is the need for the word to examine their hearts. This remains a contemporary issue also. During this Lenten season, I exhort you to resist spiritual complacency and regard the word as your principle voice. Paul provides Timothy with sound advice concerning the diverse capabilities of the word. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Prayer: Christ, examine me, and conform me to your image. In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

DAY 4

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

OUR ACCESS TO GOD

Bishop Alonzo D. Hatchett, Jr.

Ephesians 3:12

12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

The city of Ephesus was the queen city of Asia Minor. It was situated about three miles from the Aegean Sea on the Cayster River and had a population of about 34,000 people. Ephesus was the capital of the proconsular province of Asia and was one of the most important cities that Apostle Paul visited. It was known for its temple of Diana, an open-air theatre seating 25,000 people which was the shrine of Serapis an Egyptian divinity. It was also famous for its rich culture, oriental religion and its Greek philosophical tradition.

During the close of Apostle Paul's second missionary journey, he made a brief visit to Ephesus and left Priscilla and Aquila there to work in his absence and promised to return if it be God's will. (Acts 18:19-21) It was God's will for Paul to return to Ephesus during his third missionary journey. He resided there for about three years evangelizing the city and surrounding region. Paul, through his teaching, made it plain that the true church of God was composed of believing sinners; specifically of Jews and Gentiles formed into one new spiritual entity.

However, the believing Gentiles were described by many as uncircumcised, without Christ, aliens, strangers, hopeless, godless, and far-off. For many, the believing Gentiles still maintained their racial identities from the Israelites. Paul, however, made it very clear that the Gentiles were not second-class citizens of heaven. They were joint heirs with Christ which placed them on the same team with the Jews. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus," so both Jews and Gentiles are the same spiritually in Christ Jesus. The provision of spiritual oneness came through Jesus' death on the cross of Calvary.

His vicarious death on the cross did not only remove the sin barrier, but also removed the law that separated Jews from Gentiles. Jesus' death and resurrection has presented to God the Father the true church, which is one new man, one body, and the household of faith. The church was built upon the foundation laid by the Apostles and Prophets that was provided through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:10-11).

Jesus has given those of us who are born again believers, free and full access to God so we can go unto Him and pray with boldness and confidence because of our faith in Christ Jesus. Our access to God is through our Savior Christ. He is our only access to God (John 14:6).

Prayer: Almighty God, thank you for our free and full access that we may come unto you with boldness and confidence through our faith in Christ. In His name, I do pray, Amen.

DAY 5

MONDAY, MARCH 10, 2025

GOD'S HYMN OF FORGIVENESS

Rev. Dr. Amos Jones

Isaiah 44:22

22 I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you."

John L. McKenzie, in his treatment of this passage in the Second Isaiah volume of The Anchor Bible Commentary, styles this passage as "A Hymn of Forgiveness." Jehovah hums this plaintive hymn to His people, Israel, to assure them of His forgiveness. With the Lord's reference to Cyrus, it is obvious that the setting is when the Children of Israel are in captivity. Jehovah assures His people of His forgiveness of the sins they have committed that have landed them in captivity, first in Babylon and in Persia. God promises to return His people to Jerusalem, to rebuild the Temple and the Holy City.

The people's captivity has been caused by their egregious transgression of His divine law and forsaking Him as their God. At the beginning of Chapter 44, Jehovah reminds His people of who He is. Israel is His chosen. He birthed them out of the womb, i.e., as He says time and again, He brought them out of Egypt to be His people and Jehovah to be their God.

The peoples' problem came when they became enamored with idolatry and the gods thereof. The gods of idolatry are no gods, as is portrayed in Isa. 44:9-20. The people willingly fell prey to the gods of idolatry and suffer captivity for 70 years in Babylon and Persia. But God says, He now is willing to forgive, to pour floods of water on the dry ground, to pour out His spirit upon their seed that it might spring up as grass. For, God says, "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Isa. 44:6). Jehovah appeals to His people, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions."

In the advent of Jesus Christ, His death, burial, and resurrection, God continually holds out forgiveness of the sins of mankind. As Israel of old, we have transgressed God's will and way by succumbing to the gods of idolatry. But God ever holds out His appeal to forgive us of our sin of questing after the idols of idolatry. God brought the ebony sons and daughters out of the most heinous form of slavery ever known to man. Too many of us have been wooed and won to the ways of the idols of idolatry. But God through Jesus Christ, yet holds out the olive branch of forgiveness to the whosoever wills among us.

Prayer: Pass me not, O gentle Savior. Hear my humble cry. While on others Thou art calling. Do not pass me by. This my prayer in the matchless Name of Jesus Christ, Amen!

DAY 6

TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 2025

DEEP ROOTS

Rev. Dr. Jonathan Staples

Psalm 1:3

3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.

In Psalm 1, the happy person is compared to a tree. In this metaphor, we see that a happy person is compared to a planted tree. Their roots go down deep and draw nourishment from the rivers of waters. The storms may rage and the sun may scorch, but the person who is planted remains strong. For too many, happiness depends on happenings. Real happiness does not depend on what is going on around you. It depends on where your source of happiness is. If the source of your happiness is the river of God, your happiness is not dictated by what is happening around you or to you.

The happy person is also compared to a prosperous tree. The happy person “brings forth his fruit in season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper.” The prosperity described here is one of spiritual productivity. This person is not only blessed, but they are a blessing to others. They are fruitful and productive with others enjoying the blessings that flow from the life. The really happy person overflows. The joy in their heart bubbles up and flows out in blessing to others. They bear fruit and they prosper in all they do. I want my roots to be planted deeply in the Bible. I want the fruit of my life to be righteousness and holiness and godliness. The people who have moved this world have been people that the world could not move. If you won't stand for something, you will fall for anything.

I spent 15 years in California. While there I came across two kinds of trees. The first is a palm tree. For every foot tall a palm tree grows, its roots extend just as deep. So, if a palm tree is 20 feet tall, its roots are 20 feet deep. When the strong winds come, palm trees are able to stand because their roots are deep. The second tree I became acquainted with is a redwood tree. Redwood trees are majestic and known for how tall and wide they can grow. Redwood trees don't grow alone. They grow in clusters because the roots intertwine with one another so that the group of trees support each other. They are so linked together that one cannot fall without another. May our roots be so deep, that when the storms of life come, we wave our hands like the palm tree waves its branches. May we also be so connected with other believers that we are able to support others and be supported in our times of crisis. I want to be like a tree!

Prayer: Dear God, may we know the true source of our happiness and be intentional about being planted by the source of our blessings. In Jesus' Name, Amen!

DAY 7

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2025

SPIRITUAL CLOTHING

Rev. Dr. Johnny Turner

Col. 3:12

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

The above verse in Colossians shares a solid theological message. Paul reminds the Colossian Church of the importance of spiritual clothing. Let us look at the Greek word for clothe to gain the foundational meaning for the context of this passage. Clothe is one of two keywords, and the other keyword is holy. The Greek word for clothe is endou, which means to enter the garment. It is primarily an endowment for power from on high. The Greek word for holy is hagios, meaning sacred, pure and worthy.

The direction to wear spiritual clothing is for spiritual identity, which connects to clothing and holiness. The responsibility is to dress appropriately as a sign of a genuine disciple. It is a response to one's salvation that connects to putting on the new man. The new man (human) is the new life. The contrast is when we rise daily after a night's rest, we dress for the day, whether for work, business attire, or just at home. The point is we put on cotton, polyester, or linen. However, we change into bed clothes at night and repeat the cycle daily.

Paul encourages the church to change its identity from sinful clothes representing the flesh into clothes of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. There is a significant difference between worldly clothes and spiritual clothes. Spiritual clothing is at a higher level.

A perfect scripture in the Old Testament is contextually connected with Col 3:12 regarding spiritual clothing. Joshua had a vision that he was standing before the angel with filthy clothes. He had to change his identity (Zech. 3:3-4). Modern-day believers must know that proper spiritual dressing is significant when walking with God. The world is watching the church and can see if we dress in essential clothing: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. The Bible admonishes us to be kind and compassionate (Eph. 4:32). Wearing spiritual garments will gain much respect from people, even if they disagree with you. Your willingness to please God is a dedicated, honorable act.

Prayer: Eternal God, help me to identify with the spiritual clothing of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Give me the anointing to walk in a more profound spiritual identity to glorify you. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

16

DAY 8

THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 2025

IN THE LONG RUN...KEEP RUNNING

Rev. Dr. Ivory Thigpen

Hebrews 12:1

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

Often when reading scripture from afar, we lose appreciation for the value of time. As audience, we read in a timeless vacuum. Even when references are made to time within the scriptures, they are often footnotes to the plot, if not overlooked altogether.

In fairness, the calculation of time usually bears little significance to the moral of the story or the character/plot development. But what bears little significance in reading scripture makes all the difference when applying scripture to our lives. The length of time or shall I say “Endurance” has great impact on the road of life!

When we think about our lives and futures, it is essential and necessary to envision outcomes. In fact, faith is defined as the confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see... Envisioning! However, in our limited and myopic view, we are often occupied, if not obsessed, with short-term outcomes instead of long-term benefits. Much like going on a long run, the immediate exertion of energy is grueling and uncomfortable if not painful, but the long-term benefits far outweigh the short-term discomfort. This is why Paul stated, “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all (2 Cor 4:17).”

