

Lenten Devotional

Good Shepherd Lutheran and Lena UMC



Praying Hands. <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=57495>

The season of Lent is a time to pause, reflect, and prepare. We begin with Ash Wednesday. It is a reminder of our mortality and our frailty. We journey through a time of turning, turning away from sin and toward God. We pause to see all the ways that God works in our lives to make that turning possible.

This year we have been through a lot. Our emotions are all over the place. Our devotions will bring us face to face with that reality. We will name and claim our hurt. In doing so we can begin to release that hurt to God. In the release, we make space for the new creation God is working.

For the suggested devotional practice you will need a pot, dirt, and a seed. Each week we will remember that out of dirt we were shaped, and to dirt we return. In our death, we are buried in the dirt, and out of dirt springs the new growth of resurrection.

May God bless your time of devotion and turning.

Week 1: Feb 17-23

SCRIPTURES: Habakkuk 1:2-4; 2:1-8; 3:1, 17-19

Bonus: read all of Habakkuk

THEME: Anger

This week's theme is anger. So often anger is an emotion that scares us or that we think is somehow bad and to be avoided. Poet and thinker Audre Lorde challenges us to think about anger differently. Anger is an “appropriate reaction” to grievous harm. “Anger is a source of empowerment we must not fear to tap for energy rather than guilt.” For Lorde, anger becomes destructive when it has no outlet and eats away at us, and anger that is not channeled for its power is wasted.¹

TIME OF REPENTANCE

Is there anger that is festering inside eating away at you? Is there anger that could be channeled for change? Name and claim that anger, then write or draw it on the blank half of this page. Pray for God to help you release and channel that anger so that it becomes a force of change for good rather than a source of destruction. Spend as much time as you need. When your prayer time is finished, rip your page in pieces and place it in your pot. Cover the pieces with a few handfuls of dirt. Remember God hears your cries.

PRAYER (from Psalm 5)

Give ear to my words, O LORD; give heed to my sighing. Listen to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you I pray. O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch. For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil will not sojourn with you. Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me. Give ear to my words, O LORD; give heed to my sighing.

¹ Audre Lorde. “The Uses of Anger” Women's Studies Quarterly 9:3 Fall 1981

Week 2: Feb 24-Mar 2

SCRIPTURES: Luke 7:11-16

THEME: Grieving

This week's theme is grieving. Grieving is a part of our life. We experience grief when we lose our loved ones. We also grieve when we move to a new place, or we retire from a job, or our health declines. In other words, we experience grief when we lose what we are familiar with. Grief causes us pain, heart breaking, and even despair. God's people also experienced grief. The widow in Nain went through multiple losses: her husband, her livelihood, her family, her adult son, and possibly her future.

TIME OF REPENTANCE

What are you grieving? What are things you feel you have lost? Name and claim your grief, and then, write or draw them on the blank half of this page. Spend as much time as you need. When your prayer time is finished, rip your page in pieces and place it in your pot. Cover the pieces with a few handfuls of dirt. Remember you are not alone.

PRAYER (from "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" by: Joseph Scriven)

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to hear!
What a privilege to carry ev'rything to God in prayer! Oh, what peace we often forfeit; oh, what needless pain we bear--all because we do not carry ev'rything to God in prayer!

Week 3: March 3-11

SCRIPTURES: Exodus 14:11-14; 15:22-25; 16:1-4; 17:1-7;
Numbers 11:4-6; 20:1-8

THEME: Upset

This week's theme is upset. When we have a gap between what I want and where I am at, we are frustrated. Why are things not going in my way? It makes us upset. When the Israelites left Egypt, they were excited. However, their expectation of a better life in the promised land did not happen immediately. They journeyed through wilderness--a between time. It was hard. God's children reminisced about the past and were frustrated with the present. God heard their complaints and answered each of them. Not always in the way they expected or wanted, but always meeting the need.

TIME OF REPENTANCE

Are you not satisfied? Are you frustrated today? That's great! You are truly God's children! You are honest to God, and God hears our complaints big or small. Name and claim them. Then, write or draw them on the blank half of this page. Spend as much time as you need. When your prayer time is finished, rip your page in pieces and place it in your pot. Cover the pieces with a few handfuls of dirt. Welcome to God's family! because you know well how God is gracious.

PRAYER (From Psalm 88 and 121)

Lord, God of my salvation, by day I cry out, even at night, before you—let my prayer reach you! Turn your ear to my outcry because my whole being is filled with distress; my life is at the very brink of hell.

I raise my eyes toward the mountains. Where will my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

Week 4: March 10-16

SCRIPTURES: Mark: 5:22-34

THEME: Despair

This week's theme is despair. If you describe despair as a color, which color would you choose? Despair is a sense of no hope, no possibilities, no future, no energy to even just get up. Despair is feeling numb and exhausted. When we are in despair, our thinking is not clear, and we tend to close in. Despair isolates us from God and one another. Despair can also drive us to admit our limitations and to seek change. Sometimes it is only in the total exhaustion of hitting the bottom that we can finally look up and find we are not alone.

TIME OF REPENTANCE

Are you feeling weary today? What is making you weary? Name and claim things causing you to feel weary, and then write or draw them on the blank half of this page. Spend as much time as you need. When your prayer time is finished, rip your page in pieces and place it in your pot. Cover the pieces with a few handfuls of dirt. Remember Jesus shows up unexpectedly.

