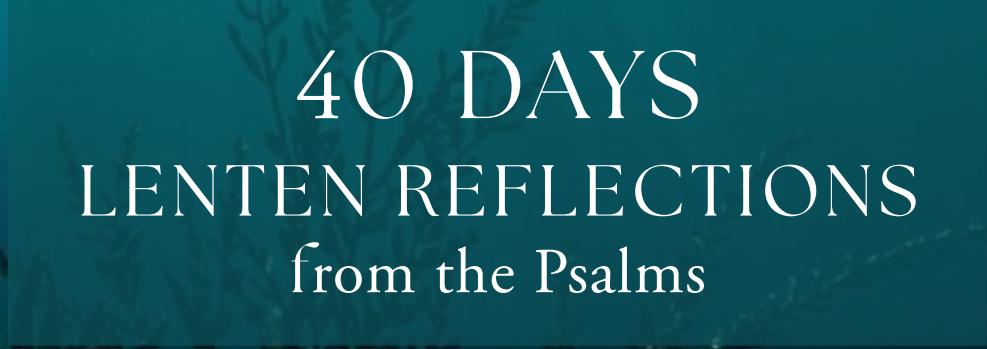




OUT OF THE DEPTHES



40 DAYS
LENTEN REFLECTIONS
from the Psalms

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INTRODUCTION

This Lenten season we invite you to pray the Psalms with us. Each day of Lent (Monday-Saturday, Sundays aren't counted) for the 40 days of Lent.

The spiritual discipline of reciting the psalms has its roots in ancient Israel. Hundreds of thousands of Jewish pilgrims would make their annual trek into Jerusalem for three major festivals: Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. These faithful people would actually sing the Psalms, specifically psalms 120-134, as they were climbing the hills into Jerusalem and as they ascended the 15 stairs leading into the Temple to worship God. You can think of these psalms as "roadtrip" songs. These psalms kept the travelers focused on the LORD instead of on their sore feet and hungry bellies.

The Psalms express the full range of human experience—joy, fear, anger, gratitude, doubt, hope, repentance, and praise. They are a prayer book God gives us when we don't have the words ourselves. The psalms speak when we can't.

We pray that as you take this journey through the Psalms with us you experience the psalms as a way to celebrate your trust in God with a renewed focus on Him even when you are walking through the darkest valleys of life.

May God bless you on this Lenten journey.

THANK YOU

A dedicated team of prayer warriors have prepared these prayers and devotions for each day. We extend our many thanks to Brian Akre, Roger Anhorn, Denton Bennet, Renée Bennett, Barbara Duhlstine-Robarge, Dirk Duhlstine, Eileen Hernandez, Nathan Hilton, Ginger Kuemmerle, Bruce Lerum, Carol Masslich, Anne Mathison, Todd Mathison, Joe Myers, and Diane Snyder.



PSALM 6

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

What Real Repentance Sounds Like

"My soul is in anguish... Turn, Lord, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love... I am worn out from my groaning... I flood my bed with weeping, The Lord has heard my weeping. The Lord has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer." - Psalm 6:1,4, 6,8, 9 (NIV)

Have you ever cried your eyes out?

I've seen it. I've sat with a mother who wept uncontrollably in front of her children after learning her husband was leaving her for another woman. I've also stood at the graveside with a young couple as they laid their newborn to rest — a little one who lived only a few short hours. Those tears are real. They come from real pain. But the weeping in Psalm 6 is different.

David isn't only crushed by what happened to him; he's crushed by what he has done. "My soul is in anguish," he says. "I am worn out from my groaning... I flood my bed with weeping." This is the grief of a conscience that won't let you look away. Sin does that. It doesn't just break rules; it breaks us. It gnaws. It consumes. It makes you tired in your bones and restless in your mind. When the Holy Spirit turns the lights on, you can't unsee it.

Psalm 6 is the first of the penitential psalms. It gives words to deep sorrow for sin, sincere seeking of God's mercy, and a stubborn, saving confidence that God forgives. Lent is honest like that. It refuses excuses and blame-shifting. Lent brings us to the end of ourselves — the place where we stop managing our image and we start telling the truth: "Lord, I have sinned. I cannot fix what I've broken. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love."

And here is the surprise of Psalm 6: the turning point isn't David's self-improvement. It's God's mercy. *"Turn, Lord, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love."* David throws himself onto the character of God — His steadfast love, His covenant mercy, His grace. Then the psalm turns: *"The Lord has heard my weeping... the Lord accepts my prayer."*

That's repentance: not polishing your life so God will love you, but laying down your excuses and trusting His mercy — especially when you have nothing left to offer. The tears of Psalm 6 are not the end of David's story. They are the doorway to God's comfort.

