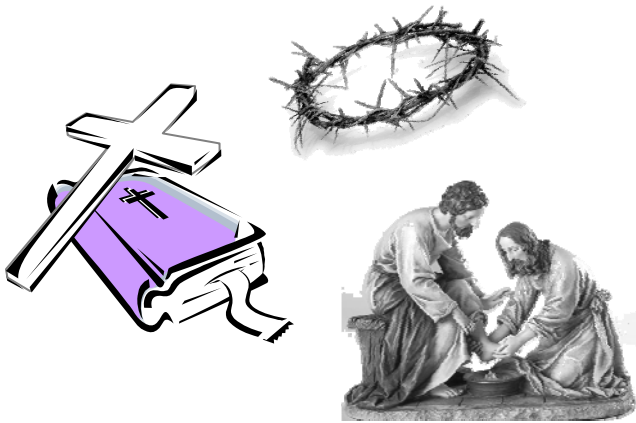


DAILY REFLECTIONS

FOR THE SEASON OF LENT

WRITTEN BY
MEMBERS
OF THE
ST. THOMAS'
COMMUNITY



ST. THOMAS' 2009
LENTEN BIBLE STUDY AND REFLECTION

Editor's Note:

Each of these daily reflections has been prepared by an individual St. Thomas parishioner or staff member. Each is unique. Each reflects the unique ideas, gifts and style of its author. We have not attempted to homogenize the length or focus of these meditations to conform to a set standard because we cherish the diversity of personality and faith reflected in them. We hope and trust that you will be blessed by the variety and spiritual strength of our authors.

*Thank you to our many members who contributed to the production:
The Rev. Whitney Altopp
Editors: Katie Worrall and Ken Oliver
Production and Graphics: Maria Lucci*

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY AND REFLECTION

“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.”

Lenten Invitation, Liturgy of Ash Wednesday, BCP pg. 265

Most of us recognize Ash Wednesday as the beginning of Lent, a period of 40 days (excluding Sundays) leading up to Easter Sunday. Many of us have come to think of Lent primarily as a period of denial when we “give up” something important to us. The Ash Wednesday invitation reminds us there is much more to Lent than denial.

Every person who has wanted to grow in their spiritual life has made a time for study, reflection, prayer and meditation a focus of daily activity. These periods give us an opportunity to seek contact with God and to reflect on our spiritual health and growth. We hope this little booklet will become a useful tool for structuring your daily Lenten study, reflection and meditation.

There is a page for each day of Lent. Each page contains the designated bible readings for the day, and a reflection on one or more of those readings prepared by a St. Thomas parishioner or staff member. We suggest you read the bible readings in your home bible and then read the reflection for that day.

After reading, take a few minutes to reflect. Ask yourself: What does this say about my daily life? Is there an issue I need to work on? How can I use these ideas to serve God and others?

We invite you, therefore, to make this Lent the beginning of a regular habit of daily prayer reflection and meditation. We pray that you may find this activity an opportunity to experience God’s grace and love.

St Thomas’ Adult Spiritual Formation Commission

Daily Reflections
for the
Season of Lent

Lent :

Eucharist during Holy Week

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday - Noon

Ash Wednesday 7:00am - Noon - 7:30pm

Maundy Thursday 7:30pm

Good Friday Noon

Easter Vigil 7:00pm

Easter 7:00am - 9:00am & 11:00am

Ash Wednesday, February 25

Psalm 32

"Therefore let all who are faithful offer a prayer to you..."

On Ash Wednesday the Book of Common Prayer invites us "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." The Prayer Book encourages us to use these classic spiritual disciplines during the season of Lent in order that God may create new spiritual life within us. Just as exercise strengthens our body, spiritual disciplines strengthen our soul.

Perhaps prayer does not come easy to you. Maybe you have dieted but have never fasted.

You may have tried reading the Bible from beginning to end, but have never gotten further than Leviticus. If that is the case, then I encourage you to select one of these spiritual disciplines and practice it for the next forty days. Make one of your daily meals lighter than normal in order to let a slight hunger remind you of your dependence upon God. It will also give you more clarity as you pray. Or set aside ten minutes each morning or evening to sit still and call to mind God's presence and listen to the Holy One embrace you, breathe and speak within you. Perhaps you may choose to read one gospel from beginning to end, slowly and meditatively during Lent.

The clergy and I would be delighted to meet with you, if you would like to learn more about how to practice any of these spiritual disciplines. I urge you to make a modest commitment and stick with it. Building a relationship with God is like anything else in life. It requires some discipline. What we achieve is based upon how much we give of ourselves to it. Join us for worship on Ash Wednesday, traditionally a day of holy obligation and one of two days prescribed by the Prayer Book for fasting. Eat simply that day, pray and recall as we worship together that "we are dust, and to dust we shall return." God will watch over us from our beginning until our end and throughout our eternal life.

The Rev. Marek Zabriskie

Thursday, February 26

John 1: 30

This is the one of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'

This gospel passage is the beginning of the journey with Jesus in his public ministry. John the Baptist is passing the torch, if you will, to Jesus. John first calls Jesus "Lamb of God," then ascribes to Jesus a baptism more potent than his own, and finally names Jesus "Son of God", (who will take away the sins of the world). The Holy Spirit descends down in the form of a dove and declares: "I have seen and have testified that this is the son of God." Jesus, the baptized Son of Man is proclaimed to be the Son of the Father. This is an outward and visible sign that Jesus is human, and He will suffer and die for sins of mankind.

