



*Reflections in the
Season of Lent
2024*

“I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s holy Word.”

-from the exhortation for Ash Wednesday, the Book of Common Prayer p. 265

This Lent, we draw on the rich spiritual treasure of many of our members at Church of Our Saviour, Mill Valley; Christ Church, Sausalito; and St. Stephen’s, Tiburon-Belvedere. Their writings on the daily eucharistic lectionary for the season reveal the diversity of perspectives and journeys in our midst – the abundant gifts of the Spirit – all bound up together in our common walk and life with Christ.

We pray that you find these reflections nourishing in this season of preparation and growth. “Lent” derives from the Middle English word for spring: a reminder that as the world around us emerges from winter, so our souls are invited to emerge into the new life we are offered by our Savior. These reflections draw us into the spring unfolding around us, even as we walk with Jesus towards his heartbreak and passion in Jerusalem.

We wish you every blessing in your Lenten journey this year. May you find hope, renewal, and new insights in this springtime of your soul!

Richard Edward Helmer+
Chip Larrimore+
Kyle Seage+

February 14

Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58:1-12

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Psalm 103 or 103:8-14

Matthew 6:1-6,16-21

Jesus said, "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

"So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Reflection:

On this Ash Wednesday, one of the holiest days in our church, it seems impossible to reflect on anything but the gospel text. It is stirring, it is commanding, and it is filled with Jesus's stern warnings on how not to live a holy life. He excepts no one in his remarks about how we are called to live this life as worthy of God's love. Jesus often tells us what we are to do but this passage is clearly telling us what not to do. Both are hard. I want to please God but the stakes are always high. I do not want to displease God, but the temptation is even greater to do what I want and not what God wants.

And yet, we must try. And then try again. What is it we value? Is it praise, honor, alms, attention? Jesus tells us that these things are not of value to God, rather we are called to humility, sharing of resources, and piety.

On this day each year for the last 27 years, I have been privileged to mark the sign of a cross on the penitent and have had the cross of ash marked on my own head as well as a reminder both that we are sinners in need of redemption but also that God calls us God's own forever. That second part alone is what keeps me walking the good path, even if often unsteadily.

Kyle Dice Seage, Rector of St. Stephen's

February 15

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Deuteronomy 30:15–20

Luke 9:18–25

Psalm 1

Deuteronomy 30: 15-20

Moses said to all Israel the words which the Lord commanded him, "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

Reflection:

Sometimes life forces us to make a hard decision. We may not recognize it as a fork in the road at the time, but later it may become clear that that is what it was.

Such a time in my life occurred when, after I had been living in the monastery for two years, I received a phone call from my mother. She told me that my father was disabled from steering the commercial fishing boat and would I come home to take his place so that crew could continue working. I wanted to say Yes—this would be an important role for me, to take my father’s place as captain and keep the crew fishing.

On the other hand, I had chosen to come to the monastery to choose a new direction for my life, to follow a path on which I felt called and led. In a quandary, I met with brother John, the prior of the community. After listening closely, he said: “You are free to return to your family and steer the boat, but you cannot come back.”

This was an ultimate decision. I dug down deeper than ever I had before to choose what I wanted for my life.

“I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses,” God says in Deuteronomy. “Choose life that you may live.” Lent is a special time for discerning what new choices God is setting before us to become more the person that we have been created to become. Choose life!

Richard Schaper, Priest Associate at Christ Church

February 16

Friday after Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58:1–9a

Psalm 51:1–10

Matthew 9:10-17

As Jesus sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” But when he heard this, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.”

Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak, for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”

Reflection:

The Pharisees questioned why Jesus chose to dine with sinners and tax collectors, that is, those who failed to strictly observe the letter of the Mosaic Law. Their observance of the Jewish Faith equated the literal observance of the Law with holiness and their rituals of sacrifice in the Temple ensured their good standing with God. Those who failed to observe in this way deserved to be cast out.

Jesus responds to the Pharisees: “Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.” His response reminds them that their righteousness is hollow and what true religion is all about. He mirrors the words of Isaiah in today’s first reading:

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly.

Embracing humility, we recognize ourselves as “sinners” – not necessarily because we are “bad”, but because we understand that we essentially lack something; and that we, therefore, are in need of God’s Grace to complete us.

Gerry Caprio, Ecumenical Associate at Church of Our Saviour

February 17th

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58:9b–14

Luke 5:27–32

Psalm 86:1–11

Luke 5:27-32

After healing the paralyzed man, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up, left everything, and followed him.

Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others sitting at the table with them. The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus answered, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

Reflection:

Today we reflect on Luke's version of the same Gospel featured in Matthew's version we heard in yesterday's Gospel – the Pharisees criticizing Jesus for dining with tax collectors and sinners.

The Pharisees are truly “religious” – in that they scrupulously observe the rituals of their faith but are blind to penetrate the mysteries they represent. They mistake the symbols of faith for faith itself. This is religious fundamentalism.

True believers are “those who are sick”; that is, they have come to a realization that they lack something. They discover that they have a spiritual need. (Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.)

Today's first reading from Isaiah leads us to the beginning of wisdom in the observance of true faith:

If you remove the yoke from among you the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

Gerry Caprio, Ecumenical Associate at Church of Our Saviour

February 19

Monday in the First Week of Lent

Leviticus 19:1–2,11–18

Psalms 19:7–14

Matthew 25:31–46

Jesus said, “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Reflection:

Leviticus 19:1–2,11–18 tells us of God’s expectations for Israel. The Old Testament provides us thirty-nine books as examples of how they did not live up this expectation. Jesus boiled these Commandments down to two: Love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself.

He also blesses us with a roadmap of how to do that. That map is Matthew 25:31-46. Bring food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to those without, care for sick, visit the imprisoned, and welcome strangers.

That love doesn’t judge (question) those in need. It gives. That love doesn’t exclude, it widens the circle, stranger by stranger. That love doesn’t demand change, it offers kindness and hope. That love focuses on the need, not the circumstance.

Matthew 25 always reminds me of the abundant grace of God and how we are to share that grace, perhaps best capsulated in Deuteronomy 14:29 (let the needy eat from your fields) and 24:19 (leave food on your field for the poor), and Leviticus 23:22 (Do not reap your harvest to the edge and leave the gleanings from your harvest for the poor). As one writer put it, “In his mercy, God provided a social justice safety net . . . to assist individuals and families who face adversity, regardless of the reason.” May we gladly be God’s vessel. Thanks be to God.