PRAYER (from "His Eye is on the Sparrow" by Civilla Martin)

Why should I feel discouraged? Why should the shadows come?
Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home,
When Jesus is my portion? My constant friend is he. Whenever I am
tempted, whenever clouds arise, when song gives place to sighing,
when hope within me dies, I draw the closer to him, from care he
sets me free. His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me;
his eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me. I sing because
I'm happy, I sing because I'm free, for his eye is on the sparrow, and
I know he watches me.

Week 5: March 17-23

SCRIPTURES: Psalm 94

THEME: Longing

This week's theme is longing. Do you miss life before the global pandemic? Our lives are no longer the same. We wear masks in school and stores. We sit 6 feet apart in church. We learn to share air hugs to show our affection. Don't we miss the "good ol' days"? God's people felt the same. Some of them were taken as captives to Babylon in 586 B.C.E. God's people had to adjust to living in foreign land. They longed for the "used to" life back home where God's temple was in their midst. God's people cried out, "how long, Lord?"

TIME OF REPENTANCE

What do you miss doing? What "used to's" do you miss? What are you longing for today? Name and claim your longing, and then, write or draw them on the blank half of this page. Spend as much time as you need. When your prayer time is finished, rip your page in pieces and place it in your pot. Cover the pieces with a few handfuls of dirt. Remember God never abandons us.

PRAYER (from "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" by Thomas Dorsey)

Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn; through the storm through the night, lead me on to the light: Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

Week 6: March 24-30

SCRIPTURES: Luke 22:31-34; 54-62

THEME: Fear

This week's theme is fear. “Fear” occurs 352 times, and “afraid” 187 times in the NRSV translation of the Bible. It is in 56 of 66 books of the Protestant canon, appearing first in just the third chapter of Genesis. Fear is a common human condition. All too often our strength, resolve, and courage dissolve in the face of fear. Peter was sure he could follow Jesus through anything, even death. Then the simple question came “You are with Jesus, right?” It should have been so easy to answer, it was rather obvious, he had given up everything to follow, and yet in that moment fear shook his whole body and clenched up his throat. All Peter could squeak out in the little breath he had left was a denial. Jesus knows sometimes our courage falls to fear, and yet loves us anyways. Jesus knows that though we may fail now, with Jesus, we will also become the rock.

TIME OF REPENTANCE

What shakes you to your core? What constant voice of worry nags at you? If you cannot even put words to your dread, perhaps draw something to represent it. Spend as much time as you need. When your prayer time is finished, rip your page in pieces and place it in your pot. Cover the pieces with a few handfuls of dirt. Remember that the earth trembled before the Resurrection.

PRAYER (from “Were You There” text: African-American Spiritual)

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Maundy Thursday: April 1

SCRIPTURES: John 13: 1-17, 31-35

Bonus: Read all of John 13:1-18:24

THEME: Washing

Washing is our daily routine. We wash dishes, and we wash dirty clothes and towels. We frequently wash our hands, and we wash our hair and body in the shower. After washing we feel clean and refreshed. Jesus washed his disciples' feet the night he was betrayed. It was an act of love. Jesus deeply loved his disciples so that he washed their feet. Jesus loves us so dearly that Christ washed our sins at our baptisms.

TIME OF REPENTANCE

Pour water in a cup or bowl. Dip your finger in water and make a sign of cross on your forehead and remember your baptism. Spend as much time as you need. When your prayer time is finished, pour a little water into your pot. Remember Jesus has washed you.

PRAYER (from "Jesus Loves Me" text by Anna B. Warner)

Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so, Little ones to him belong; they are weak, but he is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

Good Friday: April 2

SCRIPTURES: Mark 15: 21-47

Bonus: read all of Mark chapters 14 and 15.

THEME: Death

The sounds of this long night and day ring with finality. Coins of betrayal hitting a stone floor. A rooster crowing out betrayals. Mocking laughter's taunts floating in the air. Whips hitting soft weak flesh. Hammers striking the steal of cold nails. Weeping. Cries of agony and abandonment. Cloth ripping. Confessions whispered. Then silence. The cold, hard, unbearable silence of a grave.

TIME OF REPENTANCE

Fix your gaze on the seemingly barren pot. The surface of the soil seems dead. Gently touch the dead places of your own life. Weep and mourn for all the deaths you have endured. Spend as much time as you need. When your prayer time is finished, plant the seed about ¼" deep in your pot.

PRAYER (from "What Wondrous Love is This" a folk hymn)

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul, what wondrous love is this, O my soul! What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul, to bear the dreadful curse for my soul?

Easter Vigil: April 3

SCRIPTURES: Genesis 1:1-2:4a, Exodus 15:1b-13, 17-18, Isaiah 55:1-11, Daniel 3:1-29, Romans 6:3-11

THEME: Waiting

“Nobody knows how long Saturday will last or if it will ever end. Saturday is that in-between day of stillness and doubt and despair when time stands still in lethal flatness.”² What we hear from scripture is that God delivers. God who created heaven and earth delivered God’s children from bondage of slavery in Egypt. God told God’s children that God would deliver them from despair. God delivered Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace. God delivers us from death to life. God delivers. Just wait, new life is emerging.

TIME OF REPENTANCE

Take your time to read the scriptures above. What stands out for you? Dwell on the words or images or emotions. You may use the blank half of the page to write or draw your thoughts. Remember God freed us and God frees us each day.

PRAYER

O God, for our redemption you gave your only Son to suffer death on the cross, and by his glorious resurrection you delivered us from the power of death. Make us die every day to sin so that we may rise to live with Christ forever; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (ELW page 308)

² (Walter Brueggemann Devotion for Lent A Way Other Than Our Own, page 92)