

Lenten Devotions

2021



St. Philip Lutheran Church



LUTHERAN CHURCH
OF THE ASCENSION



GLORIA DEI
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Pastor's Introduction

Welcome!

Throughout the centuries, Lent has been a time in which Christians fervently devote themselves to reading scripture and spending time with God in prayer. We do so to remember Christ's journey towards Jerusalem and the cross. We prepare our hearts for the story of the passion and the darkness of Good Friday, that we may fully appreciate the joy of Easter! As you make your way to the cross this Lent, it is our prayer you find this collection of devotions helpful as you journey along the path of this season.

Each of the entries has been written by a member of one of the four ELCA congregations in Glenview, Northbrook and Northfield. Each week, we meet virtually for text study to support one another as we study God's Word in preparation for the coming Sunday's sermon. The idea came from our meetings to compile a devotional resource for Lent this year asking members of each congregation to write an entry with one word for each day as its focus.

Thank you to everyone who contributed an entry for this project. Special thanks to Brittany Neptun for coordinating the layout and formatting of this booklet. Thanks be to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ as we make our way towards Holy Week and Easter Sunday together.

Rev. JoAnn Post – Lutheran Church of the Ascension Northfield

Rev. John Berg – Gloria Dei Lutheran Church – Northbrook

Rev. Josh Evans – St. Philip Lutheran Church – Glenview

Rev. Chris Neptun – Holy Trinity Lutheran Church – Glenview

Vr. Phillip Potaczek – Lutheran Church of the Ascension - Northfield





February 17th - HEAL



Verse

[The man who had had the unclean spirit] went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed. (Mark 5:20)



Thought

One of my favorite stories in the gospels is the exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac in Mark 5, in part because I think it helps us understand what Scripture means when it speaks of *healing*. This man who had been formerly bound with chains, relegated to the cemetery on the outskirts of town, physically and emotionally beat down, and cut off from his people has suddenly been freed from his demons, liberated, and *restored to community*.

There are so many places in our world and in our lives in need of this kind of healing - the creation, our bodies, our relationships. This Ash Wednesday, as we focus on what it means to be *healed*, I'm reminded that Scripture, over and over again, speaks of healing often as some kind of *restoration to community*. Beyond a miraculous "cure," that's what healing means - the well-being of God's people and God's creation, living and being and moving together. Restored. Whole. Healed.



Prayer

God of healing and wholeness, in baptism you claim us as your own beloved and mark us with the cross of Christ forever. Drown us to the evil and brokenness that binds us, and raise us to new life and liberation, that restored to wholeness, we might proclaim your extravagant message of love for the whole cosmos. Amen.

Contributed by: Pastor Josh Evans | St. Philip



February 18th – INJUSTICE



Verse

If I have denied justice to any of my servants, whether male or female, when they had a grievance against me, ¹⁴what will I do when God confronts me? What will I answer when called to account? ¹⁵Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers? (Job 31:13–15 NIV)



Thought

Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” It is appropriate that in this past year that brought us *Black Lives Matter* and new struggles for equality and justice for people of color, immigrants, women and our brothers and sisters in the LGBTQ community, we should focus attention during Lent on injustice. Especially so since we begin our Lenten observance during Black History Month. Dr. King reminds us, as Job did, that God will judge the measure of justice we meted out to those in our world. What will we answer when called to account?



Prayer

Dear Lord, give us the grace and strength to treat all our brothers and sisters with equality and justice. Help us to see you in our neighbors and deal with them as though it was you. Let us use our Lenten observance to help us see opportunities to extend justice and peace to all in the world. Amen.