Miles Woodlief, Vestry Member at St. Stephen’s

February 20

Tuesday in the First Week of Lent

Matthew 6:7–15

Psalm 34:15–22

Isaiah: 55:6-11

Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Reflection:

As is typical when you spend time in reflection on scripture, it opens levels of meaning that are hidden in a cursory reading. Previously when I read, “Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near”, I never noticed the importance of the second part of how we're supposed to seek God. It is to happen at a time when he is near---while he may be found. When are those times? I would imagine they refer to a time when life is in an ordinary, more pleasant state, a time when things are more at peace. This is the time for reflection and meditation, scripture study, prayer, thoughts of being grateful. It should be a time for that sweet longing of the soul to be in the presence of God.

Then the verses switch to the ultimate mystery of God, how God is different and more exalted; “as the heavens are higher than the earth”. The divine life is there sending out thoughts that nourish and heal, that brings growth, strength, and wisdom. These verses remind one that mortals should be humble. Arrogance has no place and blocks the divine inflow.

These verses remind me of times when there were severe stresses, crises in relationships, or economic insecurity. Strangely, in my deep self, a place of solitude, of quiet peace, I felt that all would be well---eventually. It is hard to describe. Consciously I had worry and concern, but on a deeper level I knew a calm, a peace, a knowing God was there. It was like swimming in the ocean. The surface waves knock you down, but if you duck under, the water is somewhat still. This describes, I believe, the benefit of seeking God in the good times, the stable times.

Beverly Burke, Altar Guild Chair at Christ Church

February 21

Wednesday in the First Week of Lent

Jonah 3:1–10

Luke 11:29–32

Psalm 51:11-18

Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.

Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

I shall teach your ways to the wicked, *
and sinners shall return to you.

Deliver me from death, O God, *
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness,
O God of my salvation.

Open my lips, O Lord, *
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Had you desired it, I would have offered sacrifice, *
but you take no delight in burnt-offerings.

The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; *
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Reflection:

This beautiful passage, rife with pathos, comes from Psalm 51, where David is pleading for God's forgiveness after he has impregnated Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, and then sent the warrior to the front line where he was killed.

That's a lot to atone for.

What David begs for, what he has lost, is not simply God's favor so things go his way. He has been cast out from God's presence by his own wrong actions. He is desperate to renew his severed connection with God. He spells it out: he longs for that presence; he doesn't want to lose the holy Spirit; he aches to be sustained by the bountiful Spirit.

He's not the only one. We, too, seek that intimacy with God. We long to be in relationship with the divine spirit. To be cut off from that flow of love and spirit leaves us hollow and purposeless; aching, and not sure why.

We all mess up—maybe not to the extent that David did, but still.

And here's the joy: God wants to be in relationship with us. God sees us in our wholeness and brokenness and loves us anyway, perhaps even because of our weakness. That river of love and goodness is ours to enter.

God doesn't need a burnt offering. God wants from us our troubled spirit, our broken and contrite heart. We can offer that up at Lent as we prepare for the gift of Easter.

Juliana Jensen, Parishioner at Church of Our Savior

February 22

Thursday in the First Week of Lent

Esther 14:1–6,12–14

Psalm 138

Matthew 7:7–12

Jesus said, “Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.”

Reflection:

I know that God is good, and that He is always ready to bestow His goodness upon me... All I have to do, is ask.

I know that God has the kind of goodness I need, made just for me... All I have to do is ask for His wisdom, or His strength, or His compassion to be revealed in my life.

I know that sometimes in the midst of trouble, I forget God's promise of goodness... Then, all I have to do is ask - if only by Faith - and God will still give me what I want or need.

Finally, I know that God has limitless goodness in store for each of us... All we have to do is ask - for ourselves, and for others who need our help to simply ask.

In peace and abundant blessings,

Dina N. Warren, Parishioner at St. Stephen's

February 23

Friday in the First Week of Lent

Matthew 5:20–26

Psalm 130

Ezekiel 18-27

“When the wicked man turneth away from wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth what is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.”

Reflection:

Thus, began worship during my childhood in Britain—clear, uncompromising, definitive. Loving God and our neighbour did not appear even as an alternative to the ten commandments in the Communion Service. “Thou God seest me” was a familiar saying. My spiritual journey of the last seventy plus years has been one moderating the definitive, accepting mystery, and relying on hope.

Every year, however, Lent teaches me to re-think my re-thinking. My tendency is to condone my transgressions as much as to repent and to respond to a loving and forgiving God. Too often, I use the Church as some kind of cosmic hot tub rather than a rigorous cold shower. As I have aged, I have gotten better at forgiving myself rather than hanging on to shame year after year. Which would be fine if I had totally given up the errors and areas of selfishness which cause the shame in the first place.

So... for me this Lent is a time to resist lazy thinking and to face reality with as much honesty and courage that I can muster. I wish all well on their personal journey.

Malcolm Manson, Priest Associate at Christ Church

February 26

Monday in the Second Week of Lent

Daniel 9:3–10

Psalm 79:1–9

Luke 6:27-38

Jesus said, “I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

Reflection:

One day on the playground when I was a new-to-school fourth grader, a mean girl named Mickey accused me of something—I remember only that it was unjust—and then kicked me in the shin. It really hurt. As a child steeped in the doctrine of “turn the other cheek”, I knew I had to remain still until—as inevitably happened—she kicked me in the other shin. That also hurt.

At the time, it left me pondering the wisdom of Jesus’s teaching. So many of my childhood rules arose from this passage: never eat a popsicle in front of anyone unless you have one to give them as well; a good deed counts only if no one knows you did it; be nice even to the mean kids.

It is an entire rule book of spiritual formation in one passage.

How is it that Jesus asks so much of us?

And yet, the essence of Jesus’s teaching is that we love one another. Here is a clear instruction manual on how to do just that. While so much of the Bible is up for interpretation, this part is genuinely clear.

We are meant to be kind and loving. Period. Is that so hard?