When we receive the sacrament of baptism we emulate what Jesus did for us in his own baptism. We renounce Satan. We are welcomed into the body of Christ and are invited by the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus into the ministry of the church.

Anita Burke

[Psalm 37:1-18; 37:19-42](#)
[Deut. 7:6-11; Titus 1:1-16; John 1:29-34](#)

Friday, February 27

John 1:35-36

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, Here comes the Lamb of God."

"Look, there is the Lamb of God!" Can you even begin to imagine what it might have been like to have someone point out to you a very famous person... almost within reach, but whom you almost missed? (I once saw Mother Teresa on a street in New York City, just a half a block ahead of me.) Maybe your mind was on something quite important, you were paying attention to that distress you felt over bad news, or the eagerness you were experiencing as you anticipate a promotion at work or a baby about to be born? And, yet you almost missed the most significant event of your life... seeing God real, present and close up. Thankfully, you have friends... those close to you and close to God, who are paying attention to the epiphanies that come along.

The key, for me, is to stay grounded in the Faith Community, all of the wonderful people who have deep and vibrant relationships with our Lord. Being part of such a Community helps me pay better attention to the epiphanies that surround me. I am delighted by others who point out to me the things of God. I am equally delighted when I get to be the "pointer-outer"... when I have the opportunity to say to another, "Look! This is another God experience, a "God-sighting". The more we are there for each other, the more we are able to be the eyes and ears of Faith for each other, the stronger we each become, and the more attentive and receptive to God's Kingdom within us.

This Lent, practice attentiveness... practice your God-sightings.

Sister Barbara Jean

[Psalm: 31, 35](#)

[Deuteronomy: 7:12-16 Titus 2:1 John 1:35-42](#)

Saturday, February 28

Deut. 7:17-18

If you say to yourself, “these nations are more numerous than I; how can I dispossess them?” do not be afraid of them.

In these words from Moses to the Israelites after they had left Egypt and crossed the Jordan River, Moses gives instruction on how to deal with groups with whom the Israelites interact.

To a 21st century reader, “nations” could be interpreted on a personal level, referring to issues that make you anxious or hold you back or to individuals with whom you have troubling relationships. The first step to overcoming issues is not to be afraid of them. Understanding an issue from all angles is a big step to overcome fear, make peace and help you move forward. The same could be said of relating to other people. Communicating with them and understanding their point of view could help you make a peaceful relationship.

Katie Worrall

[Psalm 30, 32, 42, 43](#)

[Deut. 7:17-26; Titus 3:1-15; John 1:43-51](#)

Heb. 2: 14

Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death.

In the second chapter of Hebrews I am amazed at how much thought God put into Jesus. God made his Son a man fully human, so Jesus felt everything we feel, Jesus was just like you and me. The one big difference between Jesus and us is Jesus was fully God as well as being fully human. I believe God did this for at least two reasons as it states in the passage. First, when Jesus was crucified, died and was buried, then when he rose from the grave He broke the hold the devil has on us with death. Jesus conquered the grave showing His divinity. Knowing Jesus was fully human helps me when I pray and asking Him for help through my temptations. Jesus was tempted just like we all get tempted, although He did not give into his temptations as we do sometimes. We can look to Jesus as a model when we try and resist our temptations.

Andrew Schielke

[Psalm 41, 52,44](#)

[Deut. 8:11-20; Heb. 2:11-18; John 2:1-12](#)

Tuesday, March 3

John 2:15

Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables.

Love is patient. I have sat, chagrined, at many weddings hearing St. Paul's wonderful words to the Corinthians with his famous description of love. We live in a culture that makes it extremely difficult to remain patient. Ironically, we are often most impatient with those whom we love the most. Yet, here in John's gospel, we read of Jesus, the author of love, seeming less than patient. Actually, he is really kind of losing it there in the temple. Now, St. Paul goes on to qualify that love is not easily angered (I am still on thin ice here, depending on my daily "Crabby Meter" reading.) There was no getting around it. Jesus was mad.

As a psychotherapist, I often sit with clients who are impatient or angry. In spite of popular belief, I view anger and feeling impatient as potentially constructive and adaptive emotions. Anger has a way of catalyzing individuals to make necessary changes in their lives. Whether the change involves leaving a marriage when a spouse has been chronically unfaithful and abusive, or quitting a job where a boss is disrespectful and devaluing, or on a larger scale, speaking out against social injustice or oppression.

Here, Jesus seems incredulous at the blatant demonstration of greed and acquisitiveness in a House of God. When his authority was challenged, Jesus spoke of destroying the temple and rebuilding it in three days. Jesus metaphorically teaches us that in order for love to triumph, one must crack "a whip made of cords" to disrupt pathology and chaos. Only after Good Friday can we celebrate Easter Sunday.