Contributed by: Bill Horine | Gloria Dei



February 19th – SACRIFICE



Verse

Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ (Matthew 9:13)



Thought

Matthew writes of a visit to his home. Jesus sat down to dinner with tax collectors (such as Matthew, whom He had called; who were paid on a commission basis, and were viewed as serving Rome) and sinners. When the Pharisees questioned this, Jesus answered that the healthy have no need of a doctor, only the sick. He recalls Hosea (“For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,” Hosea 6.6), who was critical of Israel in the 700s BC for being unfaithful to God and for offering sacrifices in ceremony instead of love of God; as if a sacrifice earned God’s love or “paid for” His forgiveness of sinful behavior. (We are reminded that Luther would later admonish against this.) In deciding to follow Jesus, Matthew turned his back on a lucrative government job. But it was not this sacrifice that was important; instead it was his faith (love of and trust) in God and becoming His disciple and follower. For us today, this means that what is important is not giving something up that we crave or covet, but committing (giving over) ourselves in love to the notice and care of others as part of our earthly mission in service to, and for the love of, God.



Prayer

Almighty God, you have given our nation the gift and heritage of freedom. It came at the cost of many lives on many types of battlefields far and near. Receive our thanks for their sacrifice, and give us the courage to achieve justice and equality, the wisdom to preserve liberty in our own time, and perseverance to use them to your glory. Have mercy and spare us. Put an end to the pandemic, and restore the communities of the world to their common life.

Contributed by: [Stephen Schwab](#) | [Lutheran Church of the Ascension](#)



February 20th – TREASURE



Verse

7 But we have this **TREASURE** in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. (2 Corinthians 4:7-9)



Thought

What is something that you treasure day in and day out? It could be a special item that has great meaning to you, or possibly a special person that you couldn't live without. Think about how much you cherish this treasure, and how much you value its presence in your life. In 2 Corinthians, we read that we have "treasure in jars of clay". This treasure Paul writes about is the gospel of Jesus, and the jars of clay are in fact believers in Christ. This means that the treasure, or the amazing gospel story of Jesus Christ, dwells in us. As for the jars, they seem to portray this image of a vessel, or something that is used to transport something else inside. Paul's ministry was focused on being a vessel for the glory of God, even in the midst of extreme suffering. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we can look to Paul as an example of how to be a vessel for God, and how to carry His "treasure" to others who are in search of Him. During this Lenten season, let us choose to find joy in our weaknesses, and let's reveal to others the immeasurable power of God in the face of Jesus Christ.



Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Son Jesus as a treasure that dwells inside of us. Help us to draw nearer to this treasure in this season of Lent, and let it consume our lives and challenge us to share this treasure with others. We love you, and we thank you for your great power. All for your glory, and in Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Contributed by: Abby Neptun | Holy Trinity



February 21st – CELEBRATE



Verse

This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.
(Psalm 118:24)



Thought

Every day is a gift. A new beginning to forgive or seek forgiveness, to help or ask for help, to question why or listen for answers, to love or be loved. A day to celebrate life.



Prayer

Dear God, help us to celebrate each day we've been given. When we can't, hold us in the palm of your hand and help us to feel your love. In your Son's name, amen.

Contributed by: Terri Schlangen | St. Philip





February 22nd – WISE



Verse

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)



Thought

As the parent of two young girls – Molly (8) and Annie (6) - my world revolves around them. I selected this verse as it spoke to me in two ways. Both from the perspective of the wisdom I need as a parent – as well as the wisdom I hope is imparted on my children.



Prayer

Lord, give me wisdom when parenting my children. And let their eyes, ears and hearts be open to the wisdom you've given me. Amen.

Contributed by: Jon O'Brien | Gloria Dei



February 23rd – FORGIVEN



Verse

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace. (Ephesians 1:7)



Thought

One of my favorite words is grace. (It is our daughter's middle name). I learned from a sermon years ago that, "grace" equals "space." I.e.: grace-period of 15 days to be late on a bill without penalty. Yes, the Bible gives us the framework of right versus wrong, but in the real world, it is not always so clear. Like most parents, God gives us the space to make our own choices *and* our own mistakes. When we come to Him with our faults, we are forgiven. It is the original "unconditional love." Do we deserve that richness of grace? No. That is what a true gift is.



Prayer

Dear Father in Heaven, we come to You with our sins. We are healed through Your grace and forgiveness. With the understanding of this gift, may You guide us with love and kindness to give others grace, whether it is the car ahead of us or a little closer to home. Amen.