Juliana Jensen, Parishioner at Church of Our Saviour

February 27

Tuesday in the Second Week of Lent

Isaiah 1:2–4,16–20

Psalm 50:7–15,22–24

Matthew 23:1–12

Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Reflection:

1202 + 1. This equation blazed across the Stanford Cardinal's matching jerseys after Tara Vanderveer made history on January 21 by becoming the winningest head coach in college basketball history.

The game was hard fought, the celebration was joy-filled and the coach looked like she'd rather not be the subject of so much attention. Later, her former teams shared their favorite "Tara-isms" and memories. Time after time, they used the word "humble" to describe Tara's defining quality as a winning coach and inspiring mentor. One player shared: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with the team."

It's doubtful if Jesus' disciples had matching team gear but there is no question that they were inspired to go far in the only race that really matters by following the lessons of the Messiah.

Karen Gullett, Vestry Member at St. Stephen's

February 28

Wednesday in the Second Week of Lent

Jeremiah 18:1–11,18–20

Psalm 31:9–16

Matthew 20:17–28

While Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and said to them on the way, “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; 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.”

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.” But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.” He said to them, “You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.”

When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Reflection:

When I was asked to write a meditation for Lent, my heart sank. In the Baptist church where I grew up, the Bible stories were literal (yes, the whale really did cough up Jonah), the wine of communion was Welch's grape juice, and baptism was by dunking. We never observed Lent—a cross of ashes on the forehead and foot-washing were suspiciously Catholic.

I joined the Episcopal church as an adult. Even with all my weaknesses, doubts, and questions the Episcopalians welcomed me in. No one asked me to check my brain at the door. Finally, I could spiritually exhale.

Over time I came to view the seasons of the church year as a smorgasbord from which I could pick and choose. I filled up on the easily-digested sweets—Advent, Christmas, Easter. Lent was the broccoli.

In today's gospel reading, a mother asks a favor of Jesus: that her two sons be seated on His left and right sides in heaven. But Jesus warns her about skipping straight to the cake: "Are you able to drink from the cup I am about to drink?" He redirects her attention back to this earth and His bitter journey ahead. Gently, He reminds his disciples that He came to serve others and challenges them to do the same. Jesus' suffering and death on the cross must come before His joyful resurrection.

This year I am giving up my life-long resistance to Lent. This meditation is a start.

Jan Westerling, Prayer Group Member at Christ Church

February 29

Thursday in the Second Week of Lent

Jeremiah 17:5–10

Psalm 1

Luke 16:19–31

Jesus said, "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.' He said, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house-- for I have five brothers-- that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.' He said, 'No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Reflection:

Jesus tells us a story about an uncaring rich man who has ended up in Hades (a place which we might think today as being “Hell”). All his life he had ignored the destitute and hungry outside his home. Going down to Hades was not all that unusual in those days. Homer told us of trips to Hades: tales in the Iliad, and a descent by Odysseus in The Odyssey. Roman poet Virgil sent Aeneas of Troy into the Underworld in the Aeneid. These are stories that would have been going around the Ancient World at that time. Even since the Middle Ages we have heard tales of a Hell that Dante visited with Virgil as his personal guide. But we don't like to think of Hell so much anymore. More often than not we moderns like to invoke the words of John Lennon's “Imagine” (“No hell below us; Above us, only sky”). So from where then are we to hear the cry and warnings of the rich man to do the right thing? To take care of our poor, sick, hungry, unhoused neighbors?

Can we hear the pleas of the living Lazarus from here?

Do we need to be convinced ourselves, as in the story, by someone who rises from the dead? Or do we need to resurrect ourselves? If we do what Wendell Berry proclaims – “Practice Resurrection” - can our actions today convince others to join us in closing the chasms between all of us in this life?

Mike Peters, Junior Warden at Church of Our Saviour

March 1

Friday in the Second Week of Lent

Matthew 21:33–43

Psalms 105:16–22

Genesis 37:3–4,12–28

Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.

Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am." So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron.

He came to Shechem, and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" "I am seeking my brothers," he said; "tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." The man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him" -- that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers agreed. When

some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

Reflection:

The story of Joseph and his perfidious brothers is one of disappointment, jealousy, spite, and betrayal. The young brother lives in a vicious personal and psychosocial family dynamic populated by untrusting, grudge-holding, payback-obsessed, vicious siblings. While he is saved from death by the casual kindness of Ruben, the rescue is a close thing and the way ahead for Joseph continues to look no more tolerable than the history of abuse and exploitation that has already unfolded for him.

An even bleaker prospect is in Matt 21, the story of the gullible, ill-prepared landowner who ultimately loses his property, but not before collateral hardship descends not only on him but on his associates and agents. It's easy for the detached observer to say this person should not have gone to the other country, should have had a properly drawn contract, trustworthy advisers, to have carefully evaluated the quality of the persons on the other side that he was dealing with, that is, to have situational awareness, a Plan B in case things went wrong, and above all the self-awareness to guide him in his associations and experiences in order to foresee and avoid the hazards that may present themselves. Even with the best intentions and careful preparation, though, some chance of reversal and upset is present in any interaction, and one should be prepared to endure an adverse outcome with grace and resilience and be mentally prepared for negative outcomes. This is a guide for living.

The Matthew passage's conclusion about the stone that the builder rejected seems to me a non-sequitur. Certainly, it is true that botched work can be rescued: art and science are full of examples. But the favorable outcome forecasted at the end of the passage seems to me double-talk that does not follow from the preceding text. Nevertheless, looming over this story of bad business decisions is a warning to take proper care of your people and your goods, or someone else will, and this is a lesson that cannot be denied.

These stories show how central disappointment and loss is to human experience. It's what Lent is all about.

Potter Wickware, Parishioner at St. Stephen's

March 4

Monday in the Third Week of Lent

Luke 4:23-30

Psalm 42:1-7

2 Kings 5:1-15b

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. And the king of Aram said, "Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy." When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean." But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of

God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel.”

Reflection:

When I was a kid in Philadelphia, our family used to drive to New Hampshire every summer, on the old Merritt Parkway. That Parkway went up and down a lot of hills, and from a distance those hills looked to me almost vertical. But as we approached them, somehow they flattened out, and we drove up and over them with ease.

Sometimes the obstacles in life seem overwhelming to us. But then they have a way of shrinking as we approach them.

Naaman was a great military man, privileged, commander of the king’s army, who obviously was used to getting his own way. But now he had leprosy, and he didn’t know what to do to be healed from this horrible affliction.