Liz Butler-Rodgers

[Psalm 45,47, 48](#)

[Deut. 9:4-12; Heb. 3:1-11; John 2:13-22](#)

Wednesday, March 4

Hebrews 3: 15

Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.

The Scripture readings today remind me how challenging it is to trust the 'unseen'.

Aaron and the people of Israel chose to build a golden calf, visible and solid, after Moses left to be with God. Nicodemus went to speak to Jesus directly but he couldn't understand what Jesus told him about the Spirit.

What about each of us?

What are the weaknesses in our hearts that lead us to make golden calves, or lose patience waiting for God, or block our ability to 'see'?

And what are the strengths in our hearts that help us to trust that the 'unseen' is truly powerful and life-giving?

"The earth, O Lord, is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes!"

Ginger Goodrich

[Psalm 119:49-72](#)

[Deut 9:13-21 Heb 3:12-19 John 2:23-3:15](#)

Thursday, March 5

John 3:21

But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.

I chose John 3:16 to 21 because I can relate to it. Whether you are religious or not almost all of us have heard of someone with a near death experience describing seeing the light. There have been books written about this.

It is easy to believe Jesus is the light in a world where there are many dark corners. He stands for everything that is truly important. He tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves – if we did there would be no hunger, wars or oppression of others. His rules for living were always simple sayings that were brilliant ideas put so all could understand. Everyday each of us does something that we wish had been handled better. Sometimes we go out of our way to justify these actions to alleviate our guilt.

Few of us would give up our most precious possession – our child – to help others, even when the need is great.

My hope is that each of us one day finds the light.

Kaye Luckiewicz

[Psalm 50, 59, 60 or 19, 46](#)

[Deut. 9:23-10:5; Heb: 4:1-10; John 3:16-21](#)

Psalm 95:7

O that today you would listen to his voice! Do not harden your hearts...” *Deut 10:12*. So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all you soul...*Heb. 4:12*. Indeed, the word of God is living and active...

Let us take time today to be quiet and listen to God. Our world is full of noise and clutter. We listen to the morning TV shows as we dress in the morning; we turn on our radio in the car; we talk to associates at the office and through e-mail. Our minds are constantly busy with noise. Let us take just five minutes of silence today and let our minds and hearts dwell on God and our love for God. Think about what God has already given to you. There are so many days that we begin our day with a request for God to do something for us, to right a wrong, to heal a hurt or to “make something happen that we want”. Let’s just take those silent five minutes to love and listen to God because “he is a great God and a great King above all gods.” Amazing things can happen when we devote quiet time just to God. It gives him time to speak to us because “Indeed, the word of God is living and active” – let us be quiet so we can receive his love and his word.

Joyce Lawson

[Psalm 95, 40, 54. 51](#)

[Deut. 10:12-22; Heb. 4:11-16; John 3:22-36](#)

Saturday, March 7

The psalmist in Psalm 55 is so wonderfully human!" We can find ourselves and our lives in the Psalms – not unlike a good Country song.

He begins —

*Give ear to my prayer, O God;
And hide not thyself from my supplication (v.1)*

He is so hurt, he wants to run away and hide.

*Oh that I had wings like a dove!
Then would I fly away, and be at rest. (v.6)*

In many of the psalms, the writer is asking God to deliver him from an overwhelming situation. In this instance, the writer was deeply hurt not by a mortal enemy but by his *"companion and familiar friend."*

If my enemy, someone I dislike, hurts me, I can bear it – at least it is not a surprise. But when I am hurt by someone I love, the hurt goes much deeper. Betrayal compounds the injury.

We, like the Psalmist, can be comforted (in the original meaning of that word: *to be strengthened*). We pour out our deepest feelings to God, and God will give us the words to say, the forgiveness to share, the relief from hurt.

Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; (v.22)

Cindy DeDakis

[Psalm 55,138,139:1-17\(18-23\)](#)
[Deut. 11:18-28; Heb. 5:1-10; John 4:1-26](#)

Monday, March 9

Psalm 64:1

“Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint; preserve my life from the dreaded enemy.”

In my walk through this confusing and oftentimes overwhelming world, I have met many interesting people. Each person offers a different perspective on life based upon their faith, education and life experiences. The journey is different for each of us, however a kind word or deed and a friendly smile is always appreciated. I firmly believe the kindness and thoughtfulness you extend to others will come back to you.

This psalm brings to mind the importance of reaching out in a kind and loving manner to all God’s people. One never knows when that one act of kindness may change the life of another.

Caroline Hauser

[Psalm 56, 57, \[58\], 64, 65](#)

[Jer. 1:11-19; Rom. 1:1-15; John 4:27-42](#)

Tuesday, March 10

Jeremiah 2:7

*I brought you into a plentiful land to its fruits and its good things.
But when you entered you defiled my heritage an abomination.*

I gaze out the window of our apartment. The sun is brilliant as it casts a shadow across the new fallen January snow. The variety of shadow patterns from the trees creates a scene of beauty. I read the words from Jeremiah, "Shadow of death" and have a different feeling. I think of the sad farewell which death always involves as one is taken from us and we are left alone. We fear the unknown, and we know very little about death. The psalmist speaks of death (Psalm 23) as a "shadowed valley" through which we must pass.