Contributed by: Michaela Ward | Lutheran Church of the Ascension



February 24th – PRESERVE



Verse

The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore. (Psalm 121:8 KJV)



Thought

Lord, here you are - protecting us, preserving us... We think of the agony you suffered in the days before the cross, and then the agony of the cross - and yet you are faithful to preserve us. We are reeling from the events of the past year but our hope is in you - we hear the words of scripture - that you will preserve our going out and our coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore. We are thankful for your preservation.



Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for your faithfulness. Forgive our failure to trust, to be faithful children. Thank you for being the preserver of our lives. Amen

Contributed by: Karen Bruchman | Holy Trinity



February 25th – LIVE



Verse

Jesus said to [Martha], “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.” (John 11:25)



Thought

Today, February 25, happens to be my son's birthday. How appropriate that my word *live* was chosen for this day. John 11:25 is the Bible verse that speaks to me when I think of that word. After Lazarus died, Jesus spoke these words to his grieving sister Martha.

This verse brings me great comfort when I think back to four years ago when my daughter died from complications of kidney disease. Vikki had a deep faith, and she knew Jesus. I know without a doubt that she is with him now. My husband Martin is in a memory care facility and has been placed in hospice. Jesus's promise from John 11:25 brings peace to my heart, knowing that, even when his life ends within this earthly realm, he “will *live*.”



Prayer

Heavenly Father, we lift to you all our loved ones who have gone before us. We give thanks for our precious savior Jesus Christ who promises everlasting life to all who believe in him. Amen.

Contributed by: Elaine Bilowich | St. Philip

February 26th – FREE



Verse

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)



Thought

The freedom that God gives us makes transformation possible.


The image I think of when I read this passage is of the sponge animal capsules I played with as a kid. They begin their life cycle looking like little pills, identical except in color, scrunched up and trapped in their gelatin casings. But when their prisons are dissolved, and the sponges inside are freed and start absorbing water, they gradually expand and transform, and eventually their full, true shapes are revealed.



Prayer

Spirit of God, set us free, unveil our faces and dissolve our capsules, so that everything within us that now is only a hidden and indistinct shape can break free, and transform into your image, from one degree of glory to another. Amen.

Contributed by: Collin Hazlett | Gloria Dei



February 27th – LED



Verse

Jesus...was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. (Luke 4:1)



Thought

When people think of being “led by the Spirit,” it’s usually about something wonderful. A new ministry, an act of generosity or kindness. Sometimes, like for Jesus here, the Spirit leads into a desolate place...and doesn’t seem to come with us. A cancer diagnosis. Injuries from a car accident that permanently change abilities. An estrangement with a loved one. It can feel like there is no answer to our prayers as we try to negotiate a new reality. Sometimes life is just very hard.



Prayer

God, you call us beloved. You promise that you are with us always. Give us the perseverance and the endurance to trust in your presence and your love even when we cannot sense it. And give us grace to walk alongside others who may trust us to say they are in a wilderness place. Thank you that you are True, Eternal, and Now. Thank you that even in darkness, we can trust you are with us. Amen.

Contributed by: Liz Hupp | Lutheran Church of the Ascension





February 28th – CELEBRATE



Verse

“Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work...” (Exodus 20:8-10)



Thought

Each Sunday is a little Easter (even during lent)! It is the one day of the week set aside from work and for celebration. In the verses in Exodus that follow the verses above, the writer goes on to discuss how God created the earth and everything in it in 6 days but rested on the 7th day. Why did God rest when we know that God never tires? God rested in order to enjoy what God had made. God invites us to enjoy it as well. If you have given something up for Lent this year I pray you are finding it meaningful and being drawn nearer to God through it. I would also encourage you to not be bound by the practice in a way you miss the joy of sabbath. A little chocolate on a Sunday during Lent can also be a faithful reminder to remember Sabbath rest.