When he learned that the prophet Elisha, the man of God, might be able to help him, Naaman came to Elisha bringing a fortune in silver and gold and fine garments. Elisha was brief and to the point. “Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be cleaned.”

Naaman left in a rage - he came all this way to hear that? There were plenty of local rivers he could wash in if that was all it took. But his servants said to him, “If he had told you to do something difficult, you’d have done it. Why not do this simple thing the prophet suggests?”

Sometimes we try to make getting over our obstacles so complicated. Is God perhaps telling us to “make it simple,” maybe as simple as doing one kind thing a day.

Hollinshead “Lin” Knight, Priest Associate at Christ Church

March 5

Tuesday in the Third Week of Lent

Song of the Three Young Men 2-4,11-20a

Psalm 25:3-10

Matthew 18:21-35

Peter came and said to Jesus, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Reflection:

You, too, may be wondering, so how much is “ten thousand talents”? I just found out: A lot. Let’s just round its value up to the nearest billion, so let’s say its around \$4 Billion dollars. Jesus says here the kingdom of heaven is like a king’s forgiving of a debt of \$4 billion dollars owed to him by a single slave. This king is forgiving. Seventy-seven times forgiving. Or more. But this slave, though forgiven, is not a forgiving person himself. So what happens to the unforgiving slave? He is hurt.

Coming back to the beginning of this story: just how many is “seventy-seven times”? Peter had asked Jesus if he should forgive up to “seven times”. Why “seven times”? Perhaps it harks way back to a story in Genesis, where Cain, who had killed his own brother Abel, was protected by God, and anyone who killed Cain would suffer a sevenfold vengeance. Soon thereafter the story in Genesis continued that anyone who harmed Lamech would suffer vengeance seventy-sevenfold. But Jesus turns these numbers of vengeance on their heads.

I heard a priest say in a sermon once that “Forgiveness means giving up all hope for a better past.” It has been said to give until it hurts and after a while it doesn’t hurt anymore. How much will it hurt, as Jesus says to do, to forgive “seventy-seven times”? A lot. It will hurt a lot. But after a while, it doesn’t hurt anymore.

Mike Peters, Junior Warden at Church of Our Saviour

March 6

Wednesday in the Third Week of Lent

Deuteronomy 4:1–2,5–9

Matthew 5:17–19

Psalm 78:1–6

The Collect of the Day:

Give ear to our prayers, O Lord, and direct the way of your servants in safety under your protection, that, amid all the changes of our earthly pilgrimage, we may be guarded by your mighty aid; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Reflection:

When I was working as a school principal, changes in staff, students, and families happened frequently, and sometimes staff members would be disturbed by this. I always told them that the only constant in life is change. Over time, that became a mantra for them as well. A few months ago, I read a piece which said that the only constant in life is change and God. That is so true. The prayer above speaks of all the changes of our earthly pilgrimage. As I reflect on the seven decades of my life so far, I see God's hand in my life throughout the ups and downs, placing the right people in my life at the right times, and God guiding me throughout challenging times. None of us know what the future will bring, but I know God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will be with me.

Leslie Cohl, Vestry Member at St. Stephen's

March 7

Thursday in the Third Week of Lent

Jeremiah 7:23–28

Psalm 95:6–11

Luke 11:14–23

Jesus was casting out a demon that was mute; when the demon had gone out, the one who had been mute spoke, and the crowds were amazed. But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.” Others, to test him, kept demanding from him a sign from heaven. But he knew what they were thinking and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself becomes a desert, and house falls on house. If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? —for you say that I cast out the demons by Beelzebul. Now if I cast out the demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your exorcists cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his castle, his property is safe. But when one stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his plunder. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”

Reflection:

This passage, in referring to demons and the devil, is relevant to the thorny question, Why is there evil in the world?

Is evil due to humans acting in their own self-interest even if it harms others? This explanation wouldn't depend on the existence of the devil or demons. So perhaps we can disregard what the Bible says about evil beings that target humans.

But the devil in the guise of a serpent appears in the very first book of the Bible. He plants the suspicion in Eve that God is deceiving her and Adam about the forbidden fruit. Eve's doubt doesn't originate in her.

It's hard to believe in beings that exist but can't be detected by the usual means of scientific investigation. However, from this passage it's clear that Jesus believes in Satan and the power he can exert on us. Some naysayers among the witnesses accused Jesus of working with Beelzebul when he cast out demons. Jesus counters that the same thing could be said of anyone who exorcises demons, but his power to cast out demons comes ultimately from "the finger of God." Moreover, anyone who disputes this "is not with me, but against me."

This passage from Luke leads me to ponder the supplication in the Lord's prayer, "Lead us not into temptation," which has always puzzled me. Could it be a plea for God's help in resisting temptations that have their source in the devil?

Debby Conrad, Vestry Member at Christ Church

March 8

Friday in the Third Week of Lent

Hosea 14:1–9

Mark 12:28–34

Psalm 81:8-14

Hear, O my people, and I will admonish you: *

O Israel, if you would but listen to me!

There shall be no strange god among you; *

you shall not worship a foreign god.

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the
land of Egypt and said, *

"Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."

And yet my people did not hear my voice, *

and Israel would not obey me.

So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their hearts, *

to follow their own devices.

Oh, that my people would listen to me! *

that Israel would walk in my ways!

I should soon subdue their enemies *

and turn my hand against their foes.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, Thank you for this opportunity to dwell in your Word. I pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit in this moment to open the eyes of my understanding and give me insight into the depths of your Word. Reveal yourself to me as I reflect on this scripture and grant me the ability to carry it in my heart wherever I go.

In Jesus's name I've prayed.

Amen.

Reflection:

If We Would Only Listen: I loved to twirl when I was younger. It was thrilling, and the dizziness afterward was a silly little business I enjoyed. One day, while spinning around, my mother asked me to stop, saying that I would hurt myself. But I didn't listen. Before I knew it, I lost my balance and hit my bottom lip on the side of a flowerpot while my face plummeted to the concrete floor.

Israel's relationship with God is marred with such disobedience, and just like me, it led them into trouble- a lot of it.