Keep Running! The well-trained and well-conditioned believer must look over the temporary setbacks and well beyond the momentary inconveniences. For when one ventures on a long run, it appears with each passing minute that the clock becomes our enemy. So does “Time” become pitted against us in the trials and tribulations of life. With each passing day and with passing months and God forbid if what we endure stretches into years, our faith and fortitude are greatly challenged.

Keep Running! Ultimately... Eventually... Finally, that is (over time) if we faint not and fix our eyes on Jesus; we shall finish the race... complete the course... cross the finish line on this road called life. For “In the Long Run” our faith is being strengthened... “In the Long Run” our patience is being developed... “In the Long Run” our perseverance is being perfected, and our endurance enhanced... “In the Long Run”!

Therefore, Keep Running... for this long race is not given to the swift nor the strong, but to the one who endures until the end! Keep Running!

Prayer: God help us not to grow weary. In Jesus’ Name, Amen

17

DAY 9

FRIDAY, MARCH 14, 2025

IN SEARCH OF THE RIGHT PATH

Rev. Dr. Joseph G. Ford

Psalm 25:4

4 Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths.

David's heartfelt plea to God reflects a profound desire for divine guidance and direction. In a world filled with countless paths and choices, David seeks the wisdom and clarity that only God can provide. This verse invites us to adopt a similar posture of dependence on God's guidance in our own lives.

Here we find two key aspects of our relationship with God: seeking His ways and learning His paths. To seek God's ways is to yearn for a deeper understanding of His character, His plan and His will for us. It is an acknowledgment that God's ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. (Isaiah 55:9)

By asking God to teach us His paths, we express a willingness to be led and taught by Him. This requires a heart that is open and receptive to His instruction, and a spirit that is willing to follow wherever He leads. It is an admission that we do not have all the answers and that we need God's wisdom to navigate the complexities of life.

We often face decisions and challenges that leave us uncertain and anxious. By inviting God to show us His ways and teach us His paths, we align ourselves with Him, trusting that He will lead us in the best way.

As we seek God's guidance, let us also remember that His paths may not always be the easiest or the most comfortable. Sometimes, following His ways may require us to step out of our comfort zones or make sacrifices. Yet, we can have confidence that His paths lead to life, peace, and fulfillment.

I am reminded of the hymn, "Lead me, guide me along the way; For if You lead me, I cannot stray; Lord, let me walk each day with Thee. Lead me, O Lord, lead me." As we navigate through the journey of life, we should do so with a heart that is fully surrendered to His guidance, trusting that He will lead us in the way we should go.

Prayer: Dear Lord, show me your ways and teach me your paths. Help me to seek your wisdom and guidance in all that I do and give me the strength to follow wherever you lead. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

18

DAY 10

SATURDAY, MARCH 15, 2025

REDEMPTION SONGS

Rev. Dr. Alvin C. Bernstine

Exodus 15:2

The Lord is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him.

*Old pirates, yes, they rob I
Sold I to the merchant ships
Minutes after they took I from the bottomless pit
But my hand was made strong by the hand of the Almighty
We forward in this generation
Triumphantly*

*Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom?
'Cause all I ever have
Redemption songs
Redemption songs
(Redemption Songs, Bob Marley, 1980)*

The above lyrics hold a common bond. Both are songs of redemption. Unlike Bob Marley, who identified his body of work as freedom songs, the psalmist merely declared it. However, like Bob Marley, the psalmist contextualized the song. The song was sung from a context of acknowledged deliverance from an oppressive power. Like Marley, the psalmist recognized that “the hand of the Almighty” was involved in the redemption saga.

“The Lord is my strength and my song” acknowledges the source of deliverance. As the source of deliverance, the psalmist embraces God as central to his personal journey of redemption. “He has become my salvation.” From the context of redemption, the psalmist commits to a life of praise. “I will praise Him!” He does not limit the redemptive experience of God to personal experiences, but expands it into communal history. “My father’s God, and I will exalt him.”

Worship sings. Authentic praise is articulated in song. Songs of worship, while personally expressed, speak to communal experiences. Yet, much of the songs sang today are narrowly individualized and mindlessly detached from community. We rarely hear songs of freedom.

Lent invites us to consider our song. Our song, no matter how diversely expressed, give voice to blood-bought deliverance. The hand of the Almighty triumphantly gave us new life in the context of death. What is the context of your song? Has your song been composed on the canvas of deliverance? “Won’t you help to sing, these songs of freedom?”

Prayer: O God, be our strength and song. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 11

MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2025

LOVE SAYS IT ALL

Rev. Mcford B. Chipuliko

1 John 3:11

11 For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

Love is an intense feeling of deep affection for a person or a thing. Our deepened relationship in turn releases a greater revelation of God's Love, which says it all. Loving and being loved by God is the greatest joy a person can experience because we are the carriers of His Love.

The teachers of the law asked Jesus, "of all the commandments, which is the most important?" Jesus answered that love for God was the first and the most important of all the commandments. He added that the second most important commandment was "to love your neighbor as yourself." Then Jesus concluded that there is no commandment greater than these (Mark 12: 28-31). This means God's love says it all, for true love is both vertical (God's love for us and our love for God) and horizontal, that is (God's love in us released to others).

The whole Gospel is about romance! The story begins in the Garden with marriage between Adam and Eve and ends in the book of Revelation with a marriage between Jesus and His bride, the Church. This means the motivation behind everything God does is LOVE. The love of God is so vast that it is incomprehensible in its scope and depth. The Lord is the initiator of love. We are created to be lovers of God. The Love of God defines our identity; therefore, everything we do should flow out of this understanding. Paul said, "Christ's compels us" (2 Cor. 5:14) because it is a driving force behind all that Paul did in his life. When we really comprehend the love of God and respond to it, then our families and our communities can also experience His Love. God's love becomes the best deterrent to sin and the best motivation to live righteously. God's love has provided the way of redemption through Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for your love that says it all through Jesus Christ our Lord, who died for our sins. Thank you for your redemption, be with us always! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 12

TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 2025

WHEN GOD SEEMS DISTANT

Rev. Dr. C. J. Rhodes

Psalms 10:1

1 Why, Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?

The Incarnation is central to the Christian theological tradition. In the Gospel of John, we are told “the Word became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14). God became human, the Word became flesh. As such, Emmanuel, the incarnate Word, is God with us. He walks with us through Death Valley. He speaks peace to our storms. His dear presence cheers and guides. In Christ, God’s omnipresence is God’s immanence. The God who sits high came low and was “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Hebrews 4:15). What a friend we have in Jesus!

That the Lord can, at times, be distant, seems to be a contradiction to these claims, however. If God is our very present help in times of trouble, what do we do with the psalmist’s anguished interrogative in Psalm 10:1? Why is God standoffish in troubling times? Much of contemporary Western Christianity refuses to wrestle with this dilemma. Yet the Bible refuses to run away from it. The God who is near is sometimes so far away. Yes, God still sits on the throne, but God’s reign sometimes feels distant, strange, so far away when injustices abound in the world; especially when it appears that God has abandoned the poor, the oppressed, the helpless.

This is the Blues-dripped analysis of Psalm 10. This is the Blues-soaked inquiry of many of us today. Where was God during slavery? Where was God during the nightmare of Jim Crow? Where was God during the War on Drugs? Where is God now in a calamitous nation? Where is God amid family dysfunction, church disunity, or community violence?

These are legitimate questions, though limited in scope. As believers, we are not without hope. If Psalm 10’s opening verse is all we had, we could resign to a form of nihilism or Afro-pessimism. We could answer those questions above like the wicked in the text who say, “There is no God” (v. 4), but we must keep reading. Blues bend toward Gospel hope when the psalmist acknowledges that even though God sometimes feels distant, God is nevertheless close enough to hear and answer our cry: “O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed, so that those from the earth may strike terror no more” (vv. 17-18). When God seems distant, remember that God is closer to you than your next breath. God is close enough to hear your concern and cry.

Prayer: As the songwriter testifies, “When darkness veils his lovely face, I rest on his unchanging grace; in every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil.” Let this too be our testimony, Lord Jesus! Inspire us with a steadfast hope, especially in troubling times when it’s difficult to discern your presence! In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 13

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 2025

HELP US LORD!

Dr. John W. Kinney

Psalm 80:19

19 Restore us, LORD God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

The pilgrimage to promise is never devoid of problems and all of us will find ourselves singing, at some point, “trouble in my way, got to cry sometimes.” In Psalm 80:19 we hear a cry that includes some tears, but more pointedly makes a plea for divine action in a time of distress and despair. While many of the pleas in the Psalter are personal, this psalm is a communal and national lament at a time when the nation is dealing with division and destruction and the faithful are being captured and corrupted by the forces of deception. The psalmist not only communicates the pain and peril, but also suggests a process for recovery and renewal.

Recognition: The cry for help begins with the recognition that something is out of order and not in harmony with the intent, desire, and design of the Creator. There is no cry when you have surrendered the center of your consent to the present order, and you conspire with and find comfort in, its maintenance. The plea for help is initiated in the conscious naming of the evil.

Reach: The recognition of a problem induces a reach to the Power that we believe that can remedy our perilous condition: “God help us!” The reach is both a protest against the present reality and an affirmation of faith in One who can address the crisis we face.

