

Readings and Prayers for the Forty Days of Lent

February 17 – April 4, 2021

You are invited to experience the Christian season of Lent by setting aside a few minutes each day to read a verse of scripture and prayer response. Then sitting quietly, allow the Spirit's wisdom to speak to you and, if you choose, write a brief prayer reflection yourself.

The Lenten season is framed as a spiritual journey that prepares us to celebrate Easter and new life. Every week, these short readings from different Gospel traditions in the New Revised Standard Version shape our faith response.

In each of the four Gospels there comes a point in the story of Jesus' ministry when he makes the clear decision to begin the journey toward Jerusalem where he will eventually be crucified and resurrected. We follow Jesus' fateful steps as our guide through this season.

- Week 1 (A Season of Turning) begins with Ash Wednesday and focuses attention on each Gospel description of Jesus turning toward Jerusalem.
- Week 2 (A Season of Teaching) draws wisdom from Mark's Gospel and spotlights Jesus' gracious way of training his disciples for the journey.
- Week 3 (A Season of Parables) sheds light on Jesus' sacred stories and images in Luke's Gospel as guideposts on our Lenten pilgrimage.
- Week 4 (A Season of Challenge) highlights wisdom from Matthew's Gospel which helps discern our faith response to Jesus' Lenten invitations.
- Week 5 (A Season of Believing) accentuates the Gospel of John's encouragement to trust in Jesus' spirit-filled wisdom and power as we make our way to Easter.
- Week 6 (A Season with "I AM") looks at the seven "I am ..." verses from John's Gospel, remembering that in Exodus God said to Moses, "I am who I am" (Yahweh in Hebrew and translated LORD in NRSV).
- Week 7 (A Season of Courage) walks with Jesus through the final days (Holy Week) leading to his crucifixion, with excerpts from all four Gospels.

A curiosity in the Christian observance of Lent is the understanding that, because every Sunday is always celebrated as "the day of resurrection," our forty days of Lenten prayer and repentance do not include Sundays. As a way to honor this tradition, for each of the six Sundays during the Lenten season, our reading and prayer will focus on the same promise of Jesus from the Easter story.

During this season of preparation for Easter, the Spirit invites you to be more open to the sacred wisdom of our Christian tradition. One way to do this is to take a little time for listening and responding to God's invitation. As one of these prayers proclaims, ***"Teacher Lord, I imagine your goodness continually flowing into my everyday living; today I promise anew to live these Lenten days by sharing your goodness with others."***

With grace, mercy and peace on your journey.

Glen Stoudt, Spiritual Director
February, 2021

Week 1 - Wisdom from the Gospels: A Season of Turning

Ash Wednesday, February 17 – Lent Day 1 – Luke 9:51

⁵¹As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

As I begin this Lenten journey, guide me toward a future that you, Inspiring God, imagine for me, and give me the courage to respond.

Thursday, February 18 – Lent Day 2 – John 7:1,10

¹ [Jesus] did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him. ¹⁰ ... However, after his brothers had left for the festival [of Tabernacles], he went also, not publicly, but in secret.

Loving Spirit, who knows my secret fears, open your heart to the depths of my feelings and make yourself known so I might grasp the bravery necessary to take the next step.

Friday, February 19 – Lent Day 3 – Mark 10:1

¹ [Jesus] left that place and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan. And crowds again gathered around him; and, as was his custom, he again taught them.

The custom of making our way toward Easter's promise takes time and commitment; make your wisdom clear and accessible to me, O Sustainer, so I can live faithfully as I go.

Saturday, February 20 – Lent Day 4 – Matthew 19:13-15

¹³ Then little children were being brought to [Jesus] in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; ¹⁴ but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." ¹⁵ And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

With gratitude for Jesus' kindness even in the midst of his difficult journey toward Jerusalem, Lord, I ask for the grace to see and welcome others with the same gentleness.

Sunday, February 21 – First Sunday in Lent (Remembering the Resurrection) – John 20:19, 21-22

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day [of resurrection] ... Jesus came and stood among them and said... ²¹"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

O Risen Christ, help me feel your Spirit's breath today, so I may join you in proclaiming Easter's peace with everyone in every circumstance throughout my Lenten journey.

Week 2 - The Wisdom of Mark: A Season of Teaching

If you are able, it may be helpful to prepare by reading all of chapter 10 in Mark's Gospel

Monday, February 22 – Lent Day 5 – Mark 10:17-18

¹⁷ ... a man ran up and knelt before [Jesus], and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

¹⁸ Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.