In today's Psalm, God looks at their disobedience and cries out to them in love. He warns them of where their stubbornness will lead them and the retribution ahead. He had so many good things in store for Israel, but without the cooperation of his children, he could not give them those things. Today, God cries out to us through this Psalm, and I ask, will you listen?

In this Lenten season, the Lord calls you into a loving relationship with Him. A relationship where we assume the posture of an obedient child and recognize Him as Lord over our lives. We are called into submission, acknowledging that we are not equals with God but with childlike faith to look to him and say, "Speak, Lord, your servant hears you." We must walk and practice humility in this relationship to drive out the stubbornness that sits in our hearts and deafens us to the instructions of God.

Akosua Ombonga, Family Ministries Coordinator at Church of Our Saviour

March 9

Saturday in the Third Week of Lent

Hosea 6:1–6

Psalm 51:15–20

Luke 18:9-14

Jesus told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

Prayer:

Dear Lord, thank you for this time in your presence. I pray for discernment as I meditate on your Word and sit with these reflections. By your spirit speak to my heart. Renew my thoughts and help me walk out your Word. In Jesus's name I've prayed with thanksgiving. Amen.

Reflection:

The Righteousness of God: The Pharisee wasn't entirely wrong to assume that righteousness meant being morally upright and checking off certain boxes. However, the flaw in his definition of righteousness is sponsored by his ignorance of why we require righteousness in our communion with God.

We are not asked to live righteously to puff up our chest in pride and call ourselves better than others. Righteousness is a state of perpetual purity in thought, mind, and deed, and God requires it because he is Holy, and anyone he engages with must be in the same state of holiness.

Now, we must be humble enough to acknowledge that by our strength, we cannot get to and remain in such a state. We are human; we are flawed. So what do we do? We need to pray like the tax collector did. Asking God to show us mercy and clothe us with the righteousness of Jesus. This allows us into the state of righteousness that God requires of us.

1 Corinthians 10:12 says, "So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall." This is a reminder that we need to reflect on our character, behaviors, and tendencies daily. Asking God for His mercy to help us deal with the parts of us that are not too pretty.

Today, ask Him to weigh you and sift the parts of you that are not pleasing to Him so that you can live under the righteousness of Jesus.

Akosua Ombonga, Family Ministries Coordinator at Church of Our Saviour

March 11

Monday in the Fourth Week of Lent

Isaiah 65:17–25

Psalm 30:1–6,11–13

John 4:43–54

When the two days were over, Jesus went from that place to Galilee (for Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in the prophet's own country). When he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, since they had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the festival; for they too had gone to the festival. Then he came again to Cana in Galilee where he had changed the water into wine. Now there was a royal official whose son lay ill in Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my little boy dies." Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started on his way. As he was going down, his slaves met him and told him that his child was alive. So he asked them the hour when he began to recover, and they said to him, "Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever left him." The father realized that this was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he himself believed, along with his whole household. Now this was the second sign that Jesus did after coming from Judea to Galilee.

Reflection:

In the Gospel of John, the second healing miracle performed by Jesus is the restoration of the official's son in Capernaum (John 4:46-54). This is a beautiful moment revealing Jesus' love for humanity as well as His transformative power in our lives.

The official is desperate for his son's healing and appeals to Jesus. The official demonstrates a remarkable depth believing in Jesus' words: "Go, your son will live." It's a holy moment where faith transcends human understanding. This father's trust in Jesus' promise leads to the healing of his son, affirming the connection between faith and divine intervention.

This story resonates with our own journeys of faith. We face challenges and crises where solutions seem distant or impossible. Like the official, we feel a sense of urgency, longing for immediate results. The narrative reminds us that faith operates outside of time and space. It calls us to trust God, even when circumstances appear bleak.

The healing of the official's son underscores the transformational impact of pure faith. Beyond physical healing, this miracle symbolizes the spiritual healing and renewal that faith brings. It reminds us that our faith brings about profound, sometimes unexpected, results that surpass our initial expectations. Just as the official's trust in Jesus led to the healing of his son, our unwavering faith can lead to transformative outcomes that we may not immediately see.

This healing story should inspire us to nurture a faith that moves mountains and brings about divine results beyond our wildest imaginations.

Brian Seage, X Bishop of Mississippi

March 12

Tuesday in the Fourth Week of Lent

Ezekiel 47:1–9,12

Psalm 46:1–8

John 5:1-18

There was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.” Jesus said to him, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.” At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

Now that day was a sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, “It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.” But he answered them, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your mat and walk.’” They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take it up and walk?’” Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.” The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath. But Jesus answered them, “My Father is still working, and I also am working.” For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.

Reflection:

Jesus encounters a paralyzed man who had suffered for 38 years. Jesus asks if he wants to be made well, and the man shares his struggle to reach the healing waters of Bethesda. Jesus commands him to rise, take his mat, and walk. Miraculously, the man is instantly healed.

Jesus challenges religious customs by healing on the Sabbath, revealing the freedom found in God's transformative love. This narrative teaches us the power of faith. Just as the man's faith led to his healing and renewal, our faith can bring wholeness and transformation.

Jesus redefines Sabbath rest, showing that true rest is found in his presence. By surrendering our burdens and seeking rest in Jesus, we discover renewed strength and peace.

As we journey through Lent, let us deepen our faith and find rest in Jesus' presence. Embrace the transformative power of God's love, bringing healing and renewal. Surrender to God's will, finding joy and purpose, and living transformed lives.

Jon Owens, Deacon at Christ Church

March 13

Wednesday in the Fourth Week of Lent

Isaiah 49:8–15

John 5:19–29

Psalm 145:8–19

Isaiah 49:13

Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing!

For the Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his suffering ones.

Reflection:

When I first came to the San Francisco Bay Area from the Midwest twenty-five years ago, I was struck by the early onset of spring, with daffodils emerging in late January and the buds on the trees pushing by mid-February. For me, Easter often seemed here to arrive a little late for the new life of the natural world around us.

Not so this year, when Easter falls quite early, and big winter storms have the arteries of Mt. Tamalpais swollen with the water that nurtures everything from the Redwoods to the salmon to the sappy sycamores and maples, and the golden hills are their resplendent early spring green again after a long drought.

In the old language “Lent” means spring, and this season is intended not to only be a springtime for our souls, but a reminder of the verdant struggles of the earth and the creatures around us. Behind the parish rectory in Corte Madera, it has been a glorious season for the ducks and the egrets and the wild lettuces pushing up and out alongside the planted greens and the dogwood.