Prayer

God of our labors and our rest, remind us always the fruit of your labor and ours is not in the work itself but in the joy of the relationship we have with You, with each other and all that you have created - Amen

Contributed by: [Pastor Chris Neptun](#) | [Holy Trinity](#)





March 1st – KINDRED



Verse

A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need. (Proverbs 17:17)



Thought

Have you ever met someone you felt was a kindred spirit? If so, did you wonder what may have created that immediate and unexplainable bond?

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, kindred means “of a similar nature or character (kindred spirit); of the same ancestry (kindred tribes); or a group of related individuals or one’s relatives.”

The word kindred reminded me of a Canadian television series, *Anne with an E*, which is based on L.M. Montgomery’s classic work of children’s literature, *Anne of Green Gables*. In the novel, Anne Shirley is an imaginative, strong willed orphan who finds an unlikely home with the Cuthbert family. She longs for someone to connect with—a kindred spirit. Matthew, the soft-spoken man who adopted her, and Anne’s friend Diana become her kindred spirits. They agree on most things and share each other’s joys, sorrows, fears and secrets. Anne proclaims, “Kindred spirits are not so scarce as I used to think. It’s splendid to find out there are so many of them in the world.”

As human beings, we long for that satisfying experience of being part of a group of related individuals—our kindred tribe. As God’s children, we have a genuine kindred Spirit in Jesus with whom we can share our joys, sorrows, fears and secrets. Scripture states, “A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need” (Proverbs 17:17).

Jesus knows what’s in our heart, He hears every prayer, and He says, “No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you” (Joshua 1:5).

We belong to Jesus’ family and receive all of the blessings of life with Him. The moment we met Jesus we were welcomed into His kindred tribe and we can trust with certainty that because He loves us, we will spend eternity with Him. All we have to do is call His name and even when we can’t put our prayers into words, He hears our heart. We are kindred spirits in Christ.



Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for being our kindred Spirit. What a blessing to spend time with You—trusting that you always know what’s in our heart and we can bring our joys, sorrows, fears and secrets to You. Your promises are never broken and we can stand firm and claim our inheritance—not because we love You but because You first loved us! You promise to be with us and we can experience Your presence simply by calling Your name. Amen.

Contributed by: [Gayle Elliott](#) | [St. Philip](#)



March 2nd – FAITH



Verse

Following The “transfiguration,” Jesus, Peter, James, and John returned down the mountain where they were approached by a father who asked for mercy from Jesus for his epileptic son because the disciples had not been successful in their healing attempts. Jesus immediately cured the child. The disciples asked Jesus why they had been unsuccessful to which Jesus replied it was because of their lack of faith. Jesus continued: “Truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain ‘move’ ... and nothing will be impossible to you.”

(Matthew: Chapter 17)



Thought

We understand that Jesus frequently spoke metaphorically. However, even in these days of increased time in the kitchen, most of us probably do not have mustard seed in the cabinets and cannot relate the infinitesimal size of a mustard seed to moving mountains. Nevertheless, we are more likely to be familiar with the relationship between faith and grace because, as Paul reminds the Ephesians in Chapter 2, “For by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God and not because of works.” Hence, we believe that we are saved by the unmerited gift of grace through our faith.



Prayer

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Contributed by: Karen Roloff | Gloria Dei





March 3rd – SEE



Verse

Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? (Matthew 7:3)



Thought

An important aspect of seeing for me is perspective and field of vision. The world offers so many things for us to “see” it is impossible to take it all in. What we choose to focus on and how we choose to see these things are hugely important. As we think about the gift of life and creation given to us this day, let us all reflect on what we are choosing to see and how we are choosing to see it.



Prayer

Gracious and giving Lord, we are grateful for the rich abundance of life you have presented for all to see. As we go about our day, guide our vision that we may see with your eyes, and guide our perception that we may perceive with your heart. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.

Contributed by: Matt Ley | Lutheran Church of the Ascension



March 4th – PRESENCE



Verse

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)



Thought

Lent is truly a time afforded us for introspection.

Can I feel God's presence?

Can I help share His light to shine through love and justice for all?

Can I compassionately care for another?

His presence IS a present to all, not only during Lent, but always and in all ways.