Teacher Lord, I imagine your goodness continually flowing into my everyday living; today I promise anew to live these Lenten days by sharing your goodness with others.

Tuesday, February 23 – Lent Day 6 – Mark 10:19-21

¹⁹ [Jesus continued,] “You know the commandments. ...” ²⁰ [The man] said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all [the commandments] since my youth.”

²¹ Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”

Spirit of Undeserved Grace, I genuinely believe in your saving love, but feel distressed when I contemplate what response may be expected of me.

Wednesday, February 24 – Lent Day 7 – Mark 10:26-27

²⁶ [The disciples] were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

God of Possibilities, help my spirit overcome the doubts that depress me and rely fully on your ‘amazing grace’ to fill my heart.

Thursday, February 25 – Lent Day 8 – Mark 10:32

³² They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid.

Guiding Spirit, following Jesus on this Lenten journey reveals moments of both amazement and fear ... amazement at Jesus' commitment and fear that I am unable to live in his example.

Friday, February 26 – Lent Day 9 – Mark 10:43-44

⁴³ “... whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.”

O Gracious Word, bringing life to everyday service and sacrifice, inspire my example as I discover authentic ways to care for others during this season.

Saturday, February 27 – Lent Day 10 – Mark 10:35-37

³⁵ James and John ... came to [Jesus] and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” ³⁶ He said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” ³⁷ And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”

Open-hearted Teacher, patiently listen to my prayers for personal wellbeing and reveal to my often impatient heart the difference between what I honestly need and what I selfishly want.

Sunday, February 28 – Second Sunday in Lent (Remembering the Resurrection) – John 20:19, 21-22

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day [of resurrection] ... Jesus came and stood among them and said... ²¹“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

O Risen Christ, help me feel your Spirit’s breath today, so I may join you in proclaiming Easter’s peace with everyone in every circumstance throughout my Lenten journey.

Week 3 - The Wisdom of Luke: A Season of Parables

If you are able, it may be helpful to review Luke 13:22 – 19:28

Monday, March 1 – Lent Day 11 – Luke 13:22

²² Jesus went through one town and village after another, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem.

Faithful Author of My Spirit-story, as I make my way through this Lenten journey, continue to reveal to me the truths that will guide and inspire me along the path.

Tuesday, March 2 – Lent Day 12 – Luke 14:27-28

[Jesus said,] ²⁷ “Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it?

It’s not always easy to discern what ‘carrying the cross’ might mean in my life; help me, Understanding God, to ‘estimate the cost’ of living more faithfully with each passing day.

Wednesday, March 3 – Lent Day 13 – Luke 15:4-5

[Jesus said,] ⁴ “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵ When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices.”

Good Shepherd, on those days when I feel lost in the wilderness; the hope which comforts me is that you will never desert me and will pursue me until I feel your loving embrace once again.

Thursday, March 4 – Lent Day 14 – Luke 17:5-6

⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” ⁶ The Lord replied, “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.”

How much faith do I need, Lord? Is a mustard seed’s worth enough? Sometimes it feels like it’s not; then I hear your whisper and realize that you have graced me with all I need.

Friday, March 5 – Lent Day 15 – Luke 17:20-21

²⁰ Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, “The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; ²¹ nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ For, in fact, the kingdom of God is within you.”

Despite how perplexing it can seem to trust that your Realm of Love lives fully within me, I open my heart to your boundless grace and whisper with as much courage as I can, “may it be so.”

Saturday, March 6 – Lent Day 16 – Luke 18:10-13

[Jesus told this parable:] ¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee ... was praying thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people ...’ ¹³ the tax collector would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other.”

***My Lenten journey is filled with temptation to give in to arrogant self-obsession;
forgive me, Merciful God.***

Sunday, March 7 – Third Sunday in Lent (Remembering the Resurrection) – John 20:19, 21-22

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day [of resurrection] ... Jesus came and stood among them and said... ²¹ “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

***O Risen Christ, help me feel your Spirit’s breath today, so I may join you in proclaiming
Easter’s peace with everyone in every circumstance throughout my Lenten journey.***

Week 4 - The Wisdom of Matthew: A Season of Challenge

If you are able, consider reading chapters 19 and 20 to give you some context in Matthew.

Monday, March 8 – Lent Day 17 – Matthew 19:23-24

²³ Then Jesus said to his disciples ... ²⁴ “Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

Sometimes I feel rich, and sometimes poor ... help me, Challenging Spirit, to resist the temptation to allow my obsession with material wealth to sidetrack me from living faithfully.