Relationship: The reach is anchored in the remembrance of a relationship that engendered flourishing in the community. The “turning back” is not a going back in time and place, but rather the reaffirmation of an authentic relationship with God. The cry is not a request to make us great again based upon a period in history, but an earnest plea for renewed and restored relationship that can bring life and abundance to our todays and tomorrows. Then turning is not about an alteration in God, but rather a transformation in the people. The Word reminds us that if my people turn, the land will be healed (II Chronicles 7:14).

Restoration: Psalm 80:19 begins with “Restore us”, but it ends with “that we may be saved.” The text begins with a cry for help, but ends with a testimony of assurance of God’s provision, deliverance, goodness, and mercy. We discover afresh that God has not and will not abandon us nor forsake us. The God who will give His own self to overcome the powers of destruction and death is still giving and saving. Great is God’s faithfulness and, when we turn, we experience the light in the darkness, the hope in despair, and the promise in peril.

If there is a last word it would be, “Rejoice!” If you turn and experience again the salvation of the Lord, somebody should shout, “Hallelujah!”

Prayer: Creator, knowing no other help, we stretch our hands to you. What we do know is you will never withdraw yourself from us. We turn to you and ask that you be who you are and do what you do. We shall be grateful, we will walk in your truth, and we will rejoice. In Jesus’ Name, Amen. ²²

DAY 14

THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 2025

IN CHRIST: THE MYSTERY OF THE OLD AND NEW

Rev. Johnny C. Bush

2 Corinthians 5:17

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

This fifth chapter in Paul's second letter to Corinth presents for us two dynamic effects or outcomes of our pilgrimages of faith, the "not yet" and the "already." These are neither two opposites, nor contradictions. As has been said before, it's not an either/or but rather, a both/and with what's God's doing. These dynamics are God's way of bringing us closer to Godself, and they coexist to fuel what God is accomplishing in Christ, at the same time in, through and with us.

We live each day with the notion of paradox. God is experienced as both, human and divine. We are saints and sinners, at the same time. We also live both in our homes with earthly addresses as well as we live in Christ. Note too, that our proximity to Christ is neither near nor close to Him, but rather it is in Him. The "in" is indefinite, abides, and rests, while the destination is Christ Himself and more of Him. Anyone in Christ is a new creation (God's work) that is being sustained by God. What a status, a position, and a degree! What a degree of grace to receive and a privilege in which to live! How could this possibly be? When anyone is in Christ, they are new, both already and not yet. What 'use to be' has passed away, both already and not yet. We can see and appreciate it in the earlier metaphor of the one ragged tent which is being destroyed, while another glorious construction is being erected by unseen hands.

Isn't it just like our God to be doing something with, in, and through us, despite ourselves and our resistant and hesitant nature to any change. How exciting it is receiving something new and letting go something old and meaningless! Remember, those of us who are 'in Christ' live with this dynamic of dying daily to self—to behaviors, to thoughts, to perspectives and values that are contrary to the lordship of Christ. All the while, we are being catapulted to the light of new life, new mercies, and the hope of newness and resurrection; ultimately to this end, to be socially located in the Christ community that is situated in Him. Never forget too, that our "in" is indefinite and eternal.

Prayer: Lord, You alone are our dwelling; help us to abide in the gracious space, of "in Christ," and keep changing us from glory to glory. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 15

FRIDAY, MARCH 21, 2025

MERCY IS GOD'S NUMBER ONE DESIRE

Rev. Dr. Riggins R. Earl, Jr.

Hosea 6:6

6 For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

God's Number One Desire is Mercy! Mercy is, according to Hosea 6:6, God's number one desire from His people. It trumps the sacrifices and burnt offerings that the people brought for the altar of the temple. God tells them that they cannot bring enough sacrifices for their sins. The term for mercy in the Hebrew language means steadfast love. It means to be unconditionally loyal to God. It means placing the desire to know God above everything else. Simply stated, it means being madly in love with God and the knowledge for Him. Stated another way: "I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings" (NLT). One can feel and hear the tender passion in God's expression.

God's Mercy Arouses God's Lamentation for Israel. He laments Israel's flimsy love for Him, comparing it to "the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears" (Hosea 6:4c and 4d). God's heartache for Israel provokes the questions: "What can I do with you Ephraim? And, "what can I do with you Judah?" Ephraim and Judah represent the division in the nation. God sounds like a hurting parent talking to His/Her rebellious children. Israel has broken God's covenant., i.e., Israel has thumbed her nose at God's mercy. In chapter 6:8-10, God has a catalogue of Israel's sins, i.e. unfaithfulness, murder, prostitution and others.

God's Judgement vs. God's Character. The test of God's character is seen in God's mercy. What can God do with His rebellious children? God uses prophets to punish God's people: "I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth then my judgments go like the sun" (Hosea 6:4, 5). The sun is the symbol of light, signifying that God makes God's actions visible to all. God's mercy is seen as being everlasting. God's character is seen in the parental love and sustaining care shown for Israel –

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. . . I taught Ephraim to walk, ... I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love" (Hosea 11:4).

Prayer: God of mercy and knowledge, teach us how to make Your mercy and knowledge our number one desire. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 16

SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 2025

DO THE RIGHT THING

Rev. Dr. Treyvon J. Sinclair, Sr.

Exodus 23:1

1 “Do not spread false reports. Do not help a guilty person by being a malicious witness.”

In 1989, the legendary director Spike Lee gave us a cultural masterpiece called “Do The Right Thing” a film that confronted racism, prejudice, and injustice in a Brooklyn neighborhood. The title alone sums up God’s message for us in Exodus 23:1. Just like the characters in the film had to make tough choices about right and wrong, we too are called by God to do the right thing in every area of our lives. Especially when it comes to truth and justice.

“You shall not spread a false report.” We know words are powerful. In the film, rumors, gossip, and misunderstandings lead to a boiling point in the community. A false word can do that! We see this in our own lives whether it's on social media, at work, or even in church. A small rumor can destroy relationships, and dishonesty can cause division that might take years to heal. How often do we pass along information without verifying its truth? In today’s world, it’s easy to retweet or repost something without thinking about the consequences. But God’s Word is clear, spreading false reports harms not just individuals, but entire communities.

“Do not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness.” One of the most profound lessons from “Do The Right Thing” is the role of influence. Characters were pressured into making decisions based on what others were doing around them. In this verse God is challenging us on how we align ourselves with those who do wrong. You can’t be a “ride or die” with someone who’s pulling you into dishonesty. Are we standing for truth, or do we let the pressure of others pull us into something dishonest? God's Word challenges us to examine our relationships and ask ourselves: Are we standing for what’s right, even when it’s hard? Dishonesty doesn’t just stay contained. It creates a ripple effect of pain and injustice. Much like in Spike Lee’s movie, one lie or false report can escalate to something far more destructive.

When we choose to live honestly, we reflect God’s character. God is truth. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). When we live in truth, we become a reflection of that divine character. Exodus 23:1 is a reminder that we, as followers of Christ, are held to a higher standard. We must not only avoid dishonesty, but also refuse to align with others who promote falsehood. Whether it’s confronting gossip in your circle, standing up against injustice in your community, or even choosing integrity over convenience at work - God is calling us to Do The Right Thing.

Prayer: Lord, we come asking for the courage to stand for what is right and true. Help us guard our words so that they bring healing and not harm. May we reflect Your truth and righteousness in all that we do. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 17

MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2025

WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

Rev. Dr. Barbara E. Headley

Ephesians 4:32

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

On October 6, 2006, a deranged gunman walked into a schoolroom in the Amish community of Lancaster County Pa. and did what was unimaginable in that community and in all of society. The gunman shot 5 schoolgirls and seriously wounded 5 others. What occurred within that quiet Amish community that day and the days after was both inconceivable and incredible. Amidst the shock, pain, and loss of young life was the incredible response of the Amish families that lost their little girls. They publicly forgave the killer and even extended grace to the killer’s family. How could this be possible? How can anyone forgive someone who has violently taken the life of their child?

The Amish, known for their 18th century lifestyle, deep religious convictions, and non-conformist to the conveniences of modern-day life, demonstrated to the world that theirs was a lived faith. Central to their Christian belief is the practice of forgiveness—radical forgiveness. What made the Amish families able to extend forgiveness was their understanding that forgiveness is what we have received from God through Christ. They practice forgiveness as an act of gratitude for the daily forgiveness they experience from God. They endeavor to live what Paul admonished the believers in Ephesus to do, to “be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

We are called to extend to others what we receive from God through Christ’s—forgiveness. One cannot do this without contemplating how great the forgiveness is that we received from God. We don’t deserve forgiveness, but because of Jesus’ great sacrifice on Calvary, and the power of His blood to cleanse us from sin, God sees us through Christ and forgives our sins. Jesus tells us that if we do not forgive others their sins, God will not forgive our sins (Matt.6:15).

Can we extend forgiveness for the offenses we experience, even the most grievous? We must and can forgive because in Christ Jesus, God is graciously forgiving us, and that forgiveness frees us to live and forgive others.

Prayer: Dear Lord, teach us to forgive others as we daily experience Your forgiveness and grace. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 18

TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2025

COMMANDING A SOUL IN WAITING

Rev. Dr. L. O. Griffin

Psalm 62:5

5 Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.