So, if you are at the end of yourself today — ashamed, weary, or worn thin — pray Psalm 6 s-l-o-w-l-y. Let your honest confession rise to the Lord. And hear this with faith: in Jesus, God has heard you. Mercy is not a maybe. It is His answer.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, when our sin has worn us down and our hearts feel too heavy to carry, draw near with Your mercy, speak Your forgiveness over us, and quiet our souls with the peace of the cross. Teach us to stop excusing and start confessing, restore our joy, and lead us to live as those who have been heard and welcomed by You. In Your precious name we pray. Amen.



PSALM 1

Thursday, February 19, 2026

Life's Two Roads

***"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers"* - Psalm 1:1 (NIV)**

I remember when I was little, how important it was for me to feel like I fit in. We lived in a small town in rural Illinois and almost everyone I knew went to church. I was surrounded by positive influences both from the children I hung out with as well as the adults all around me. I fit in because I was like everyone else. We all believed in God. We all went to church. Our lives, while not perfect, were often bearing the good fruit that comes from belief in Him.

But then, I went away to college and I met people from all different walks of life. Some were Christians but quite honestly most of them, like me, had strayed from their faith. Very few of us walked the few short blocks to the campus church. Hanging out in the counsel of the wicked became pretty easy. I found myself surrounded by influences that mocked organized religion and so it became easy for me to forget the sacrifice that Jesus had made for me by His death on the cross. His story of forgiveness seemed so far removed from me and what I set my daily sights on. What did I need His forgiveness for? I was consumed by living in the moment. Where's the next party? Who wants to skip class? Where are you going on spring break? I was carried by whatever the group wanted to do. Because it was extremely important for me to feel like I fit in, I followed even though sometimes I wasn't loving what everyone else was doing.

Then, a close friend of mine was killed in a terrible car accident. She was going to be one of my bridesmaids. My lack of faith in God caused me to feel like chaff blowing away in the wind. I had absolutely nothing to anchor me. No amount of worldly platitudes could lift me out of this pain. After trying almost everything else, I dug out my Bible and turned to the scriptures and discovered that as the psalmist says in Psalm 1, "I became like a tree planted by streams of water." I was able to soak up God's Word. It brought me comfort like nothing else could. I had no idea how thirsty I had become. I came to realize just how truly blessed we are when we stand against the mockers of this world who do not understand the blessed assurance we have through our faith in Christ. As believers, we are like fish swimming against the tide, soaking up the cool waters of His truth. The road during Lent is a road not all will take. It is a road of lament, a road of confession, a road of repentance, and a road of celebration that Romans 5:8 reminds us, "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Prayer: Heavenly Father. Help us to avoid the counsel of the wicked by delighting in Your will and walking in Your ways to the Glory of Your Name. Amen.



PSALM 8

Friday, February 20, 2026

Crowned from the Depths

*"What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?
Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor." - Psalm 8:4-5 (ESV)*

When David gazed at the night sky, he was overwhelmed by a profound question: "What is mankind that you are mindful of them?" It's the question that echoes through every human heart when we honestly assess our condition. Who are we in the grand scheme of creation? The psalmist's answer is startling—we are creatures made "lower than the angels for a little while," crowned with glory and honor.

But Lent forces us to reckon with a harder truth: that crown of ours has fallen. The glory is tarnished. We are not simply small in comparison to the stars; we are trapped in depths of our own making, drowning in sin and death with no rope long enough to pull ourselves out.

This is where Psalm 8 becomes more than ancient poetry—it becomes prophecy. The glory David celebrates isn't ultimately about humanity in general; it's about one particular human: Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews makes this explicit, applying Psalm 8 to Jesus, the Son of Man who "for a little while was made lower than the angels" (Hebrews 2:9). But why would the eternal Son of God descend? Because we were in the depths, and He dove in after us.

Jesus didn't rescue us from a comfortable distance. He descended into our condition—took on flesh, experienced temptation, knew betrayal and felt abandonment. On Good Friday, He plunged into the deepest depth of all: death itself, even death on a cross. He went down into the darkness where we were trapped, where death held dominion, where hope had drowned.

But Easter morning shatters the darkness. The stone rolls away. The grave cannot hold Him. And here's the glory: when Christ rose, He didn't rise alone. He pulled us up with Him. Our faith unites us to His death and resurrection, so that His ascent from the depths becomes our ascent. His crowning with glory becomes our crowning.