Note, however, that the Lord walks with us, and the valley is only a part of the road that leads to his house. There the table is spread, and we are received as welcomed guests.

Pastor Bill deHeyman

[Psalm 61, 62, 68:1-20\(21-23\)24-36](#)
[Jer. 2:1-13; Rom. 1:16-25; John 4:43-54](#)

Psalm 72: 1, 2

Give the king your justice, Oh God, and your righteousness to the king's son. May he judge your people with righteousness and your poor with justice.

This psalm is especially relevant considering the change in leadership in our nation. Even 2,000 years ago, those qualities deemed necessary in a ruler are the same as what we need in our leaders today: righteousness and justice; an individual who will bring about peaceful coexistence among people, and defend the poor. Imagine if the world leaders could commit themselves to these qualities.

Solomon prays that he has instilled in his son all of these qualities. Likewise, we also pray that our new leader in Washington will draw on his past experience to guide us through some very turbulent times. Although we can't predict the outcome of the new administration any stimulus plan being debated, we can, like Solomon, ask God's help for our leaders.

Lisa and Paul Lonie

[Psalm 72, 119:73-96](#)

[Jer. 3:6-18 Rom. 1:28-2:11; John 5:1-18](#)

Thursday, March 12

Rom.2:13,21

*For it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified;*** 21 You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal?*

This passage in Romans calls us to examine our actions and how we respond to the laws of God. We are expected to go beyond just hearing God's word--we need to practice what we preach and provide an example to others.

The scripture also warns us not to be hypocritical- instructing others how to live their lives when we ourselves are not following God's laws. When we "boast in the law" and profess to be morally above others just because we are Christians we actually steer people away from the church and religion.

Many of us feel uncomfortable bringing the good news of Christ to others because we don't want to seem boastful or condescending. We don't want to be viewed like a radical televangelist who professes to have ALL the answers. This scripture reminds me that just being a living example of God's will can have a significant impact on others. Simple acts of kindness and respect- starting with the way we treat our own families are not only noticed and appreciated by others but often emulated.

I saw this exemplified recently through our much-missed parishioner, Dave Schreffler. Everyone who speaks of Dave remembers his generosity and kindness. Even those who barely knew him talk of his thoughtful greetings in church, warm personality and uplifting smile.

Little things mean a lot.

Steve Bitterman

[Psalm 70, 71, 74](#)

[Jer.4:9-10, Rom.2:12-24; John 5:19-29](#)

John 5:30

"I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me."

Throughout the year we lead incredibly hectic lives. We are all pulled in many directions by our careers, our families, and many other activities. The crisis in our country and recent events in our parish weigh on everyone. Lent is a time to listen, to hear God's voice, to make worship and prayer a priority. It is a time to look around and realize all the gifts that have been given and be thankful. It is also a time to center myself, re-energize, and focus on the things that matter most.

Ted Brown

[Psalm 95, 69:1-23\(24-30\)31-38, 73](#)

[Jer. 5:1-9; Rom. 2:25-3:18; John 5:30-47](#)

Saturday, March 14

Jeremiah 5:31

What will you do in the end?

The current papers attest to the earth and all its inhabitants quaking. We are afraid and fear leads us astray from our primary purpose. It leads the addict to use, it makes us rageful, it leads me to sins of commission and omission. Jeremiah asks, "What will you do?" Today, I will "make a vow to the Lord my God and keep it". I will seek out a place and the people where God keeps me safe from me. I will wait patiently. I will not do this publicly, but in secret.

Stroud Hellebusch

[Psalm 75, 76, 23, 27](#)

[Jeremiah 5:20-31 Romans 3:19-31 John 7:1-13](#)

Monday, March 16

Jeremiah 7:3

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell (thrive) in this place.

As I read and re-read these passages, I am reminded of a truth I have always known ... follow the path the Lord has defined for good and decent human behavior or suffer the consequences. In other words, set your "moral compass" to true north and keep it on that heading even though we are surrounded by temptations to have it point elsewhere. Interestingly, this message applies directly to the state of affairs in our country today; as a nation, founded on "In God We Trust", we seem to have lost our moral compass.

Greed, corruption, arrogance and indifference have overtaken our corporations and government that has turned our compass, as a nation, upside down. There is hope, however, as the passage says, "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell (thrive) in this place" ... we can put our country back on course.

As a Christian I believe we can do this by living in all the aspects of our lives as Jesus taught us how to live ... have an open heart to peace, love without expectations, treat everyone with respect, truly care about others, find a way to help those in need, have forgiveness for those that have strayed and most of all to have faith in the Lord our God to guide us along this path.

Harry MacCord

[Psalm 80, 77, \[79\]](#)

[Jer. 7:1-15; Rom. 4:1-12; John 7:14-36](#)

Tuesday, March 17

John 7:37-38

If you are thirsty, come to me. If you believe in me, come and drink! For the scriptures declare that rivers of living water will flow out from within.

When I read that passage, I am struck by the words "Have faith in me and you will have life-giving water flowing from deep inside you." Often, in the course of a day, I find myself struggling with the demands of my family, job, etc. I contemplate that it would be easier to "skip everything" in favor of curling up with a good book on the couch. Then I think of the Jesus, his teachings, his love for us, and sacrifice. I am inspired to consider what is right or best, and I find myself pressing onward. My thoughts of Jesus are not relegated to one-hour "chunks" on Sunday morning, but rather 60 second "snippets" that inspire me throughout each day.