What if we listen this Lent to the joyous singing of Mt. Tam, the roar of the creeks and the sound of the birdsong? What does it tell us about our own call to renewal that God’s creation sings in response to our storms, rejoices even in the face of many harms, and thrives as what seemed long dead comes roaring back to life?

For our comfort, and that of all Creation, is the joy of our living God.

Richard Edward Helmer, Rector of Church of Our Saviour

March 14

Thursday in the Fourth Week of Lent

John 5:30–47

Psalm 106:6–7,19–23

Exodus 32: 7-14

The Lord said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, `These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" The Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation."

But Moses implored the Lord his God, and said, "O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, `It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, `I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

Reflection:

God sees the Israelites as “stiff-necked,” a term used in describing an attitude of stubbornness, rebellion, or resistance. In this context, being “stiff-necked” depicts an obstinate resistance to following God’s commands and respecting God’s authority. The term is used throughout the Old Testament as a metaphor (most often for the Israelites) for a stubborn and unyielding spirit that resists the bending or turning toward God’s way. Of course, Moses intercedes, appealing both to God’s character and covenant, and God ultimately relents and chooses not to bring destruction and disaster upon the Israelites.

As I imagine ahead to “future Brad” in the fourth week of Lent (with less than two weeks remaining until the start of a particularly busy Holy Week), I imagine myself as perhaps a bit “stiff-necked” myself-- simply in the way I carry unnecessary tension over the details surrounding the many upcoming worship services and last bits of preparation. Perhaps you, too: at this midpoint of the week, of the month, and of the season of Lent, are carrying your own bit of tension. We can find ourselves “stiff-necked” for a myriad of reasons, can’t we? The beautiful thing about this metaphor, though, is that a little stiffness can typically be fixed.

So, in whatever area of your life you need it right now (you too, “future Brad”), take a moment to release that tension. Allow yourself a few deep, low, and cleansing breaths in and out. Unclench your jaw. Release your shoulders from your earlobes. Marvel at the space made for beauty and awe, for God, and for the possible.

Brad Schultz, Music Minister at St. Stephen’s

March 15

Friday in the Fourth Week of Lent

Wisdom 2:1a,12–24

Psalm 34:15–22

John 7:1-2,10,25-30

After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish to go about in Judea because the Jews were looking for an opportunity to kill him. Now the Jewish festival of Booths was near.

But after his brothers had gone to the festival, then he also went, not publicly but as it were in secret.

Now some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, “Is not this the man whom they are trying to kill? And here he is, speaking openly, but they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Messiah? Yet we know where this man is from; but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.” Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him. I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me.” Then they tried to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come.

Reflection:

When we're young, we trust our family. But if we aren't told the truth, that trust fades. When Jesus taught in the temple, he said that the one who sent him was TRUE. He said we do not know the one who sent him, but we do know Jesus. This, I feel, is Jesus's way of telling us to trust his teaching because he is one with the Father and the Father sent him. And the Father is TRUE.

The truth that Jesus speaks of is the truth we all know in our hearts. I think Jesus is asking us to trust that truth. Ask yourself, "What truth do you know in your heart?" If you sit with the question long enough, you will get a very truthful answer.

Truth is just not telling a lie. Real truth can be hiding behind a false motive. When we ask God for a favor, when we ask God to relieve us in our suffering, we can't control the outcome. We ask humbly in faith with the intension of living an honest life of accepting God's will. We can't control God's will, but if we speak with truth and trust, we can learn to accept it.

The light shines through the broken places and I feel truth comes with the light.

Kathy Shirek, Senior Meals Ministry at Christ Church

March 18th

Monday in the Fifth Week of Lent

Susanna [1-9,15-29,34-40], 41-62

Psalm 23

John 8:1-11

Early in the morning Jesus came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

Reflection:

Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone. – John 8:7

The readings for today are all about God's judgment — and ours. In a rarely read text from Susanna, we hear the story of two elders of the ancient Israelites who become distracted from their duties to the people by their lust after the beautiful and devout Susanna.

When they conspire to violate her, she cries for help. Caught to their shame, the elders sully Susanna's virtuous reputation with lies and, but for the timely intervention of Daniel, she nearly loses her life in a rush to judgment.

In John, we hear the more familiar story of the woman caught in adultery. Central to the story are the authorities who surround her with condemnation and ask Jesus to join in their judgment that she must die under the law.

We are so swift to condemn — especially those who offend our taste, our morals, our sense of righteousness. But how often, Jesus reminds us, do we jump to judgment because we would rather confront the sin in others than face it in ourselves? And how often do we rush to condemn without taking the time to carefully gather all the facts that make up truth, or engage in the hard, humble labor of compassion for the flawed humanity that surrounds us on every side?

Lent is an invitation to set aside the ease of condemnation and take up the disciplines of humility, compassion, and charity. For ours is not a God of condemnation, but a God of mercy. And it is mercy — not condemnation — that saves us.

Richard Edward Helmer, Rector of Church of Our Saviour

March 19

**Tuesday in the Fifth Week of Lent
The Feast of St. Joseph**

2 Samuel 7:4,8-16

Luke 2:41-52

Psalm 89:1-29 or 89:1-4, 26-29

Romans 4:13-18

The promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations") -- in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous shall your descendants be."

Reflection:

All begins and ends with Faith. Abraham is the father of faith for Christians, Jews and Muslims – the “Abrahamic faiths”. His faith, tested repeatedly, including through the ultimate test of offering up his son Isaac, secured God’s promise that he and his descendants would inherit the world. His faith was unwavering. He did not question or doubt God’s promise and fully believed God would do what he said. If God’s promise depended on obedience to the law, faith would be useless.

Faith is the common foundation of the three Abrahamic traditions. We may not understand God in the same way, but we all rely on and are blessed by faith. The Tomb of the Patriarchs, in the West Bank city of Hebron, profoundly reveals this connection.

Described in Genesis, Abraham purchased the Tomb (a series of caves) for a burial site. The Patriarchs Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah are buried in the caves. An ancient structure built by Herod the Great between 31 and 4 BCE covers the caves. A mosque and synagogue, added later, allow Jews, Christians and Muslims to share the sacred site for worship and study. On a recent pilgrimage to the site, we experienced the deep spiritual connection between all our faiths, observing, respecting and participating in prayers in both the mosque and synagogue. Through faith, as Abraham modeled for us, we are called to believe and trust in God and to love one another. Through faith, we remember we are all children of God.