Prayer

Almighty God, help me feel your loving presence and strength in all that I do each day and always. Amen

Contributed by: Mary Fisk | Holy Trinity

March 5th – SPEAK



Verse

“Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak.” (Exodus 4:12)



Thought

Have you ever been at a loss for words? So often, we can feel intimidated into silence, because we want to say the "right" thing. But if we ask God for the words to say (and really listen), God can give us the words we need to do God's will.



Prayer

Dear God, please give us the words we need to do your will for your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Contributed by: Megan Bratkovich | St. Philip

March 6th – BELOVED



Verse

Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.
(1 John 4:11 NRSV)



Thought

Be-Loved or Be-Lov-Ed

Over the top LOVE – 2 syllables; an adjective – 3 syllables; a noun, (person)

We've just experienced a year like none before. For those who died, for the families of those who died, for those recuperating and with "long haul" conditions, for those whose lives have been totally upended financially, scholastically, and socially, God weeps. We are his be-lov-ed, he does not intend for us to suffer. Knowing God as our beloved, we thank and praise him for the gifts of forgiveness, mercy and the assurance of his constant presence with us.



Prayer

Lord, we give you our perpetual thanks for naming us your beloved. Through prophets, kings, apostles, Jesus and your own words, the Bible assures us repeatedly that we are your beloved. Help us to make you our beloved and strengthen us to love one another as you have loved us.
Amen.

Contributed by: Marge Andersen | Gloria Dei



March 7th – CELEBRATE



Verse

This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance. (Exodus 12.14)



Thought

Celebration erupts only after suffering has subsided. Whether it was the Passover meal, celebrated annually in remembrance of freedom, or the Paschal feast, celebrated weekly (even during Lent) in remembrance of resurrection, we celebrate only because we have sorrowed. In this season of repentance, we keep a silent “Alleluia” in our hearts, knowing that the greater the grief, the greater the joy; knowing that the deeper the darkness, the more brilliant the light. Christ is rising, even now.



Prayer

Come, celebrate, your banners high unfurling.
Your songs and prayers against the darkness hurling.
To all the world go out and tell the story of Jesus’ glory. Amen.
 (“Rise, Shine, You People,” ELW 665)

Contributed by: Pastor JoAnn Post | Lutheran Church of the Ascension



March 8th – AFRAID



Verse

When I am afraid, I will trust in you. (Psalm 56:3)



Thought

"Whenever I feel afraid, I hold my head erect and whistle a happy tune....". Wouldn't it be great if it were just that simple? However, with the fears that tend to preoccupy us by day and haunt us at night - serious illness, possible loss of a job, inability to pay bills, addictions, food insecurity - we need something more than whistling in the dark.

Fortunately, God has given us his word that we can trust him to be with us whatever our circumstances. It doesn't mean we won't ever be afraid; we just don't have to do it alone. Let's take a little time each day to release our fears to him and ask for his guidance and love. He keeps his promises!



Prayer

Loving God, we acknowledge we have those dark times when we are afraid. Even Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane confessed his fear of what his future held, but he put his trust in you to be with him faithfully. Help us to follow his example and believe you will be with us also whatever our lives may hold. In Jesus name, Amen

Contributed by: Marilyn Maier | Holy Trinity

March 9th – GO



Verse

And [Jesus] said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.” (Mark 16:15)



Thought

Jesus commissions not only the disciples gathered with him then, but us who gather with him now. We join together as his disciples to worship him, to learn from him, and to care for one another; but then he instructs us to go out from our comfortable community and spread the good news of God’s love and grace to all the world. What can you do during this holy season of Lent to prepare to share the gospel?



Prayer

Dearest Lord, abide with us, inspire us, and so saturate us with your love and grace that we cannot help but go out into the world and proclaim – by our actions and our words – your good news to the whole creation. Amen.