Pam McKernan

[Psalm 78:1-39; 78:40-72](#)

[Jer. 7:21-34; Rom. 4:13-25; John 7:37-52](#)

Wednesday, March 18

Romans 5:11

But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we now have received reconciliation.

How do we find peace and joy in a world full of trouble? Where and what is the source and the object of our faith and our hope? These are questions with which so many deeply struggle. This powerful and faith affirming passage from Romans tells us that our hope must be in the Lord Jesus who has saved us through His sacrificial suffering and death and who is, therefore the source of our hope. The words even dare suggest that in our sufferings and pain we can find our joy in the Lord who demonstrated the power of His love for us in dying for us while we were still sinners. In a world full of uncertainty and confusion, these words call us to find our peace in the One who justified us by His blood.

Elisa Marshall

[Psalm 119:97-120, 81, 82](#)

[Jer. 8:18-9:6; Rom. 5:1-11; John 8:12-20](#)

Thursday, March 19

Jeremiah 10: 23

I know, O Lord, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his own steps.

I don't know this at all! New Year's resolutions, strategic plans and budgets direct my steps toward success. But my deaf and blind cat, Patches, knows the wisdom of Jeremiah's words in a way I do not. Gingerly moving through the house she constantly collides with walls and chair legs, but somehow manages to find her litter, food and water. Mostly, she sleeps curled up on the sofa or in a warm lap, like she was this morning when I read this verse from Jeremiah. Stroking her soft fur I realized how like Patches I am.

In a way, I also am blind and deaf; I don't know where I am going in my life and often can't hear God's voice guiding me. So, I run into problems just as surely as Patches runs into the kitchen wall. I cry out like she does, and God is there to rescue and comfort me, if I remember to be still and listen. There is always food for my soul in the Bible and daily prayer. My community of St. Thomas' friends refreshes me like cool water. I have been given a whole world to roam and explore, but know that in God I always have a safe loving haven in which I "live and move and have my being." Yes, Patches never seems to need a plan. Maybe I can learn from her.

Jane Hamilton

[Psalm \[83\] or 42, 43, 85, 86](#)

[Jer. 10:11-24; Rom. 5:12-21; John 8:21-32](#)

Friday, March 20

Psalm 95: 7-8

“For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness.”

At a time when we are bombarded with so many conflicting and “unchristian-like” messages, it is our responsibility to put aside these messages and focus on the path to God. As God’s sheep, we often follow those with the largest voice or biggest stick and ignore the quiet voice of love and compassion for the good of others. Our spirituality and that of our children is often left for another time and place when we think we will have the strength to fight for these principals. Often, it is too easy for many of us to conform or give in to the whim of society in our search for power, wealth and notoriety. We should instead, ask ourselves to go beyond the love of self and search for the quiet gift of giving of oneself.

Nicole Riter

[Psalm 95, 88, 91, 92](#)

[Jer. 11:1-8,14-20; Rom. 6:1-11; John 8:33-47](#)

Saturday, March 21

Romans 6:13-14

No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of your righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under the law but under grace.

Through God's grace we do what is right because we want to do that rather than because it is the rule. But, even when we do not live up to God's expectations, when ignore another's needs or focus on our culture's values rather than or religious values; God forgives us through grace. I think of God's grace as the way in which I am forgiven for my imperfections and my human nature.

Tom Morgan

[Psalm 87, 90, 136](#)

[Jer. 13:1-11; Rom. 6:12-23; John 8:47-59](#)

John 6: 11

Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks to God, and passed them out to the people. Afterward he did the same with the fish. And they ate until they were full.

John writes of the many miracles Jesus performed. They are the stories we learned and loved as children: Jesus ordered a lame man to pick up his mat and suddenly he was able to walk. An official's ill son was made well. For me, the most vivid and most beautiful childhood memory is the Feeding of Five Thousand. With only five loaves and two fish to start, the food multiplied in the baskets and no one went hungry. I really marveled at that one.

The cast of characters and setting made for a perfect story for a young person with a vivid imagination like mine. But there is something I missed; something that until this reading I didn't quite realize was there. And that is squarely in the very last verse:

15: Jesus saw that they were ready to take him by force and make him king, so he went higher into the hills alone.

How perfect is that? Today when so many seek power and prestige, Jesus sought none of that. He knew that the masses needed proof that he was the son of God, and that was distasteful to him. Nevertheless... it was necessary to get the word out. But, he had had enough, and was gone. Something I wish to remember and live by: Good deeds are done for their own sake and not for recognition or any other reason.

Cindy Oliver

[Psalm 89:1-18, 89:19-52;](#)
[Jer. 16:10-21; Rom. 7:1-12; John 6:1-15](#)

Tuesday, March 24

Psalm 100

“For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations”

As we exist in a world of constant change, our status as God’s own is reassuringly steadfast and comforting. Even as we wonder what life will be like for our children and future generations, Psalm 100 assures us that they will be embraced by the same loving God.