Silence doesn't always mean peace or without disturbance. Thoughts and events ruminating in one's soul could easily disturb and drown the silence of a tranquil atmosphere! One description of such a moment lies with the statement 'dark night of the soul.'

A dark night of the soul occurs when an unwanted, unsolicited, and unconscionable situation lands in one's life and upsets the equilibrium! Moments occur on life's journey that "rock your world" or strike at one's core! Beloved, do not expect a scarless life from birth-to-death! Into each life some rain does fall! Into each life, some tragedy brings temporary turmoil. Each person, each believer faces one or multiple dark nights of the soul.

The Psalmist, in this musical and poetic faith statement, encourages himself and each reader to pause amid a problematic moment to review the evidence of the Presence of the Eternal One. While amid the moment of misery, the writer reverts to the first two verses of this Sixty-second Psalm to remind himself that "my soul finds rest in God; [that] my salvation comes from him. [That] Truly he is my rock and my salvation; [that] he is my fortress, I will not be shaken." (Psalm 62:1-2)

Thus, he speaks to himself, speaks to his own soul, to remind himself that hope does not rest on the despair that caused the disturbance. Hope comes from the Lord! Hope rests in the Lord! Hope arrives with the Lord! Hope has its Source in the Lord. Hope remains available for rest, resurgence, rekindling, and resurrection—because God measures out the necessary hope that allows our individual souls to rest in God, amid life's storms. Friend, use this Lenten time to duplicate Christ's example of resting in the Lord.

Prayer: God, the temporary troubles we face disturb us. Remind us to rest in You so that we continue to move forward on and in Your strength. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 19

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2025

KEEP YOUR FOCUS

Bishop Brandon T. Whitehurst

Phil. 3:14

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Rarely does anyone begin anew without having a goal in mind. In verse 14, because Paul knew that he had not arrived, there was only one option open for him. He had to press on. Considering the many obstacles that life often times throws our way, having the zeal of Paul will help us to press on. More specifically, there is nothing that can compare to the unexpected that attempts to knock the wind out of our sails. However, we must join in the conviction of Paul to keep our hands to the plow, by keeping the goal at the forefront of our minds. We also must eliminate distractions, and be willing to reflect and adjust. As you continue to give your all to God, be encouraged by the story about “The Tightrope Walker.”

There was once a world-famous tightrope walker. Crowds would gather to watch him perform daring stunts, balancing high above the ground on a thin rope. One day, a young boy in the crowd shouted, “How do you keep from falling?” He smiled and responded, “It’s simple: I keep my eyes on the goal. As long as I focus on the end of the rope, I stay balanced. But, if I look down, I’ll lose my way.”

Then the rope-walker invited the boy to climb a small platform and walk across a low rope. “Just focus on the other side,” he said. The boy hesitated at first but kept his eyes fixed on the end. Step by step, he made it across. When the walker reached the other side, he said, “Life is like walking a tightrope. If you focus on your fears or distractions, you’ll stumble. But, if you keep your eyes on the goal—the things that truly matter—you’ll move forward with confidence. Keep Your Focus!”

Prayer: Father, grant us the power to keep our focus through every difficulty. Our goal is to please You in everything we say and do—for we know, with God, all things are possible. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 20

FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2025

WHEN THE WORD BECOMES FLESH

Rev. Dr. Darrell Drumwright

John 1:14

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

John's gospel reminds us of a hallmark truth of our Faith; God in Jesus Christ literally and physically walked this earth and lived like one of us in community with others. As believers indwelt by the Spirit of God, it should also be said of us that the "Word became flesh." Everywhere we go and in our everyday interactions with others we have an opportunity for the Word, which lives on the inside of us, to be made evident.

Give careful consideration to the way you treat, communicate with and interact with God's creation. It's not only you who will be seen, it is also the Jesus of our faith that others will speak of as well. In this critical time in which we live, an honest and critical self and church-based investigation must be undertaken to make sure that our professed witness is matched up with fruit-based evidence that Jesus Christ is living, active and moving in our lives.

Prayer: Eternal God our Creator, we ask you to search us and show us ourselves so that in our journey of faith it can be said of our witness that, "The Word became flesh and dwelled among us." In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.



New United Missionary Baptist Church Baptist Church of LeSotho, Southern Africa, completed and dedicated in July of 2023, by United Baptist Association of Greater New York.

DAY 21

MONDAY, APRIL 14, 2025

SAY, “YES”-BUT, SURRENDER IS REQUIRED

Dr. Charlie Dates

Luke 1:38

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.”

If I close my eyes now, I can hear Mr. Campbell singing in our Southside Chicago Church, “Master, can you use me?” We ought to be careful with the music we let our children hear. The right lyrics can impose a proper view of God on the childhood mind. It is no surprise then that these words first leap from the lips of a child in Scripture.

With all of her inadequacies and insecurities, Mary, the earthly Mother of Jesus surrendered her life and her body by boldly saying, in Luke 1:38, “I am the Lord’s servant, may Your word be fulfilled.” Remember now, that whenever God does something great in the world, He uses a human agent. There’s Moses and David, Ruth and Esther; the human witness of God’s work in the world. He chooses not to act alone. Without the welfare of a Mother, Jesus rested in eternity past in the fullness of His heavenly Father. But in time, He would need the benefit of an earthly Mother to accomplish His heavenly Father’s great plan of redemption. God wants human participation.

The good news is that God wants to use us. The bad news is that our surrender is required. We face competing forces that hinder our surrender to God, like the intangible injuries of sin and the normal limiting phases of life. Other, more visible hindrances attack our eligibility. Age becomes a factor. Miseducation and doubt sometimes inhibit our quick obedience.

We learn from the young teenage virgin Mary that whoever you are and wherever you are, you remain a candidate to be used by God. Nothing can fully or finally protect you from His sovereign selection. Hers are among the heaviest words known to humanity: “May Your word to me be fulfilled.” Weaker words don’t change history. Think about it. All of human history depends on this response. God wants to send His son into the world, but somebody has to be a willing instrument. I wonder what else God wants to do in the world, but our resistance blocks His entry.

You can pray it, too. Try it, “O Lord, be it done to me.” I’m glad that Mary said, “Yes” to God, but I’m also glad, that Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass said, “Yes” to God; glad that Fannie Lou Hammer and MLKJ said, “Yes” to God. I’m glad that my Mother said, “Yes,” to God. And I’m praying that Charlie and Claire say, “Yes,” to God, too.

Prayer: Use me, Oh Lord, as you please. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 22

THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2025

PEOPLE OF ANOTHER WAY

Rev. Dr. Don Darius Butler

Matthew 2:11-12

11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

No act of worship stands alone. Every expression of devotion is connected to the grand story of faith that is always unfolding. The gifts brought by these Eastern mystics are more than acts of mere veneration of a new king. When viewed through the lens of Lent and Easter, these gifts are tributes that anticipate the surrender and sacrifice of a sacred life on the altar of God at Calvary.

As an Epiphany text in the church tradition, we remember the significance of gold representing royalty; the symbolism of frankincense as a ritual offering within ancient Israelite religion; and the use of the aromatic resin, myrrh, for anointing bodies upon death. These symbols point to the mystical identity of the Christ Child as both divine and human, of royal lineage and an uncommon birth. Having searched for Him with a sentient star as their guide, these seekers find Him and offer the gifts of their possessions as an act of worship in the moment and as a testament to what is to come.

We tend to read the words they departed to their own country as the conclusion to the story of the magi, but I suspect the evangelist is conveying something of a deeper meaning. In contrast to Herod, the despotic king whose power is propped up by the Roman empire, his stated desire to worship is but a pretense. The coming of the wise men reveals the universal rule of the new King and a yielding of all wisdom to Him. Herod wants Him rooted out, while the wise men bestow upon Him deserving honor. And for the sincerity in all their searching and the liberality of their gift-giving, they leave this holy encounter convinced that they must travel a different route.

The same discerning spirit that brings them to Jesus directs them on a new path to journey. They cannot return home by the way of Herod – that is, power-seeking, dominance, and even violence; they must travel another way. Forasmuch as these wise men may have come to the Christ from another fold, they indeed are followers of another way of life because of their meeting Him. What good is it to make the spiritual journey without an openness to being redirected and leaving without a commitment to walking another way in our life in God?

Prayer: In our search for meaning, may we renounce the pretenses of power and dominance and remain open to a redirection towards humility and wholeness, O God, Jehovah. Let it be. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

31

DAY 23

SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 2025

PUTTING SATAN IN HIS PLACE

Rev. Edwin Holmes

Matthew 4:10

10 Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

As I reflect on my childhood, I remember playing with my friends and walking down the street past a house with a Doberman Pinscher. We laughed at the dog and threw rocks at it, knowing that the Doberman was on a chain and could only run about seven feet before being pulled back. This reminds me of God and Satan. Satan is like the dog in this story, restrained by God’s spiritual leash. Satan can only go so far before God pulls on the leash. God knows how to put Satan in his place.

The historical setting of Matthew 4:10 occurs during the early ministry of Jesus, shortly after His baptism by John the Baptist. This event takes place in the Judean wilderness where Jesus fasted for 40 days and faced temptation from Satan. Jesus’ confrontation with Satan reflects His commitment to fulfill His divine mission, establish God’s kingdom, and counter the temptations that appealed to power, security, and worldly success.