Contributed by: Michael Weidemann | St. Philip

March 10th – JOYFUL



Verse

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. (Psalm 100:1)



Thought

“The earth is as much a part of creation as we are,” and the earth celebrates God’s glory, according to notes in the Collaborate Lutheran Student Bible pp 637. Especially during the past year, the joyfulness of our earth has provided a poignant reminder of the possibilities for joy all around us. Even when simply looking out our windows, we can see the joyfulness with which our earth celebrates God. May we all each day find joy in the earth, share our joy with each other, and return that joy to the Lord.



Prayer

Dear God, let us see the joy of the earth celebrating Your glory. Help us to find joy and to be joyful. Help us to make a joyful noise to You. Amen

Contributed by: Judy Roman | Gloria Dei



March 11th – REST



Verse

Then Jesus came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. (Matthew 26: 45)



Thought

Lent is filled with vigilant contemplation and repentance. It can be a challenging time for people. Some grow weary, and others are tempted to ignore this season all together. However, the Spirit gently invites us to find rest in God’s redeeming mercy as the church continues to venture forward to the Resurrection.



Prayer

Risen Lord, you call us to follow you. By your Spirit, renew our faith, bring rest to our weary souls, and help us to observe a holy Lent. Amen.

Contributed by: Phillip Potaczek, OC | Lutheran Church of the Ascension



March 12th – LOVE



Verse

For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)



Thought

While recently sitting at the hospital waiting for the results from a cancer test, I pondered this verse from Jeremiah. I could feel God's love surrounding and supporting me as I concluded I could accept whatever the outcome would be. As a favorite hymn from the 1600's says - "for He who took for you a cross will bring you safe through every loss." Thanks be to God for that Love.



Prayer

Help us to be more aware of your constant love and to share that love with all creation.

Contributed by: Carolyn Sanderson | Holy Trinity



March 13th – JOURNEY



Verse

The LORD will watch over your coming and going, both now and forevermore. (Psalm 121:8)



Thought

We have all made journeys we'd prefer not to make. Perhaps it was a life changing journey such as divorce, or the death of a loved one. Or maybe it was a visit with a physician to discuss treatment of an unexpected diagnosis, or the sudden loss of a job. At times like these when our world feels as though it has been turned upside down, this verse reminds us that God watches over us on all of our journeys, from start to finish.



Prayer

Caring and merciful God, help us to remember that no matter what journey we may face, you are there with us. Give us hope and comfort in your loving presence in our lives. Amen.

Contributed by: [Melanie Chavin](#) | [St. Philip](#)



March 14th – CELEBRATE



Verse

The servants did as Jesus told them, and the man in charge drank some of the water that had now turned into wine. He did not know where the wine had come from, but the servants did. He called the bridegroom over and said, “The best wine is always served first. Then after the guests have had plenty, the other wine is served. But you have kept the best until last!” (John 2:9-10 CEV)



Thought

What can we take from the fact that this was Jesus’ first miracle in the gospel of John? Maybe the simple message is that Jesus recognized the importance of the times we have in life to celebrate. Jesus not holding back and providing the best he had to offer. Jesus offering us an example of being in the moment, of sharing the unexpected, of celebrating in the joys of life.



Prayer

Holy God, we thank you for this day, for it is the day you have made. Help us to be watchful for your presence and ready to celebrate. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Contributed by: Pastor John Berg | Gloria Dei



March 15th – SIGN



Verse

Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. (John 2:11)



Thought

Sometimes signs are called wonders or miracles, but that's too magical. They are instead disclosures, openings, a door cracked open to show something potentially new about God's ways for us. Seven times such signs happen in the gospel of John – water into wine, healings, feedings, rising from the dead. They're all over the Old Testament, too – rainbow, burning bush, challenges to Pharaoh, wilderness manna and water. The door cracks open to a new and blessed reality, a sign of what God's presence promises.



Prayer

Holy God, you know our dim vision and so open a door to your truth and light. We beg you show us another realm, a place of your compassion, abundance, and grace. Shatter our stolid sight with signs of your greater vision for us as your children. And then, break us open to care for our siblings with signs of the same mercy and love. This we beg through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Contributed by: James Nieman | Lutheran Church of the Ascension





March 16th – GRACE



Verse

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we are dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ-- by grace you have been saved.... For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God. (Eph. 2: 4-5, 8)



Thought

Grace comes through love; the love of our God for all people. This is God's love which is freely given. What a wonderful present to receive. What a wonderful gift for all of us. So let us share this gift so that all may feel God's love.