Diane Crookenden

Psalm 97, 99, 100, 94, 95

Jeremiah 17:19-27 Romans 7:13-25 John 6:16-27

Wednesday, March 25

Rom. 8: 5-6

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

Today's readings of the Psalms and Romans remind us that life is filled with difficult decisions. Each day we face what can be an overwhelming struggle to make the right decisions. Today, face those challenges knowing that God sent His only son to save everyone seeking his father's grace. Today, joyfully take on those challenges that God gives us, knowing that he is lovingly guiding you along your path.

Christine Wendt

[Psalm 101, 109:1-4\(5-19\)20-30, 119:121-144](#)
[Jer. 18:1-11; Rom. 8:1-11; John 6:27-40](#)

Thursday, March 26

Psalm 73: 1-3

“Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

Do we feel God’s anger with us for the damage “inflicted on the poor by the prosperity of the wicked?” We see it all around us – hear it on the news – experience ourselves. The test before us is what have we done, what will we do to help the needy and in our gifts values, policies and priorities. Personally, in our church, our community, our nation and the world, do we hear the cry? Have we clothed, housed, taught and fed the poor? Too often we fall short, knowing we could and should do more. Lord, I pray, move us to be generous in sharing your gifts, move us as advocates to the welfare of all of Your Children.

Jim Sheldon

[Psalm 69:1-23 \(24-30\),31-38, 73,](#)
[Jer. 22:13-23;Rom 8:12-27; John 6:41-51](#)

John 6:56

Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.

For Christians, one of the most familiar and beloved verses in all of scripture is found in the eighth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. We go to it for comfort, peace, strength and courage at times when the issues of life cause us to consider these things to be beyond our grasp. To quote in part: "...neither death nor life, ... nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

On the other hand, today's reading from John's readings tends to bring us back down to earth. It tells us, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them. " And later, "...if you do not you have no life in you."

Of course John's words draw attention to our physical participation in the Eucharist. Particularly in Lent, however, they help us concentrate on how we may have fallen short in eating the flesh and drinking the blood; or put another way, how we may have failed to assimilate Christ's life in our own—to surrender completely in order to attain His ultimate victory which we will soon celebrate at Easter.

Lent is such an important season in the church year!

Frank Conly

[Psalm 95,102, 107:1-32](#)

[Jer. 23:1-8; Rom. 8:28-39; John 6:52-59](#)

Saturday, March 28

John 6:63

It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

What saves us from sin? More to the point, what do I personally have to do to avoid the fate awaiting the wicked?

Surely good works - attending church, giving up a favorite food this Lent – surely, these acts will make me un-wicked in God's eyes. Won't they? Or is something more required? I feel Jesus is telling me that the something more is to accept the spirit and the Word.

Tim Russell

[Psalm 107:33-43, 108:1-6 \(7-13\), 33](#)
[Jer. 23: 9-15; Rom. 9:1-18; John 6:60-71](#)

John 9:1

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man blind from birth.

When I was in 8th grade, the eye doctor said I needed glasses. I was puzzled by this because I thought I could see okay. I saw things the way I always saw them and didn't know any different.

I really didn't want glasses because I was sure they would make me look ugly. The moment I put on my new glasses is one I will never forget. Suddenly, I could see the world in a whole new way. Not only could I read from a distance, but colors were amazingly vivid and my surroundings were much clearer. I had thought I could see but I really could not see fully.

Jesus is like those glasses. Our faith in Him enables us to see. He is the light that makes the path to God the Father amazingly vivid and clear.

We pray that our faith will be strong and Jesus will be our light.

Kathy Crane

[Psalm 31, 35;](#)

[Jeremiah 24: 1-10; Romans 9: 19-33](#)

[John 9:1-17](#)

Psalm 121:1-2

I lift up my eyes to the hills from where is my help to come? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

The psalmists in the readings speak of cries for deliverance, assurance of God's protection, seeking the mercy of the Lord, giving thanksgiving for our deliverances, trusting in the Lord, and rejoicing in what the Lord has done for us.

These psalms remind me that in this time of great difficulty for our nation and our world, our situation is not unique. Through the ages, mankind has endured many threats and challenges. And through the ages, man has sought the protection, mercy and grace of God in the face of these challenges. The passages tell us that God's protection and mercy in the face of adversity are real. We can put our trust in Him and we should rejoice and praise Him. If ever there was a time for thanksgiving and praise, it is now.

Jan Connor

[Psalm \[120\], 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, \[127\]](#)
[Jer. 25:8-17; Rom. 10:1-13; John 9:18-41](#)

Wednesday, April 1

John 10:9

I am the door; anyone who comes into the fold through me shall be safe. He shall go in and out and shall find pasturage

We live in a world where many are stretched to the limit with commitments of all sorts, constantly concerned for our family's wellbeing, and bombarded with messages for products and services that will make us "better people" or live "better lives". Sometimes it can be difficult to sift through what is truly important and what is simply "noise". If we are not vigilant, seemingly higher priorities or more important messages may displace our spirituality. But in this parable, Jesus reminds us that it is only through him that we can truly attain wellbeing and security. We must find ways to connect spiritually with God every day, to remain rooted in our faith regardless of external pressures or messages.