Gretchen Busterud, Parishioner at St. Stephen’s

March 20

Wednesday in the Fifth Week of Lent

John 8:31–42

Canticle [2] or 13

Daniel 3:14-20, 24-28

Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods and you do not worship the golden statue that I have set up? Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble to fall down and worship the statue that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire, and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?”

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter. If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.”

Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace heated up seven times more than was customary, and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up quickly. He said to his counselors, “Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire?” They answered the king, “True, O king.” He replied, “But I see four men unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the fourth has the appearance of a god.” Nebuchadnezzar then approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire and said, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!” So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men; the hair of their heads was not singed, their tunics were not harmed, and not even the smell of fire came from them.

Nebuchadnezzar said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. They disobeyed the king’s command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.

Reflection:

Often, the most impactful aspect to a scripture reading lies in how the lives of those in the reading mirror our own. For me, it is impossible to hear the names Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego without thinking about one of the saints in my life. Her name was Peggy Voris.

When I met Peggy, she was in her early 70’s, living in subsidized housing in Redwood City. She was both mentally and physically differently abled. She was also one of the most faithful people I have known. Peggy relied on public transportation to get around, yet she attended worship every Sunday and Wednesday, and participated in every adult education series at church. Peggy regularly read for the Wednesday service, and each year when this reading from Daniel came up, Peggy read the names Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as clearly and easily as if she were reading her own name. It was a testament to how much attending worship and reading scripture was integral to her life.

Though the record of their faithfulness was certainly extreme (being thrown into a furnace) when I read about the lives of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, it is impossible for me to not reflect on the life of one of God’s quiet saints whose faith made such an impression on me, and whose example has been an inspiration for me in my own walk of faith.

Chip Larrimore, Rector at Christ Church

March 21

Thursday in the Fifth Week of Lent

John 8:51–59

Psalm 105:4–11

Genesis 17:1-8

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God.”

Reflection:

We want instant gratification. When we pray, often we are sending up a wish list to God, almost like a Christmas list, and assume that if we're good or pray enough our prayers will be granted. And we want them to be answered in the way and time that suits us.

Abram and Sarai's story tells us that our relationship with God doesn't work quite like that. When the Lord appeared to Abram in Genesis 17, Abram is 99 years old. By this time, he had followed God's instruction to leave his country, people, and father's house – a move he made at age 75 -- and his first son he had with Sarai's handmaiden, Hagar, was 13 years old. Despite God's promise to Abram of offspring and land to his descendants, none of these had come to pass since the first promise from God 24 years earlier.

Perhaps it wasn't that the people who told this ancestral origin story saw God as a power that would dangle a spectacular promise but take his sweet time to grant it. Perhaps in this story it was the same promise to Abram decade after decade because being secure in a place – their national land – and time – descendants that would remember them forever – was the deepest, unwavering desire of generations of people. The storyteller expected the fulfillment of such monumental promises would take a long time. They adjusted their expectation to God's time. I wonder how we would change if we do so as well.

Koko Peters, Altar Guild Coordinator at Church of Our Saviour

March 22

Friday in the Fifth Week of Lent

Jeremiah 20:7–13

John 10:31–42

Psalm 18:1–7

I love you, O Lord my strength, *
O Lord my stronghold, my crag, and my haven.

My God, my rock in whom I put my trust, *
my shield, the horn of my salvation, and my refuge; you are
worthy of praise.

I will call upon the Lord, *
and so shall I be saved from my enemies.

The breakers of death rolled over me, *
and the torrents of oblivion made me afraid.

The cords of hell entangled me, *
and the snares of death were set for me.

I called upon the Lord in my distress *
and cried out to my God for help.

He heard my voice from his heavenly dwelling; *
my cry of anguish came to his ears.

Reflection:

We live in parlous times. Personally, corporately, globally, it sometimes seems that “the cords of hell entangle” us. So many things grab our attention, bother us, make us despair. We may see existential threats everywhere – within each of us, among our friends and families, with strangers, bombarded with ill news all over the Internet. We wish we could solve everything by ourselves, but we can’t.

Where do we turn for help? The Psalmist shows us the way: “I called upon the LORD in my distress and cried out to my God for help.” That may be the hardest thing to do, but God is listening. We need to invite God inside each of us, to heal our souls, clear our minds and hearts, and show us the best ways to proceed. The answers may be small, local, or wide-ranging, global. But first we must listen to what God is telling each of us, because God knows our strengths and weaknesses, and can speak directly to them.

Our “enemies” are not always people, as might be imagined from reading this Psalm. We need to clear our minds of things that trouble us, so that God can show each of us an effective way forward, in our own lives, in our communities, and in the world as a whole.

Yes, God will hear our “cry of anguish” and give us strength and courage to see our way through.

Olive DePonte, Parishioner Emerita at St. Stephen’s

March 25

Monday in Holy Week

Isaiah 42:1-9

Hebrews 9:11-15

John 12:1-11

Psalm 36:5-11

Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, *
and your faithfulness to the clouds.

Your righteousness is like the strong mountains, your
justice like the great deep; *
you save both man and beast, O Lord.

How priceless is your love, O God! *
your people take refuge under the shadow of your wings.

They feast upon the abundance of your house; *
you give them drink from the river of your delights.

For with you is the well of life, *
and in your light we see light.

Continue your loving-kindness to those who know you, *
and your favor to those who are true of heart.

Let not the foot of the proud come near me, *
nor the hand of the wicked push me aside.

Reflection:

“Your love, O Lord, reaches to the highest heavens, and your faithfulness to the clouds.”

What’s your reaction when you see the bumper sticker proclaiming, “Forty-Niner Faithful”? My response always is, “Cool. Me too. I’m Loyal, I’m Proud. I’m in.” Ridiculous, isn’t it? Because it takes only a few lost games before the Forty-niner Faithful becomes the Forty-niner Fickle.

What if God turned fickle so easily on us? God’s faithfulness is to the end of time. His love is so vast we mortals cannot begin to grasp it. The theme of God’s faithfulness runs throughout the Scriptures. It’s our love story, God’s love letters. It’s as though God can’t say “I love you” enough.