This Lenten season, we walk with Jesus toward the cross, acknowledging our desperate need. We cannot save ourselves. No amount of self-improvement or religious effort can pull us from the pit. We need a Savior who will go into the depths for us. And that's exactly what we have. The same God who set the moon and stars in place, who gave humanity dominion over creation, has done something far more wondrous: He has rescued us from the dominion of death. Through Christ, the question "What is mankind?" receives its fullest answer: we are the beloved, the redeemed, the ones He died to save and rose to crown with glory.

Easter is coming. The tomb will be empty. And we who were in the depths will find ourselves raised with Christ, crowned not by our merit, but by His mercy.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, when I was drowning in sin and death, You descended to pull me out. Thank You for not leaving me in the depths I could not escape. As I walk this Lenten journey toward the cross, remind me daily of my desperate need and Your sufficient grace. Crown me not with my achievements, but with Your righteousness. In Your name I pray, Amen.



PSALM 13

Saturday, February 21, 2026

Trust in God

"But I trust in Your unfailing love. My heart rejoices in Your salvation. I will sing the LORD's praise, for He has been good to me." - Psalm 13:6-7 (NIV)

How often do we trust God the way we should? Do we turn to Him when we need to OR do we forget to trust Him and instead "do it our way"?

Many years ago, I found myself working the night shift around 2:00am in a very busy Intensive Care Unit (ICU) when I became overwhelmed by the responsibility placed on me. I had four fresh post-operative patients, one on a heart assist device, all of them on many IVs. I also had over 10 other sick patients in the ICU not to mention the 25 plus patients on the different floors of the hospital. This was what the life of the open-heart team physician assistant on call looked like. I remember praying to God for help and within minutes the feeling of being overwhelmed was gone. The work was still there, but God relieved me of the need to be relieved; God didn't take the work away, just the feeling of being overwhelmed. He knows what we need!

In this psalm, David shows us his trust and gratitude and praise of God. *"But I trust in your unfailing love"*. We see that God answers our prayers just not always in ways that WE think are best, but God knows what is best—much like my personal experience. In this case I trusted God would answer my prayers and He did, just not in quite the way I had expected. However, the impact of this event is still in my mind some 30 years later.

When we reflect on Lent, we need to remember that the story starts in Advent. The two stories are the beginning and end, book-ends of the great salvation story. I believe that Advent starts with "Christ the King Sunday" the last Sunday of the church year, a wonderful reminder of what the Lord means to us. A couple of years ago, Chaplain Susan said in her sermon (I am paraphrasing the message) that even though Advent and Lent are two separate occasions they are very connected. This sermon was a great reminder that we DO trust in God's unfailing love and that we DO rejoice in the salvation that Jesus gives us first in His birth then in His death and the climax on Easter Sunday!

Prayer: Lord thank you for answering our prayers. You answer them with perfect timing and in ways that we need, not always the way we want. Amen.



PSALM 18

Monday, February 23, 2026

The Cross on the Hill

"The ropes of death encompassed me, and the torrents of destruction terrified me.

The ropes of Sheol surrounded me; The snares of death confronted me.

In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God for help; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry for help before Him came into His ears."

Psalm 18:4-6 (NASB)

Can you remember a time in your life when you were so distraught that you didn't know where to turn? Talking with friends and family brought comfort, but the issue was so deep that perhaps God was the only one who had answers?

I had looked at the cross on the hill thousands of times. But as I began my second year of college, I found myself standing beside it—not out of routine, but out of desperation. I was angry. I was confused. I needed God to hear me. A close friend of mine had been missing for days. When she was finally found, I learned she had been murdered. In that moment, I felt the sting and the snares of death all around me. To say that I was distressed would be an understatement. To say that I cried out to God would be an understatement. I lost count of how many nights I ended up on that hill—sitting, weeping, or yelling at God in pain and disbelief.

How could this happen to her?

How could a loving God allow this?

Why should I trust a God who seemed so silent?

During that season, I don't remember ever hearing God's "still, small voice." But I did come to know that He is a God who listens. A God who loves. A God who is with us.

The answers didn't come all at once. But over time, I found myself able to look again at the cross on the hill—and feel a powerful reminder that Jesus endured suffering. He cried out to His Father in pain. He experienced death. This is the God who chose to love us first while we were still stuck in our sin. This is the God who listens to our cries. He answers not with silence — but with His presence. Through Jesus, God experienced our human life and shared our grief, fear, and sorrow we still feel today. We have a God whose name is Emmanuel—God with us, and every little cross or big ones on the hill are a reminder of His love.