Carl Jameson

[Psalms 119:145-176, 128, 129, 130](#)

[Jeremiah 25:30-38; Romans 10:14-21; John 10:1-18](#)

Thursday, April 2

Psalm 142

“Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name. Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me.”

It can take a long time to realize where God has come into your life and to understand what he wants from you. I didn't start to read the Bible in earnest until I turned 40. Since then I have spoken to God almost every day, in many cases just to say “Good morning” and “Thank you for this day.” In some cases to ask for help or guidance, patience or opportunity.

God has returned my prayers many times.

As wonderful as that is, it is equally wonderful that through my reading and through my communication with God, I have gained the knowledge and certainty in my faith that has allowed me to share it with others. Where I would have politely kept my mouth shut or offered conventional or trite advice, I now can offer my own experiences and insight to a friend or colleague or even a stranger. And the more I speak of my gifts from Him, the more people seem to come and ask about them.

Andrew McMaster

[Psalm 131, 132, \[133\], 140, 142](#)
[Jer. 26:1-16; Rom. 11:1-12; John 10:19-42](#)

Friday, April 3

Psalm 141

“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.”

Technology has changed the way we communicate with each other. Gone are the days of long, carefully drafted and beautifully hand-written letters. How many of us keep boxes of these letters anymore, spending rainy afternoons dredging up memories? Phone calls and emails and text messages are faster. Yet sometimes in our haste to communicate quickly, we can be less thoughtful with our words. We say things we regret later. Or we fail to say the things we should have said.

May our words today be Christ-like, spreading the Good News to all.

Sarah Elliott

[Psalm 95, 22; 141, 143:1-11\(12\)](#)

[Jer. 29:1, 4-13; Rom. 11:13-24; John 11:1-27 or 12:1-10](#)

Saturday, April 4

Jeremiah 31:27-28

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seeds of humans and the seeds of animals. And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the LORD.

In today's Old Testament reading, the Lord says, "when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seeds of humans and the seeds of animals," the Lord will watch over us through bad as well as good times, he may put us down but he will pull us up. The Lord will be our God and we his people, he will forgive our iniquities and our sins. He chooses us not because we are powerful or strong but because we are all his people. The Lord loves us and will guide us to love one another for who we are.

Bill Potts

[Psalm 137:1-6\(7-9\), 144, Psalm 42, 43](#)

[Jer. 31:27-34; Rom. 11:25-36; John 11:28-44 or 12:37-50](#)

Monday, April 6

Psalm 51: 4,11

*Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight; *** Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.*

In her poem "Trust", Dorothy Piersen advises:

"Steady the mind on God;
Let single-mindedness
Ignite the divine spark.
Let the fire of Truth
Dispel ignorance,
Dissipate the dark."

The readings for this Monday of Holy week echo the theme of the poem. In Psalm 51 we listen to David's confession: "Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight" and his plea for Gods help: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me." This plea for release from our guilt is continued in Psalm 69, "O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you." And we trust in God's response, "Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me." Jeremiah complains to God about his observations of injustice in the world: "Why does the way of the guilty prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?" God responds with a rebuke, a lament, and a series of complaints and ends with a promise to restore Judah.

Paul's advice is to rejoice in the Lord while being vigilant of "evil workers", "dogs", and those who mutilate the flesh. Overcoming these obstacles he celebrates "because Christ Jesus has made me his own." The gospel from John tells of the plotting of the religious authorities against Jesus and Lazarus, plus the triumphant arrival in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. We recognize that this plotting will result in a brutal death on the cross a few days hence. We celebrate the day and event at hand but wonder at those dark clouds on the horizon. Reflect on the following prayer petition and consider how the many messages from what we have read can help us be more compassionate.

Bless us with compassion and generosity - remembering that every religion's God judges us by the way we care for the most vulnerable in the human community, whether across town or across the world.

Rob Davidson
Candidate for Holy Orders

Tuesday, April 7

John 12:20-26

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew: Andrew went with Philip and they told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat fall into the earth and dies it remains alone: but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."

We may wonder why the Greeks are here. It is said that they were searching after truth! What follows may be more confusing than enlightening at first. Take it one sentence at a time. His death helped give birth to the church as we know it. One who lives totally for their own pleasure may have nothing at the end. One who is not satisfied with what they see continually tries to multiply the good. The will find goodness at the end. Follow the example of Jesus and bask in the warmth of God's love.

During Lent we are asked to give up something in honor of the life that Christ gave up for us. Perhaps here He is asking us to do something to multiply the good. Each day, one small thing....

Peg Kregel

[Psalm 6, 12, 94](#)

[Jer. 15:10-21; Phil. 3:15-21; John 12:20-26](#)

Wednesday, April 8

Philippians 4:6-7

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Today's readings all show ways to seek and trust God. But the final two are the most powerful. In John, Our Lord, in predicting His death, counsels his followers to put their trust in the light to be people of the light. St. Paul, writing from prison, sets forth two of the most spiritually haunting exhortations in all Christianity: first, to rejoice in the Lord and be unafraid, no matter what; second, to practice whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy. Although readable in a moment, these truths may take a lifetime to apply.