As a Believer there are three things, we can do to put Satan in his place:

1. Recognize the Resistance: Jesus recognized that Satan was trying to divert Him from His mission. Believers must discern the subtle ways temptation can infiltrate their lives. Awareness is the first step to resistance.

2. Reinforce with Scripture: Jesus responded to Satan’s temptations by quoting Scripture. He demonstrated the power of God’s Word as a weapon against lies and deceit. Believers should immerse themselves in Scripture to strengthen their defenses against temptation. The next time that you are tempted tell the enemy, **“It is Written.”** The next time there is family drama, tell the enemy, **“It is Written.”** The next time they lie on you, tell them, **“It is Written.”**

3. Refuse to Compromise: Jesus firmly commanded Satan to leave, making it clear that worship and service belong solely to God. The Greek word for worship conveys the meaning of kissing one’s hand or prostrating oneself in profound reverence. Believers must stand firm in their faith, refusing to compromise their values or yield to worldly temptations. Just as Jesus rejected Satan’s offers, we too must prioritize our devotion to God above all else, ensuring that our actions and choices reflect our commitment to Him.

In facing temptation, like Jesus, we must Recognize the Resistance, Reinforce our Faith with Scripture, and Refuse to Compromise our Devotion to God. By doing so, we can effectively put Satan in his place and live in the victory Christ has secured for us. Believers are no longer in bondage. we are free in Christ Jesus!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to recognize temptation, reinforce our faith with Your Word, and refuse to compromise our devotion to You, so that we may always put Satan in his place. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 24

MONDAY, MARCH 31, 2025

WITNESSING AT HOME

Rev. Allen Paul Weaver III

Mark 5:18-19

18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. 19 Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”

The man who was formerly demon-possessed had the right desire: He wanted to be with Jesus! After all, it was Jesus who had released him from the spiritual prison which had derailed his life! We don't know how long the man was possessed by demons. But we do know that the demonic chaos which had become his life was known to many within that region. Over the years, people had tried to bind and tame him. Up until this point, all had failed. They could only avoid the hill country near the tombs where he resided. But Jesus showed up, and everything changed!

In an instant, the demons were cast out of the man and he was completely set free and brought into his right frame of mind! And so, the man begs to go with The One who set him free. Again, his desire was right, however, Jesus had other plans for him: “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” Jesus lets him [and us] know that the blessing was not only for him alone... it was also to be a sign for everyone back in his hometown, so they could be confronted with THE TRUTH and place their faith in God.

Sometimes, the hardest people to witness to can be those from our home towns and families. Those people who knew us back in our “before Christ” days. Those who are close enough to witness our current struggles and flaws. Yet, Jesus gives us the task of sharing the reality of the gospel with them. The man obeyed Jesus and many who knew of his demonic lifestyle marveled when they saw that he had been made whole. No doubt, there were those who gave their lives to the Lord!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us share the blessings of your Son with those abroad AND at home. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 25

TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2025

GOD'S KIND OF JUSTICE

Rev. Dr. Mark A. Wainwright

Matthew 5:44

44 But I tell you: “Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, ...”

This verse calls us to embrace a divine form of justice, one grounded in love and sustained through prayer. It is not merely about tolerating those who hurt us; it is about seeking their transformation, healing, and redemption. This profound love ethic was championed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who believed that justice and love are united in the heart of God.

Dr. King understood that God’s justice was not about revenge, but about reconciliation. He famously said, “Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.” For Dr. King, prayer and love were the foundation of the Civil Rights Movement. His approach to justice was not rooted in anger or retribution, but in the belief that love could redeem even the most hardened hearts. This was a powerful reflection of Matthew 5:44—loving enemies and praying for those who persecute is not a sign of weakness, but of spiritual strength. Through prayer, Dr. King and many others sought divine intervention to transform oppressive systems and the hearts behind them.

In the 21st century urban context, this call to justice through love and prayer remains deeply relevant. Cities today are often battlegrounds for justice, where racial inequality, police violence, and systemic oppression persist. But as followers of Christ, He calls us to engage in this fight with God’s kind of justice—one that refuses to repay evil for evil. Instead, we pray for the transformation of those who harm and work tirelessly to build communities grounded in love.

This does not mean we stay silent in the face of injustice. Rather, our prayers fuel our advocacy, and our love inspires us to fight for a justice that is redemptive, not vengeful. God’s justice through love creates pathways for healing, reconciliation, and systemic change. In this way, we live out the legacy of Dr. King and the teachings of Christ, bringing light into dark places and transforming enemies into allies through the power of prayer and the ethic of love.

Prayer: God of justice and mercy, help us serve you and this world in a just manner. Help us focus on you as our guide to create a just world. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 26

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2025

GLORY TO HIS NAME

Rev. Dr. Joe Samuel Ratliff

Matthew 6:13 (KJV)

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

The model prayer is taught to believers and even familiar to nonbelievers. We fervently pray and affirm His kingdom, His power, and His glory.

The glory of God is referenced many times in the Bible, but reserved for this very moment. The idea of applauding our God places Him above all other gods. Embracing the closing of the Lord's Prayer "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen," we humbly submit and praise the trinity of His being.

The kingdoms of this world will become His kingdom affirming His power and applauding His glory. As we watch political figures compete for the glory of God, we hail the power of Jesus' name and crown Him Lord of Lords. God is a jealous God and will not share His glory! The Bible records stories of even kings who were brought down when they attempted to supersede God's power and rule of God's people.

God's glory is reserved for Him. Glory to His precious name! The resurrection is all about Him. GLORY TO HIS NAME!

Prayer: Father God who reigns supreme be glorified and magnified forever! In Jesus' Name, Amen.



The new W.W. Brown Day Care Center in SOWETO, Johannesburg, South Africa completed and dedicated in July of 2024

DAY 27

THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 2025

GOD'S KIND OF INVESTMENT

Rev. Dr. Derick Brennan

Matthew 6:20

20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Investment marketing is designed to give potential clients insight and incentive to invest with a specific firm. The advertisements are peppered with the implied assurances of trustworthiness, security, personal attention, diversification, and minimizing risk while maximizing returns. However, all commercials, social media posts, and mailings are accompanied by small font disclaimers or reduced volume voiceovers noting that “no investment is fully guaranteed.” Therefore, stakeholders must do their research and invest at their own risk.

Unlike secular strategies, the Biblical investment philosophy is explicit in mitigating all risk with guarantees of short- and long-term gains. For Matthew’s target audience, the Jewish diaspora living under Roman oppression and 21st century readers, Jesus’ advice is radical and revelatory. Jesus candidly reminds us that nothing on earth is permanent. It is imperative that believers identify what and who are receiving the greatest percentage of our time, energy, talent, and money. Due to the finite natures of these resources, they can be a person’s most precious assets. One way to gauge the location of our hearts and our current investment priorities is the examination of our search engine and streaming logs, bank statements, and calendars.

The brevity of our earthly sojourns mandates this approach. At the time that this devotional was penned, due to fall weather, leaves were turning colors portending their decline. It is disconcerting but true, that our earthly treasures are ebbing and subject to the cyclical elements of life. Aging, family transitions, economic shifts, serendipitous occurrences are ongoing and require attention. However, responsibilities must be managed with caution. If we’re not careful, the tyranny of now can enable our cares to supplant the priorities of Christ. Therefore, though extremely difficult, it behooves believers to faithfully steward possessions without idolizing them.

One of Satan’s most effective strategies is leading humans to vest in self or his kingdom while divesting in God’s. Unlike our ancestors Adam and Eve, we must read the fine print, listen for the disclaimer, and do our own research. God is the master investor as affirmed by the empirical data of God’s creation of the world, self-sacrifice at Calvary, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. His is the only investment advice that believers should heed.

Prayer: Lord, may you get the greatest return from investing in me. Please give me the wisdom to prioritize your guidance in accruing heavenly treasures that are perpetually appreciating. With anticipation and expectancy, I look forward to sharing in future returns when I see your face! In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

36

DAY 28

FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 2025

THE KINGDOM, TOP PRIORITY

Rev. Dr. Derrick L. Boykin

Matthew 6:33

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

We all have priorities in life. What's yours? Is it family or friends? Is it work or school? Is it making money and providing for your basic needs, or your family's? Perhaps, something else is at the top of your priority list? Jesus makes clear what the top priority for his disciples should be. As his disciples, we are to put the first thing first by seeking God's kingdom and his righteousness above all else.

Obedience to this command is without a shadow of doubt the secret key to victorious living. "Why?", you might ask? The answer is clear: Jehovah is sovereign. This is a fundamental truth about God's very nature. Put differently, there is none like Jehovah in all of heaven and earth. No king or queen; governor or ruler; angel or principality, can rival him. He is supreme in power and authority. He is almighty, all-knowing, and present everywhere. The world, and everything in it, belongs to God and is under God's dominion.

In light of this truth about Jehovah's nature, the man, woman, boy or girl who seeks first God's kingdom and God's righteousness proves themselves to have Godly wisdom, because they constantly place themselves at the fountain of all spiritual and material blessings. Such persons can rest in full confidence knowing, God can and will meet their every need according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus. This is the true path to victory!