During Holy Week we try to grasp this overwhelming love and faithfulness. “God so loved the whole world that he gave us his only begotten son.” Sometimes my response is to run away--I’m not worthy. Often, it’s unbelief--How can an omnipotent God, creator of the universe, love little insignificant me? How about indifference--I just don’t have the energy for this relationship right now.

But what better time is to ponder my faithfulness to the One whose faithfulness is unceasing? What about faithfulness to personal prayer? Faithfulness to Sunday worship? Faithfulness to serving those in need? Faithfulness to sharing my financial resources?

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” (Lam. 3:22-23)

Ann Knight, “Plant Parents” (Garden Care Committee) at Christ Church

March 26

Tuesday in Holy Week

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Psalms 71:1-14

John 12:20-36

Isaiah 49:1-7

Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away!

The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me.

He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away.

And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified."

But I said, "I have labored in vain, have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the Lord, and my reward with my God."

And now the Lord says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the Lord, and my God has become my strength--he says,

"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel;

I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, "Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

Reflection:

The prophet Isaiah quotes God as saying:

“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel;

I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

It seems that being a servant is not enough. Being a servant for the benefit of a limited group of insiders, the tribes of Jacobs and survivors of Israel, is not enough. Rather, God’s vision is much “heavier” and far reaching: to be light to the nations. A light not just for tribes but for whole nations, enlarging the beneficiaries to an undesignated multiplicity of huge collections of people. That’s a huge audience.

And what are we to be? A light. What does a light do? It glows, it shines, it warms, it draws, it guides, it illuminates, it chases out darkness. I’m sure you can add more. But it doesn’t do these things actively but instead does all of these things just by what it is, just by its presence. Light doesn’t do. Light just is.

A light is visible to everyone. It does not limit who can see it. It does not exclude who can see it because they don’t meet the criteria. This light is to shine to the ends of the earth, to spread salvation. Salvation may have different definitions, but Britannica describes salvation for different world religions.

Salvation is apparently not just a Christian thing.

Koko Peters, Altar Guild Coordinator at Church of Our Saviour

March 27

Wednesday of Holy Week

Hebrews 12:1-3

John 13:21-32

Psalm 70

Isaiah 50:4-9a

The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.

Morning by morning he wakens--
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.

The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward.

I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;

I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.

The Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;
he who vindicates me is near.

Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.

Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.

It is the Lord GOD who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

Reflection:

I love this description: “Morning by morning he wakens—wakens my ear—to listen...” I love its gentle rhythm and its intimacy. We all hear ‘voices’ (don’t we?) but somehow Isaiah also senses that what he is hearing is worth attending to. He trusts. It’s also interesting that he is living, while writing, at a time –following Assyrian war--when trusting in the good intentions of others is difficult and dangerous. Conflict is all around and yet somehow; he is able to sense a truth.

Then, there is a twist. Isaiah listens, and then he teaches. He has faith that others are ready to listen through him: God has given “me the tongue of a teacher that I may know how to sustain the weary”. You cannot be a good teacher, I think, unless you believe that others are ready to hear what you have to say. He leads by example: as he listens, others listen to him.

We are living in a time of too many voices: so much opinion, so much certainty. Each morning, I find it hard to know who, or what, amid the noise, to attend to. The temptation is to trust no one, to “do your own research”. But skepticism is not a useful permanent state of being. It stimulates but leads you only so far. In the end you do have to trust someone.

I found on the internet Michelangelo’s gorgeous depiction of a young Isaiah from the Sistine chapel. It captures a moment like this. The prophet is not ‘prophesying’. He is not speaking. His head is turned in surprise and he is listening, brow furrowed. He is trusting in angels.

Andrew Purvis, Vestry Member at St. Stephen’s

March 28

Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Psalms 116:1, 10-17

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord--and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

"Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Reflection:

For me, Maundy Thursday is the last good day of passion week: a week commencing with Christ's jubilant entry into Jerusalem. Today marks His last supper with His disciples when He issued God's new commandment that we "love one another"! Maundy is derived from a Latin word meaning "Commandment".

Christ also instructed us on how we should remember Him in the sharing of His Body and Blood together (just as we do it today); and we're told to "Proclaim his death and resurrection until His coming again".

The latter has always left me a bit befuddled on two counts: first, why doesn't our proclamation (Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again) begin with His life? Christ has lived, Christ has died and risen, Christ will come again. And second, I'm also puzzled about a return from His "Sitting as one at God's right hand".

In my jewelry box, I retain a pin recognizing five years of perfect Sunday School attendance. Throughout the instruction, as I recall, we learned about Christ's birth, his life, death and resurrection. Retrospectively, my recollection is the emphasis in our teaching was around His birth and life; resurrection for me was about new clothes, happy people, finding hidden eggs, and a big lamb dinner. No discussion about "His return."

However, in adult worship, even as I question why our proclamation doesn't start with "life" before we remember his death and resurrection, and I feel free to envision His return without a blueprint, with Christ's example of living and dying and with the "benefits of His passion," I am perpetually overwhelmed with GRATITUDE and AWE! They motivate me to seek to spread Joy through the great Maundy.

Pegi Wheatley, Prayer Group Member at Christ Church

March 29

Good Friday

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

John 18:1-19:42

Psalm 22

Isaiah 52:15

So he shall startle many nations;

kings shall shut their mouths because of him;

for that which had not been told them they shall see,

and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

Reflection:

Rarely do we reflect on the cross as a sign of failure in the world's eyes. Perhaps, this Good Friday, we should. When the God whom the kings, queens, magnates, militaries, influencers, and all the powers of this world are warned to follow and emulate — when this God empties the divine self of all power and offers the divine life up to the hands of the mob and evils of domination, what is there left to say?

Good Friday is meant to startle us as a people and stun all of us out of our aspirations to achieve, to acquire, and to be powerful. In Christ on the cross, God shows us that the path of salvation is not found in power, but in self-emptying; not in achievement, but in willingness to fail for love; not to acquire, but to relinquish. God works out our salvation in the humility of our fragility, our human weakness. And that empties all the powers of this world of their domination.

It empties us of all that stands between us and the hope of Easter.

Richard Edward Helmer is Rector of Church of Our Saviour