Tuesday, March 9 – Lent Day 18 – Matthew 19:30

[Jesus said to them,] ³⁰ “... many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

Lord of Grace, dare me to trust that, when I willingly make a sacrifice to benefit someone in need (not because I'm expected to or manipulated to), in your heart I'm a winner, not a loser.

Wednesday, March 10 – Lent Day 19 – Matthew 20:18-19

[Jesus said] ¹⁸ “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death; ¹⁹ then they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified; and on the third day he will be raised.”

My heart breaks when I consider what you imagined your destiny would be like, Strong Jesus; I feel like one of those disciples who would not accept your struggle. Strengthen me to face my struggles, however big or small, with the same Spirit-grounded courage you showed.

Thursday, March 11 – Lent Day 20 – Matthew 20:25-26

²⁵ Jesus called [the disciples] to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ²⁶ It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.”

Servant Saviour, the story of your life gives me the greatest example for daily living I can embrace. Challenge me anew to find authentic ways to serve others in your name.

Friday, March 12 – Lent Day 21 – Matthew 20:29-30

²⁹ As they were leaving Jericho ... ³⁰ there were two blind men sitting by the roadside. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!”

Merciful Jesus, whatever it is deep within me that compels me to call out your name, welcome the deepest longing of my heart and lift my spirit.

Saturday, March 13 – Lent Day 22 – Matthew 20:32-33

³² Jesus stood still and called them, saying, “What do you want me to do for you?” ³³ They said to him, “Lord, let our eyes be opened.”

Lord, instill within me a heartfelt trust that you know what I need most, even before I ask; then grant me the wisdom to humbly name it for you, yes ... but especially for myself.

Sunday, March 14 – Fourth Sunday in Lent (Remembering the Resurrection) – John 20:19, 21-22

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day [of resurrection] ... Jesus came and stood among them and said... ²¹“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

O Risen Christ, help me feel your Spirit’s breath today, so I may join you in proclaiming Easter’s peace with everyone in every circumstance throughout my Lenten journey.

Week 5 - The Wisdom of John: A Season of Believing

If you are able, it may be helpful to review John 10:22-11:53.

Monday, March 15 – Lent Day 23 – John 10:24-25

²⁴The Jews gathered around [Jesus] and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.” ²⁵Jesus answered, “I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name testify to me.”

Just by calling you “Messiah,” I need to revisit who I believe you really are for me and what you are at work doing in my everyday living. Bless me, Enlivening Messiah.

Tuesday, March 16 – Lent Day 24 – John 10:37-38

[Jesus continued,] ³⁷ “If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. ³⁸ But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”

Your example of showing lovingkindness toward others as you made your way toward Good Friday and Easter Sunday inspires me. Thank you, Jesus, for being my role model in discovering what it looks like to be one with the Father.

Wednesday, March 17 – Lent Day 25 – John 10:40-42

⁴⁰[Jesus] went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing earlier, and he remained there. ⁴¹Many came to him, and they were saying, “John performed no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.” ⁴²And many believed in him there.

Did you need some time away to reflect on where you have travelled since your baptism? Living Christ, guide me to find my quiet place in your presence as I walk this Lenten journey.

Thursday, March 18 – Lent Day 26 – John 11:17,20-21

¹⁷When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ...

²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

Lord, what I believe about your power over life and death is not always clear and, like Martha, I struggle with feeling that you are not always here with me. Help my unbelief.

Friday, March 19 – Lent Day 27 – John 11:32-35

³² When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping ... he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴ He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵ Jesus began to weep.

Weeping Saviour, it humbles me to witness your grief; the depths of feeling you willingly expressed gives me permission to risk sharing my own loss and sorrow with those who love me.

Saturday, March 20 – Lent Day 28 – John 11:40-41,43-44

⁴⁰ Jesus said to [Mary], “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. ... ⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The dead man came out. ... Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

Liberating God, the losses of this Covid year weigh heavy on me. Call me forth; unbind me; and set me free to live fully as your partner in this Spirit-inspired, life-affirming work.

Sunday, March 21 – Fifth Sunday in Lent (Remembering the Resurrection) – John 20:19, 21-22

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day [of resurrection] ... Jesus came and stood among them and said... ²¹ “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

O Risen Christ, help me feel your Spirit's breath today, so I may join you in proclaiming Easter's peace with everyone in every circumstance throughout my Lenten journey.

Week 6 - The Wisdom of John (continued): A Season with "I AM"

Monday, March 22 – Lent Day 29 – John 6:35

³⁵ Jesus said to them, "***I am the bread of life.*** Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Eternal Source of Life-nourishing Bread, feed my soul today with enough of your goodness that I may feel inspired to share my surplus with those who are hungry in the world around me.