Prayer

Dear God thank you for your love which you pour out upon us, through the gift of Your grace. Help us to share this gift with friends, enemies, and all whom we meet. Amen.

Contributed by: Felix Lopez | Holy Trinity



March 17th – OPEN



Verse

“Knock and the door shall be opened unto you.” (Matthew 7:7b)



Thought

Jesus’s own words in his love letter to us – open – a word of hope, brightness, endless possibilities. We but knock. He opens. And we, in turn, open our hearts to let him in, open our eyes to really see what he would have us see, open our hands to give out of the abundance he has given to us. We are open to his very presence in our lives.



Prayer

Precious Lord, on this Lenten journey, keep me open to all that belonging to you means in my life.

Contributed by: Bonnie Gerth | St. Philip

March 18th – WILL



Verse

And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.”
(Matthew 26:39, 42)



Thought

This is a particularly thought-provoking passage as it clearly highlights Jesus’ humanity and reveals a reaction to his pending crucifixion that would be very similar to most if not all of us. While we know Jesus is the Son of God, he also reveals his humanity by revealing his hesitance to go through what he knows will be a horrible event (because as the Son of God, he is fully aware of his coming fate). While Jesus asks to skip this horror not once, but twice, he is nonetheless willing to follow through on his Father’s will despite his knowledge of the extreme suffering that he will endure.



Prayer

Lord, please give us the strength to do your will even as we know that that path is hard and even painful. Thy will be done. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Contributed by: Dave Meier | Gloria Dei

March 19th – WITH



Verse

Then Jesus returned and found the disciples asleep. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Couldn’t you watch with me even one hour?” (Mark 14: 37)



Thought

Jesus grieves when his friends fail to keep awake with him in this vulnerable hour. As baptized followers of Christ, we vow to serve all people. May we be moved by the present urgent needs of our neighbors and stand in solidarity with them as we strive for justice and peace in all the earth.



Prayer

God, we thank you for your love for us. Help us to see and love Jesus in all people, and awaken us to the needs of your suffering ones. Trusting in your Spirit, may we be strengthened to stand always in solidarity with them. Amen.

Contributed by: Phillip Potaczek, OC | Lutheran Church of the Ascension

March 20th – DARKNESS



Verse

“I will give you the treasures of darkness
and riches hidden in secret places,
so that you may know that it is I, the Lord,
the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.” (Isaiah 45:3)



Thought

I don't know many who like darkness. If you think about it, humans work pretty hard to eliminate it. Not just physical darkness but everything that makes us uncomfortable, pain, suffering, sadness and more. In fact, our own Christian scriptures often illustrate a dualism making light good and darkness bad. Still, darkness is neutral. When you find yourself in darkness, you are still the same person as you were before it became dark. Light reveals characteristics we might be able to see but so does darkness. Light gives advantage to our sense of sight, but what about our other senses? Darkness can reveal things to us and about us we might not perceive as we quickly move to extinguish it. If you find yourself in darkness, perhaps resist the urge to flee it and instead learn what God may be revealing to you through it.



Prayer

God of all that exists, guide us in all things including all which makes us uncomfortable. Direct our hearts and minds towards you and reveal the wonders of your goodness both in light and darkness. - Amen

Contributed by: **Pastor Chris Neptun | Holy Trinity**

To learn more about spiritual things we might find in darkness, consider reading:
[Learning to Walk in the Dark](#) - by Barbara Brown Taylor



March 21st – CELEBRATE



Verse

This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118:24)



Thought

We have learned this last year how important it is to celebrate, even during difficult times. We've celebrated proms in the back yard with our parents as our "dates", drive-by birthday parties, and zoom graduations and weddings. We even celebrate vaccinations with cheers and selfies! God has been with us every day, and we rejoice in that.