Richard Lee

[Psalms 55, 74](#)

[Jeremiah 17:5-10](#) [John 12:27-36](#) [Philippians 4:1-13](#)

Jeremiah 20:8

Whenever I speak, the words come out in a violent outburst. "Violence and destruction" I shout. So these messages from the Lord have made me a household joke.

Jeremiah was a very angry man. God had told him to warn people that Israel would be destroyed because the people were doing evil things. He tried to warn them; but no one would listen. The more they ignored him, the angrier he got. And, the angrier he got, the less they listened.

Today, most of us don't believe God destroys a city or culture to eradicate or punish evil. We no longer embrace the old Hebrew idea of collective guilt. And, most of us don't presume that God has sent us to warn the world. So, what's the point?

At times I have acted a bit like Jeremiah. A particular course or idea seemed obvious to me. I "just knew" my idea was best. But, others often didn't seem to share my vision. I became angry and often told people how stupid they were for disagreeing with me. Of course, that wasn't productive or endearing. It didn't help my self-esteem either.

I often see my children, my friends or organizations making "mistakes" and want desperately to stop them. Instead of misdirected and unproductive anger, I try to pray:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

Ken Oliver

[Psalm 102, 142, 143](#)

[Jer. 20:7-11; 1 Cor. 10:14-17, 11:27-32; John 17:1-11\(12-26\)](#)

Psalm 22:1

My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?

These words are the first words of the 22nd Psalm and were spoken by Jesus on the cross according to the gospel accounts of both Mark and Matthew. In our shock and horror, we empathize with Jesus in his agony and ask the same question, "Why?" Does Jesus start this psalm because of the references in the first 21 verses that mirror his own suffering? We see these resemblances and that is why we read this psalm every Good Friday. But I don't know why we stop after the 21st verse. Jesus didn't tell us to. The last nine verses of the psalm are about praise. What strikes me in these is that the praise continues even in the midst of the incomprehensible agony. I imagine that Jesus does this because he wants to remind himself and us of God's promise to bring us into his glory. *"My soul shall live for him; my descendants shall serve him; they shall be known as the Lord's forever. They shall come and make known to a people yet unborn the saving deeds that he has done."*

The Rev. Whitney Altopp

[Psalm 22: 29, 30, The Book of Common Prayer](#)

Saturday, April 11

“Why hast thou cast me off, O Lord, why dost thou hide thy face from me?”

Psalm 88: 14

In 2007 St. Thomas Church sent me to Malawi to meet the children of Mtengowanthenega, all orphans, some afflicted with AIDS. I wondered where God could be in the face of such abject poverty, disease, and death. Where could one find God in a place like this? Bracing myself, expecting God's absence, I was surprised by the incredible gentle and positive spirit of the Malawian people. Where I expected to find nothing but despair, was instead an incredible spirit of love, hope, and even joy. How could these people have such strong faith? I was reminded of Job and his great faith in the face of doubt and pain.

“I know that my vindicator lives and that he will rise last to speak in court.”

Job 19: 25

“Wait for the Lord; be strong; take courage, and wait for the Lord.”

Psalm 27:14

I love St. Thomas's outreach to Malawi. I want to do more. I am ready to continue the work supporting GAIA (Global AIDS Interfaith Alliance) in its work there.

“Let us therefore boldly approach the throne of our gracious God, where we may receive mercy and in his grace find timely help.”

Hebrews 4: 16

Jim Weiss

[Psalm 95, 88, 27](#)

[Job 19:21-27a; Heb. 4:1-16; Rom. 8:1-11](#)

Many thanks to the following parishioners, clergy and staff who contributed to this booklet:

The Rev. Marek Zabriskie	Elisa Marshall
The Rev. Whitney Altopp	Jane Hamilton
The Rev. Bill deHeyman	Nicole Riter
Sister Barbara Jean Brown	Tom Morgan
Anita Burke	Cindy Oliver
Katie Worrall	Diane Crookenden
Andrew Schielke	Jim Sheldon
Liz Butler-Rodgers	Frank Conly
Ginger Goodrich	Tim Russell
Kaye Luckiewicz	Kathy Crane
Joyce Lawson	Jan Connor
Cindy DeDakis	Carl Jameson
Caroline Hauser	Andrew McMaster
Lisa and Paul Lonie	Sarah Elliott
Steve Bitterman	Bill Potts
Ted Brown	Rob Davidson
Stroud Hellebusch	Peg Kregel
Harry MacCord	Richard Lee
Pam McKernan	Jim Weiss



St. Thomas' Church, Whitemarsh

Bethlehem Pike and Camp Hill Road
P.O. Box 247
Fort Washington, PA 19034

Phone (215)233-3970 Fax (215)233-2893
Email info@stthomaswhitemarsh.org

Lent :

Eucharist during Holy Week

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday - Noon

<i>Ash Wednesday</i>	<i>7:00am - Noon - 7:30pm</i>
<i>Maundy Thursday</i>	<i>7:30pm</i>
<i>Good Friday</i>	<i>Noon</i>
<i>Easter Vigil</i>	<i>7:00pm</i>
<i>Easter</i>	<i>7:00am - 9:00am & 11:00am</i>