Tuesday, March 23 – Lent Day 30 – John 8:12

¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "***I am the light of the world.*** Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

May your warm, radiant glow illuminate me from the inside out, O Living Light, so I might brighten the lives of those whose experience feels like darkness and drudgery.

Wednesday, March 24 – Lent Day 31 – John 10:7,9

⁷ Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, ***I am the gate*** for the sheep. ... ⁹ Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture."

Blessed Gateway along this spiritual journey, I am deeply grateful for the sense of safety and security in your presence and for the encouragement to cross the threshold out to a daily life of surrender and service.

Thursday, March 25 – Lent Day 32 – John 10:14-15

[Jesus said,] ¹⁴ "***I am the good shepherd.*** I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep."

To know your faithfulness, Good Shepherd, assures me of how deeply I am known and cared for; throughout the rest of this Lenten season continue to ground my identity in your loving sacrifice.

Friday, March 26 – Lent Day 33 – John 14:6-7

⁶ Jesus said to him, "***I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*** No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you know me, you will know my Father also."

As a follower of Jesus, I am encouraged by the path of truth and life he creates for me; Loving Way, broaden my heart to honour the many other ways people discover you.

Saturday, March 27 – Lent Day 34 – John 15:5

[Jesus said,] ⁵***I am the vine***, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.”

I feel empowered by this image of connection and relationship, O Sacred Vine ... with you, the Source of Life, and with those among whom I share the fruit of your love.

Palm Sunday, March 28 – Sixth Sunday in Lent (Remembering the Resurrection) – John 11:25-26

²⁵ Jesus said to her, ***“I am the resurrection and the life.*** Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”

Living Resurrection Promise, who reaches beyond the threat and fear of death, speak boldly to my heart this Palm Sunday and motivate me to trust anew that “in life, in death, in life beyond death, you are with us. We are not alone.”

Week 7 - Wisdom from the Gospels: A Season of Courage

A glimpse into the final week of Jesus' life on this earth.

Monday, March 29 – Lent Day 35 – Mark 11:11,12:41-43

¹¹ Then [Jesus] entered Jerusalem and went into the temple ... ⁴¹ He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. ⁴³ Then [Jesus] called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury.

Quiet Inspiration of Generosity, increase my capacity to notice the examples of selfless giving in my midst, so I can model my response after their faithfulness, in Christ's Spirit.

Tuesday, March 30 – Lent Day 36 – Matthew 23:1,37,39

¹ Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples ... ³⁷ “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ... ³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Bless you, Mother Hen God, for expressing through Jesus your ‘gathering in’ impulse ... during these final days of Lent, I choose again to willingly open my heart to your welcoming wings.

Wednesday, March 31 – Lent Day 37 – John 13:12-15

¹² After [Jesus] had washed their feet ... he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

My Lord and Teacher, I think I do appreciate what your example means. So as my Lenten journey reaches its fulfillment, I continue striving to translate your model of servanthood into my daily practice.

Maundy Thursday, April 1 – Lent Day 38 – Luke 22:14,19-20

¹⁴ When the hour came, [Jesus] took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. ... ¹⁹ Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁰ And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

O Maker of Living Memories, may Jesus’ sacrament of bread and cup encourage me to carry the reminder of your never-ending promise in my heart ... to love as I am loved.

Good Friday, April 2 – Lent Day 39 – Mark 15:22,25,34,37

²² Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). ...

²⁵ It was nine o’clock in the morning when they crucified him. ... ³⁴ At three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice ... “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” ... ³⁷ Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

In those moments when I feel like you have forgotten me, my God, I am comforted by Jesus’ brutal honesty and a shared trust that you faithfully accompany each and every one of us even in the worst times.

Saturday, April 3 – Lent Day 40 – Luke 23:55-56

⁵⁵ The women who had come with [Jesus] from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. ⁵⁶ Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.

Compassionate Spirit, as my Lenten journey draws to a close in the midst of such grief, I bear witness to the sorrow I feel for all cruel and unjust things that plague humanity. Come and stay with me awhile, as I pray and prepare to face tomorrow.

Easter Sunday, April 4 – The Day of Resurrection – John 20:11,14-16

¹¹ Mary [Magdalene] stood weeping outside [Jesus’] tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹⁴ ... she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ [He] said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him, “Teacher!”

This morning my longing spirit turns toward the rising sun and I imagine you calling me by name, Living Lord. Like Mary, with a heart overflowing in love, the name by which I know you most intimately forms on my lips, “.....!” And with a deep breath I welcome the promise of new life you offer. Thank you!