During this Lenten season and beyond, I encourage you to humbly, reverentially, yet boldly, find your place daily before the mercy seat of God! At dusk, make evident that God's Kingdom is your top priority by lifting up heartfelt prayer! And just watch and see how God moves on your behalf! Beyond question, Jehovah Jireh will prove himself faithful and true in doing immeasurably more than all of what you can ask or imagine!

Prayer: Almighty God, grant us the wisdom essential to put the first thing first! By the power of your Holy Spirit, help us each and every day to make our top priority seeking first your kingdom and your righteousness above all else! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 29

SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 2025

THE DANGER OF GAINING THE WORLD AND LOSING YOUR SOUL

Rev. Dr. Donaldson Jones

Matthew 16:26

26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Homosapiens are trichotomous beings comprised of body, soul and spirit. The spirit is God's breath of life animating our being. When death takes that breath, the body retires to the bed of earth. At death, the soul, the center of our being, which houses the mind, heart and will transitions to its chosen everlasting estate of Heavenly Felicity or the Flames of Hell.

Since the fall, humankind has sought to redefine the moral order apart from God. The pseudo-intellectual infiltration of secular humanism has labeled the cheap things valuable and the valuable things cheap. The deficit of decorum has sabotaged the collective consciousness of contemporary civilization, indicative of a lostness of soul. This lostness descends by degrees into depravity and damnation.

When a nation fails to function in the best interest of its people; when an institution forgets or forsakes its founding principles and or personalities; the soul has been lost. Most alarming is when the church has lost its soul! THE SOUL OF THE CHURCH IS JESUS CHRIST; His Message, Model, Ministry and Mission of Love and Liberation.

How unfortunately unthoughtful so many individuals and churches willfully exchange permanent providential principles for passing privileges of power, pleasures and possessions.

The apostle John states, "For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life—comes not from the Father, but from the world" (1 John 2:16). If one could have all this verse speaks of, one would have gained the whole world.

If one acquired all the world, would it be profitable enough to exchange for your soul and forfeit the well-being of humanity and the wonders of Heaven? After one has transitioned from this world and awakens in the state of lostness, in less than three seconds of that terrible torment, the blood curdling eardrum bursting cry will ring throughout gehenna, HELL- NAHH!! May we all exchange our souls to Christ and gain eternal life in Heaven.

Prayer: Gracious God give us the wherewithal to exchange our will for yours. We pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 30

SATURDAY, APRIL 19, 2025

EMANCIPATED

Rev. Dr. William B. Sutton III

Luke 5:20

20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

Most Americans are aware of the Emancipation Proclamation, issued on Jan. 1, 1863, by President Abraham Lincoln. This document “officially” proclaimed freedom for the 4 million Blacks who were enslaved against their will in the United States. One of the main goals of this proclamation was the immediate release and freedom of any human beings who were being forcibly held against their will as slaves.

In our devotional passage for today, Jesus meets a man whose sickness has forcibly held him in captivity for a number of years. Most likely, because of this man’s physical condition (he is a paralytic), his life has been reduced to one of financial, emotional, mental, psychological and spiritual slavery. However, as a result of the concerted actions of this man’s friends—friends who worked together to get the sick man to Jesus—Jesus issues to the sick man a spiritual “Emancipation Proclamation.” Immediately after issuing this man’s spiritual “Emancipation Proclamation,” the man is physically healed and restored. Consequently, because he was physically restored, this man is now in a position to live a life of normalcy and self-sufficiency. Because God has set him free, the man who was once held in “slavery” is now emancipated and can live the life of a free individual.

Most disciples of Christ see the Lenten season as a time of willingly entering into bondage for a spiritual significance. Usually, Lent is the time when disciples are encouraged to give something up during the Lenten season, or to engage in a sacrificial labor of love. Unfortunately, few disciples of Christ see the Lenten season as a time to “gain” something, rather than to “lose” something. The insight of our devotional passage of Scripture for today challenges us to hear the voice of Jesus saying, “Friends, I see your faith, your sins are forgiven,” and therefore you have been emancipated. Now that the spirit of God has emancipated us, we have been freed in order to engage in the work God has called us to commit ourselves to do, and to advance the kingdom of God.

Prayer: Gracious and loving God, emancipate us today so that we can begin to really discover what your Son Jesus meant when he declared, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 31

MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2025

IF I CAN HELP SOMEBODY

Rev. Johnny Williams

Mark 8:36

36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?

Rev. Dr. R. T. Kendall, renowned preacher/pastor, tells a story of when he was with his long-time childhood friend, who was also a pastor. Dr. Kendall asked his friend the following question: “If you had to do it all over again, what would you do differently?” His friend paused for a moment, and replied, “I would remember that only God can turn water into wine.” Dr. Kendall shares, he immediately understood what his dear friend was talking about.

So many leaders when they are blessed with a new assignment from God, immediately try to “turn water into wine.” They try to change the world by the end of the day. Some newly assigned pastors take down all the older pictures in the vestibule, and they put up their own photograph with a hosanna smile. They purchase a new sound-system so they can tell the person in the sound room, “Give me a little more on the left speaker and maybe on the right too.” They think they have the formula to turn water into wine.

We as leaders must always remember only God can turn water into wine; no matter how hard we try! I wonder if the idea ever crossed their minds, “If I can help somebody,” through discipleship education; providing a moral example of dignity and integrity found in the teachings of Jesus Christ. Could it be possible that you proclaim a prosperity gospel? Name it and claim it? One of the saddest sights you’ll ever see is a leader being chauffeured in a Rolls Royce, while their members are catching the bus to church on Sunday morning. I’m reminded of Jesus’ words, “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”

During this Lenten season, we must remember love is never manufactured; love is given. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). When we help somebody along the way by declaring the love of the resurrected Savior Jesus Christ in word and deed, then we will be able to sing along with Mahalia Jackson and others, “If I can help somebody as I travel along the way, then my living shall not be in vain!”

Prayer: O Lord, I ask that you elevate the minds of our leaders, specifically, and your church, generally, to the greater possibilities of helping those who may not be as fortunate as others. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 32

TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2025

NOTHING LEFT TO LOSE BUT EVERYTHING TO GAIN

Dr. Martia Creighton Thigpen

Mark 5:25-28

25 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. 26 She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. 27 When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28 because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.”

We, all, will experience loss! Whether it be loss of a job, loved one, or health; we will suffer loss. The woman with the issue of blood, is a great example of how to cope and conquer loss. She suffered loss of her health, her finances, and her sense of community, but not her faith. Having spent all her money, she grew worse rather than get better. Enduring much under many physicians, she tried any and every treatment possible, yet her condition grew worse! Her sense of community...her support system...her family...her friends, all were lost, but she pressed forward.

Suffering from unceasing bleeding; isolated for twelve years; excommunicated from community because the law and tradition forbid her from being amongst the people; she was abandoned and alone, but she refused to be denied her opportunity for healing. She had nothing else to lose.

I believe this unnamed woman was healed because she refused to be overlooked or excluded. She knew the power within herself and despite the “rules” or traditions that told her what she couldn’t do, she had nothing to lose and everything to gain! Her prognosis was incurable, but she believed that she could be healed. Healed without “permission” from anyone. For she said, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.”

This woman “reached out” and grabbed healing for herself! She didn’t wait for healing to be given to her, she didn’t wait for society to tell her when or how. She didn’t wait to be given permission, but instead this woman with no power, authority, or place in society realized who she was and WHOSE she was! As a result of her faith, God restored ALL that she had lost.

Prayer: Lord God, help us to realize who we are and Whose we are. Help us to operate in the full faith of your power and your authority for our gain and your glory. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

41

DAY 33

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2025

TAKE HEED, WATCH AND PRAY

Rev. Elmer Porter Hardy, Jr.

Mark 13:33

33 Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.

One of my fondest memories as a teenager growing up in the South Bronx, New York was becoming a Tenderfoot Scout in Troop 95 (Boy Scouts of America) at Thessalonia Baptist Church. I recall how the late great Rev. Dr. Shellie Sampson, Jr. blessed us with his pastoral handshake at the end of worship on 2nd Sundays (Scouts Day) as we lived out the Scouts' motto: "Be Prepared." And while the Boy Scouts of America may have used it, Jesus Christ said it first, right here in today's text. Jesus warns the 1st century believers to: 'Be Prepared' for His return.

One of the many things I love about Jesus is His willingness tell His disciples everything His Father told him. But I can hear the Father saying to Jesus: "Yes, I taught you everything you know, but I did not teach you everything I know." And beloved, that's because Father knows best. So, while the Father did indeed tell Jesus about the signs of the times regarding His return, He did not tell Jesus the actual time in terms of the specific year, month, day or hour. However, here's what we know for sure, we can hold Mark 13 in one hand and the NY Times in the other, and literally check the list to confirm that the signs of the end and return of Christ are accurate:

- False prophets (check)—like Evangelist Harold Camping who wrongly predicted the end 12 times.
- Wars and Rumors of Wars (check)—Russia vs. Ukraine, Israel vs. Palestine, World War III and 'Me'.
- Earthquakes and Famine (check)—New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Japan, Malawi and Kenya.

Additional checks on Mark's checklist include: Abuses in houses of worship; fatal family betrayals; murderous children killing their parents; as well as disciples being hated and arrested. The last check on the checklist for Christ's return is when the gospel reaches every nation. Until then beloved, as we witness the signs of the end, don't be scared, just "Be Prepared."