Prayer

God of all creation, we thank you for each day. Help us to find something to celebrate even on days that are difficult. Guide us to share that joy with others. Amen

Contributed by: Janet Fisher | Gloria Dei



March 22nd – LIGHT



Verse

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. (Psalm 119:105)



Thought

Light comes to us in many forms. Sunlight starts our days with warmth and energy. At night the light of the stars ends our day with dreams and possibilities. God's light is constant and available to us in his word, His promises and unending love, to light our path through life.



Prayer

Loving God, thank you for your word. Let me see your light on the path before me today. Amen

Contributed by: Karen Long | Gloria Dei



March 23rd – BREATH



Verse

Then the Lord God from Man out of the dust of the ground; and breathed into Man's nostrils the breath of life; and Man became a living being.
(Genesis 2.7)



Thought

A year ago today, the stock market plunged in response to fears about the emerging economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some warned that the economy was in free-fall, on life support. All because of a breath-born virus, invisible to the naked eye but devastating to all on whom it fell. Today we also remember that the breath of God—a single snort from a holy nostril—created all human life, and continues to breath in and around us, creating life, stirring hope, restoring wholeness.



Prayer

O living breath of God, bearing us to life through baptismal waters;
O living breath of God, sighing with creation for freedom's birth:
Come now, and fill our spirits; pour out your gifts abundant.
O living breath of God, Holy Spirit, breath in us as we pray.
(O Living Breath of God, ELW 407)

Contributed by: [Pastor JoAnn Post](#) | [Lutheran Church of the Ascension](#)





March 24th – HEAR



Verse

Blessed rather are those that hear the Word of God and obey it.
(Luke 11:28)



Thought

Our ability to hear is vital. Hearing our alarm clock, telephone, doorbell, smoke alarm, oven timer, music, and our friends and loved ones' voices are important. When we cannot hear, we become disconnected and isolated. Likewise hearing and obeying God's word is essential for our well-being. We are truly blessed when we are connected to God by hearing and obeying his life-giving Word.



Prayer

We give thanks to you, Oh God, for enriching our lives with sound. Help us to hear and obey your Word. Attune our ears to the cries of the hungry, the homeless, the refugees and asylum seekers so that in hearing, we can respond with love and kindness. As you have loved us, help us to love one another. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Contributed by: [Bonnie Lopez](#) | [Holy Trinity](#)



March 25th – BELIEVE



Verse

Then [Jesus] said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” (John 20:27)



Thought

In this verse we see Jesus come before his disciples and tell them to believe in him the Holy Spirit and God. He shows his disciples to put trust in him and the beliefs will be rewarded. If they stand with Jesus and God, then God will lead them through life and always be there to watch over them.



Prayer

Dear God, help us and everyone around us believe. We have been through tough times, and at times it may feel like we are alone, but remind us that you are always there looking over us and protecting us. In Jesus’s name we pray, amen.

Contributed by: Michael Schick | St. Philip



March 26th – VOICE



Verse

Speak out for those who cannot speak,
for the rights of all the destitute. (Proverbs 31:8)



Thought

We are called to speak up for those who can't speak for themselves. Our voices are important especially when used in the service of someone who may not have access to channels where they can be heard. For example, we may speak on behalf of the homeless, refugees, and the marginalized.



Prayer

Lord, we ask that you care for those whose voices are not being heard. And give us courage and wisdom to use our voices to aid them. Amen.

Contributed by: [Lisa Chu](#) | [Gloria Dei](#)





March 27th – BLESSED



Verse

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
(Matthew 5:9)



Thought

We say we are “blessed” when the circumstances of our lives make us happy. Others say we are blessed when good fortune seems to smile on us. But we are truly blessed when we are divinely favored by God, whose love brings us everlasting joy that is deeper than any to be found in our journey on Earth.



Prayer

Lord God, we are blessed to know you in our daily lives, to turn to you, our savior and redeemer, in good times and in bad. Help us to reach out as peacemakers in these divisive times. Grant us patience and love so that through us, others may know your blessed assurance of everlasting life. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Contributed by: Carol Mueller | Lutheran Church of the Ascension