Prayer: Yahweh, thanks for helping us to Stay Woke for Christ's return. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 34

THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2025

DOING THE DIRTY WORK OF SERVING

Rev. Tremaine Combs

John 13:3-4

3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

There are few who like to do dirty work. Most would prefer work that doesn't place themselves in the path to look unkept and appear unpolished. Most would desire work that gives, at the very least, the appearance of success and skill. Few like to do work that puts them in a subservient light that reflects a lack of value and worth. This is often because we tend to find our worth in what we do. This is the result of living in a capitalist society that moves from a place of commodification. When a value is attached to everything and everyone, what we do becomes a gauge of worth.

Yet in the text, Jesus shows a better way. As we consider the text, the significance of the moment is not in the servant's towel. The towel is a result of knowing Who He is and what His Father has done. This is crucial for our understanding. It teaches that our worth is not found in what we do. Our worth is not found in how we are compartmentalized or commodified. Instead, our worth is found in our relationship with God.

The foundation of personal worth and powerful ministry is a profound relationship with the triune God. We must not forget that the Lord was empowered to serve, because of the intimacy He shared with the Father, as the Son always turned to His Father's face and will. He could serve fully, because He is completely rooted in His Sonship and the Father's love.

The same must be true for us. We must show our relationship with the triune God by our service, not assume that through our service our relationship is secured. We show that we are most like our Lord, most filled with the Holy Spirit, and most reflective of the Father's glory when we are able to serve with the dignified humility that rightly befits the identity of a disciple of Jesus Christ. We must do the dirty work of serving, because it is only in doing the dirty, hard work of serving we can rightly apply to ourselves the words of the Lord Who exemplified service with a towel and a cross, when He says, "But the greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted" (Matthew 23:11-12).

Prayer: Lord God, help us imitate You in the dirty work of service that reflects that we are children of God. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 35

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 2025

LORD, IS IT I?

Rev. C. Allen Moses

Matthew 26:22

22 They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, Lord, is it I?

It's the first day of the week, and the Unleavened Bread's festivities are underway. Many Jews gathered in the Holy City of Jerusalem to observe and commemorate the Passover. This is a time of redemptive remembrance of when Israel experienced deliverance from Egypt. As the sun descended and evening presented itself, Jesus sat at the dinner table surrounded by His twelve disciples. One of the twelve who sits with them has opened himself to the powers of evil. Knowing everything, Jesus speaks a confrontational truth that one who eats with Him will betray Him. One by one, the disciples pondered and asked Jesus, "Lord, is it I?"

Lord, is it I? Am I the one whose loyalty is at risk? Am I the one who violates the trust we have built over the years? Am I the one who will hurt the person who has helped me? Am I the one that will fall away? Can you imagine sitting and enjoying the evening meal and being confronted with the most unpleasant reality: the one among you is going to betray Jesus? Questions and feelings of inadequacy permeate through each disciple, prompting them to ask, "Lord, is it I?" The Greek word *meti* indicates a state of denial by which the disciples exclaimed, "Surely, not I Lord."

The question or statement articulated by the disciples on that night should cause believers to take inventory of their commitment and dedication to Jesus. There must be an awareness of self, where we examine our faith walk to ensure we are not teetering the lines of betrayal. Self-awareness keeps us loyal and faithful, not only to Jesus, but to those whom we have connected ourselves to. In this season of Lent, may we rededicate ourselves to being committed to the one who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. May we hold fast to the profession of our faith and remain loyal to the cause of Christ. Examine and be aware of self, and when in doubt, ask the pivotal probing question, "Lord, is it I?"

Prayer: Lord, help me see myself in the light of your love so that I may remain faithful to you and committed to the work you have given me. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 36

TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 2025

A WILLING SPIRIT AND A WEAK FLESH

Rev. Dr. Robert P. White

Mark 14:38

38 Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Have we forgotten, how we do something is just as important as what we do? God wants our hearts inclined to obey, and He promised to bless willingly obedience (Isaiah 1:19). Willingness can be apparent and is admirable, but the reality is some anxiously amble through life ready, and willing, but unable to obey God, perhaps due to addiction, a debilitating illness or a diminished capacity; for which God understands and has compassion (Psalm 103:14).

Who among us has not felt weak or strong, at some time or another? When our abilities, capacities and energies are high we feel strong; and when they are low, we can feel weak. In many cultures weakness is considered a negative trait to overcome or as a liability to avoid, but Christians can view it is as an opportunity to receive strength from God. When their way of thinking changes (Rom. 12:2); their appraisals, values, and perspectives become different. And they can learn to differentiate spiritual and physical strength and reframe their experiences of weakness, like Paul (2 Cor. 12:9).

In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed in agony, struggled inwardly and in his humanity, wanted support outwards (Mk. 14:32-36). In this context, admonishing Peter, He said ***“the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,”*** the Greek words (*pneuma prothymos*) mean to be eager and willing in spirit yet, unable, since the Greek words for “weak flesh” (*sarx asthenes*) means feeble, it indicates inability, lacking strength (physically) and (metaphorically) to oppose the spiritual. But Hallelujah! God provides both desire and ability needed (Phil. 2:13) as we submit to His will, they can be cultivated or conferred (Galatians 5:16). The dichotomy between strength and weakness are reflected in the contrasting behavior of Jesus and His disciples. Yet, Jesus empathizes with our weakness (Hebrews 4:15) and in the garden, modeled the acquisition of strength through alertness, persistent prayer and submission.

Prayer: Unfailing, loving, limitless Lord, we love you, yet live with our limitations and fail. Keep us alert and prayerful to overcome temptations and make us humbly aware of our weaknesses and need to find strength in you. Thanks for your mercy, in Jesus' Name, Amen!

DAY 37

THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 2025

THE STRENGTHING ANGEL

Rev. Naomi Tyler-Lloyd

Luke 22:43

43 An angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him.

Often God calls for us to do things we do not want to do, go places we do not want to go, and accept things we do not want to accept. Our freewill is a gift that at times can cause emotional agony because it makes our flesh face our spirit as if they were enemies on a battlefield. Jesus was approaching the final steps in God's plan of salvation. This was the reason He came in flesh to walk among humanity, however, at this moment His human freewill is facing His divine omniscience. Jesus petitions the Father for a reprieve, if possible, but knowing all things He submitted Himself to God's will. In response to Jesus' obedience, an angel strengthened Him.

Is not that the way God enters into our lives? We flinch at the difficulty, discomfort, or dreadfulness that we may have to engage in order to be faithful. We battle to be in a nevertheless posture, when we really want to be exempted from whatever it is that God wants from us. But when we yield, God gives us strength for the assignment.

An angel came to give Jesus strength for what was ahead; the violence, humiliation and degradation that should be our punishment for sinful separation from God. As you continue this Lenten journey, as you face the cares of this world, be encouraged. Submission to God's will may at times be a difficult calling, but God already knows what lies ahead and has already dispatched angels to strengthen you. Whatever God is calling upon us to do, it cannot compare to the assignment Jesus had on our behalf. Yield to God's will, God has already proven that it is what is best, and we will be ***blessed***.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for thinking about us. We praise you for working through us and for us. We exalt you for giving us just what we need and just when we need it. Help us to be drawn nearer the cross and the Christ. Strengthen us for this Lenten Journey. This we ask in the name of the Lamb of God, our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus, Amen.



DAY 38

FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 2025

INDECISION IS DECISION

Rev. Dr. John H. Grant

Matthew 27:17

17 So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Christ?”

In this passage, Jesus is on trial standing before Pontius Pilate the governor. Jesus was handed over to him by all the chief priests and elders who were plotting to put Jesus to death. After listening to the accusations and reviewing the evidence against Jesus, Pilate knew Jesus was innocent.

Luke records Pilate saying he found no fault in Jesus, nothing deserving of death. Yet the people cried “Crucify Him.” Three times Pilate asks, “Why? What crime has this man committed?” (Luke 23:14-15, 22).

When Pilate sees they are determined to have Jesus crucified, he takes water and washes his hands before the multitude, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood...” (Mt. 27:24). Pilate does not have the courage to make a decision to take a stand for Christ. Instead in his indecisiveness, he attempts to shift the decision and the blame onto the crowd for Jesus’ crucifixion—in which case his indecision becomes his decision.

Soap and water could not wash away the guilt of handing Christ over to be crucified. His failure to decide for Christ becomes by default his decision against Christ. Perhaps the best commentary on Pilate’s actions are our Lord’s own words: “He who is not with me is against me...” (Mt. 12:30, Luke 11:23).

Those who are indecisive about or do not decide for Christ have made a decision against Christ and remain lost in their sin and under God’s condemnation (John 3:18,36). There is no excuse or escape for indecision about Christ.

Prayer: Grant, oh God, that everywhere this gospel is heard, the hearers may realize that indecision or neutrality about Christ is never acceptable or excusable—we’re either for Him or against Him. In His name, Amen.

DAY 39

SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2025

IT IS NEVER TOO LATE

Rev. Dr. Jamey O. Graham

Luke 23:43

43 Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

In this Lenten season it is good to know that it is never too late for God to come through for you. Whether you are a lost sinner, dying like this thief on the cross or someone with a terminal illness, Jesus comes to remind us that it is never too late for hope and healing; deliverance and salvation.

Number one, Jesus, reminds us today that **it is never too late to call upon the name of the Lord**. The thief called on the name of the Lord in His dying moment. He said, "Jesus..." which means Jehovah Saves. The angel said to Joseph in Matthew 1:21, "His name shall be called Jesus, and he shall save his people from their sins." Romans 10:13 says, "Whosoever call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Just like the thief in the text, you too, can call on the name of the Lord and be saved.

Secondly, **it is never too late to ask the Lord to remember you!** The thief said, "...remember me when you come into your kingdom." That word remember also means to be mindful. The Psalmist said in Psalm 8:4, "what is mankind, that you are mindful of them, or human beings that you care for them?" The Psalmist even said in Psalm 115:12, "The Lord remembers us and will bless us..." He will remember you in His mercy.

Finally, **it is never too late for the Lord to save you**. Jesus responded to the thief by saying, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." This day, while you are dying, you shall be with me in paradise. Paradise is a place of peace, freedom, joy, and final rest. So, remember it is never too late to call upon the Lord, for hope, healing and salvation.

Prayer: Thank Lord for reminding us that it is never too late for You to save! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 40

FRIDAY, APRIL 18, 2025

WOUNDED FOR ME

Rev. Dr. Lisa M. Weaver

Isaiah 53:5

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Microscopes are amazing instruments. Things unseen to the naked eye are magnified and seen in all their intricate detail. Through them, specks and particles take up our entire view as we peer through the lenses that make unseen things visible. Through them, doctors identify root causes of sickness and disease by examining cells, and then set a healing course of treatment for patients. Lent is somewhat like a microscope. We spiritually dial down the microscope on the final years of Christ's earthly life. We can see, as through a spiritual microscope, in full detail the ugly, messy, un-Christ-like specks and particles of our own lives in the light of Christ's life and healing work.

In this regard, what does this verse say to us? It tells us that Christ was wounded and bruised for our thoughts, our words, and our deeds—for all the ways in which our living does not glorify God. It begs the question, then, "From where do these non-glorifying things spring?" They spring from broken and bereft spirits. They spring from spirits who are lonely, abandoned, angry, spiteful, hurting, abused, arrogant, anxious, afraid, insecure, and resentful. They spring from spirits who want revenge, and spirits who want their way at any and all cost. They spring from the places of deep lack in our spirits that cause us to engage in compensatory deeds that don't heal our real wounds but only pacify our pain and emptiness. These are but a few of the "specks and particles" that during Lent we need to see and acknowledge as our own, in all of their full and ugly detail. We then need to bring them all to the altar, surrender them to Christ, and let them be healed by His finished work. It is not that healing is not available. We need to make ourselves available to His healing. He was wounded for us.

Prayer: Gracious and loving God, You who stands ever ready to forgive and to heal, cause me to see and own everything You already know about me, and grant me the courage to come to your altar and receive the healing for which Christ was wounded, bruised, and died. I pray this through the strong name of Your Son Jesus the Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

RESURRECTION SUNDAY

SUNDAY, APRIL 20, 2025

SURPRISED BY HIS UNEXPECTED PRESENCE

Rev. Dr. Joe Albert Bush, Sr.

Luke 24:36

36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

A group of brilliant scholars were gathered around a table discussing the great authors of the past and their impact on society. One of the men asked the question, "What if John Milton were to suddenly enter this room where we are sitting?" "Ah," replied another gentleman. "We would honor him and compensate him for the little recognition he received during his day." A third man chimed in with the question, "But what if William Shakespeare were to enter this room? Would we not all stand and proclaim him King of the Poets?" At that point one from their ranks ventured with the question, "And if Jesus Christ should enter?" After a few moments of pure silence, one of them said, very softly but convincingly: "But gentlemen, He is here!"

Luke shows us the eleven disciples gathered together on the evening of the Resurrection. They were trying to make sense out of the strange events of the past few days, including a rather bizarre report from two other followers of Christ who claimed they had just seen the Lord. All of a sudden, in walks Jesus, not dead, but very much alive. And the very first words out of His mouth were, "Peace be with you."

This morning, millions will gather around the world for worship, in churches great and small, without realizing that Christ really is present. Then we will gather around the dinner table with family and friends to celebrate the Resurrection. And tomorrow many of us will go about our regular duties and responsibilities, even trying to make sense of the tragedies, the calamities, and the vicissitudes of life without realizing that Jesus Christ really is Present. Did He promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

On this Easter Sabbath, and anytime here after, we may just find ourselves surprised by the Master's unexpected presence.

Prayer: Lord Christ: Keep showing up in situations, in circumstances, in places, and in ways we would never expect. To the glory of your strong name. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

2025 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL CONTRIBUTORS

Deacon Sheila W. Alexander

Graphic Designer, Walker Memorial Baptist Church, Bronx, NY

Dr. Alvin Bernstine

Pastor Emeritus, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Richmond, CA

Dr. Derick Brennan

Pastor, Canaan Baptist Church, Philadelphia, PA

Dr. Derrick L. Boykin

Executive Pastor, Walker Memorial Baptist Church, Bronx, NY and Chief Editor of the So Send I You, Inc. Lenten Devotionals

Dr. J. Albert Bush, Sr

Senior Pastor, Walker Memorial Baptist Church, Bronx, NY and Founder and Chief Executive Officer, So Send I You, Inc.

Rev. Johnny C. Bush

Pastor, Gunter's Chapel Baptist Church, Columbia, SC

Dr. Don Darius Butler

Pastor, Concord Fellowship Church, Huntsville, AL

Rev. Mcford B. Chipuliko

Retired Indigenous Missionary to Malawi, Foreign Mission Board, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Rev. Tremaine Combs

Senior Pastor, Mount Zion Baptist Church, Lincoln, NE

Dr. Darrell A. Drumwright

Senior Pastor, The Temple Church, Nashville, TN

Dr. Riggins R. Earl, Jr.

Retired Professor of Ethics, Interdenominational Theological Seminary, Atlanta, GA

Deacon Cheryl Forbes

Editor, Walker Memorial Baptist Church, Bronx, NY

Dr. Joseph G. Ford

Senior Pastor, Faith Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church, Stamford, CT

2025 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Jamey O. Graham, Sr.

Pastor, St. John Baptist Church, Columbia, SC, and President of the Baptist Education and Missionary Convention of SC

Dr. John H. Grant

Senior Pastor, Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Asheville, NC and Board Member of So Send I You, Inc.

Dr. Leonard O. Griffin

Pastor, Old Macedonia Baptist Church, North Augusta, SC

Rev. Elmer Porter Hardy, Jr.,

American Baptist Minister, Hamden, CT

Bishop Alonzo D. Hatchett Jr.

Pastor, Foster Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, Nashville, TN

Dr. Barbara Headley

Pastor, Zion Community Baptist Church, Springfield, MA

Dr. Edwin Holmes

Pastor, The Renaissance Baptist Church, Detroit, MI

Dr. Amos Jones

Pastor, Zion Hill First African Baptist Church, Nashville, TN

Dr. Donaldson Jones

Pastor, Great Commission Baptist Church, Pulaski, TN

Dr. John W. Kinney

Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Beaverdam, VA, Retired Professor of Theology and Dean Emeritus, Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology, Richmond, VA

Rev. Brandle C. Morrow

Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church of Jeffersontown, Louisville, KY

Dr. Joe Samuel Ratliff

Senior Pastor, Brentwood Baptist Church, Houston, TX

Dr. C. J. Rhodes

Pastor, Mount Helm Baptist Church, Jackson, MS

2025 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Treyvon Sinclair

Executive Pastor, Christ the King Baptist Church, Milwaukee, WI

Dr. Johnathan Staples

Pastor, First Shiloh Baptist Church, Buffalo, NY

Dr. Ivory Thigpen

Pastor, Rehoboth Baptist Church, Columbia, SC

Dr. Martia A. Thigpen

Associate Minister, Rehoboth Baptist Church, Columbia, SC

Racine Tucker-Hamilton *(design and layout)*

Bowie, MD

Dr. Johnny Turner

Associate Minister of Training and Teaching, MT. Sinai Baptist Church, Orlando, FL

Dr. Mark A. Wainwright

Pastor, First Baptist Church of Annapolis, MD

Rev. Allen P. Weaver, III

Pastor, Bethesda Baptist Church, New Rochelle, NY

Dr. Lisa M. Weaver

Executive Minister, The Riverside Church, NY, NY

Bishop Brandon T. Whitehurst

Pastor, Faith Tabernacle Baptist Church of Spartanburg, SC

Dr. Demetrius K. Williams

Pastor, Community Baptist Church of Greater Milwaukee, and Associate Professor of Languages, Comparative Literature, and Religious Studies, University of Wisconsin.

Rev. Johnny Williams

Associate Minister, MT. Zion Baptist Church, Detroit, MI

CONTACT US

SO SEND I YOU, INC.
P.O. BOX 1699
LINCOLNTON STATION
NEW YORK, NY 10037

WWW.EVENSOSENDIYOU.ORG

JOHN 20:21-23

"As the Father sent me, even so send I you."



so send i you

"AS THE FATHER SENT ME,
EVEN SO SEND I YOU"