Prayer: *Lord, thank you that even when we feel distant from You, You are still near. Thank You that when we face fear, death, or deep distress, we can cry out to You and trust that You are with us on that hill. Amen.*



PSALM 25

Tuesday, February 24, 2026

Do Not Remember My Sins

"Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you, LORD, are good." - Psalm 25:7 (NIV)

I love the psalms that David wrote. He was a great king, but he humbly reflected on his faults. He openly expressed his need for guidance in his walk with God. David would sing, play musical instruments and even would dance (2 Samuel 6:14) causing some of my Baptist friends to omit this from their memories! He openly expressed his love for the Lord and even in all his sins, he would seek God's will for him. David was depending on the Lord's compassion but at the same time he asked for forgiveness of his sins. He trusted that God would forgive his transgressions as it reflects God's character.

Verse 7 requests that God wouldn't remember the sins "of my youth". When I first read this verse, I did think of those rebellious events of my teens and twenties but in all reality, I think David meant any time prior to today. When I consider my whole life, counting all my sins; in thought, word or deed, those done and those left undone, they would be like God telling Abraham his descendants would outnumber the stars in the sky, that's just how numerous my sins are.

Dying on the cross has been explained by scholars as one of the most painful ways to die. Even the Romans only used this form of punishment for the worst of the worst offenders. Jesus underwent a whipping that many people would have died from. He had the disgrace of having to carry the elements of his cross and was so weak that the soldiers seized Simon of Cyrene (AKA Rufus from Pastor Denton's 2025 Ash Wednesday message). He underwent the nailing of his hand and feet and was hung on the cross. He would have had horrible pain from all this along with being in the HOT desert sun. As time progressed, he would suffer the effects of major dehydration. Ironically, His death would be from heart failure as His heart could no longer move the fluids out His lungs. One of my sins of my youth was I tried to avoid the truth of His pain, only in college science classes did I have to consider ALL HIS pain—and all the more remarkable is the fact that He made a conscious choice to die this way! So He could look at me and say, "Your sins are forgiven."

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for loving us so much that you died a horrible death to wipe away all our sins. We are so blessed that You humbled yourself and came in human form into our sinful world. You were free of sin and still died for us so that our sins would be no more. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.



PSALM 22

Wednesday, February 25, 2026

Sometimes Lord, You Seem so Far Away

*"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?"*

Psalm 22:1 (NIV)

Have you ever cried out to God wondering where He is and why He is allowing your present situation? You may find yourself reminding God that you have "prayed without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), you have kept His commandments (John 15:10), you have loved the neighbor (Matthew 23:39), you have most certainly been patient in affliction (Romans 12:12), you have waited patiently for the Lord (Psalm 40:1) and yet, you still feel abandoned.

In this season of Lent, we are reminded of the indescribable love that our Lord has for us. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). How often are we tempted to remind God of all the things we have done and yet we seem to overlook the fact that we would be facing eternal death were it not what He did for us.

The Enemy wants us to be focused on ourselves and our woes. He wants us to feel isolated and abandoned by God. There is no greater lie than that. You are loved. You are not alone. The Lord is never far from you. As the psalmist David proclaims, *"For He has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; He has not hidden His face from him but has listened to his cry for help."* (Psalm 22:24)

When you are discouraged and doubting whether God hears your cries, please know this, there is no problem or sin or concern that is too big or too awful or too powerful for God. You have a direct connection to the Creator of the Universe. He has set the sun, moon and stars in their place and yet in His "awesomeness" He still cares about every hair on your head. Luke 12:7, *"But even the hairs of your head are all numbered! Do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."*

Prayer: Dear Lord, Help me to feel Your presence when I feel lost and forgotten. Drive the enemy far from me and cleanse my thoughts of all doubts about who You are and who I am in You. Amen.



PSALM 23

Thursday, February 26, 2026

The Lord is My Shepherd

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,

He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul.

He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

Psalm 23:1-3 (NIV)

How often do we pray — Lord I want this or I want that. Or we pray I don't want this to happen. Please don't let this happen. I am sure the human part of Jesus did not want to carry the cross or suffer a painful and humiliating death for my sins, but He did. Wanting things leads me to so many distractions instead of seeking to see what Jesus is already doing. I need to remind myself that He is my good shepherd. The bottom line is that He is taking care of me and therefore I need not be afraid of anything.

A person who is open to Jesus' presence is exceedingly precious to Him. His eyes search the earth looking for those whose hearts are seeking him. Stillness of soul is increasingly rare in this world which is addicted to noise and speed. Jesus is pleased with our desire to create a quiet space where we can meet with Him. The psalmist David talks about *"lying down in green pastures of peace"*. We are encouraged to learn to unwind whenever possible, resting in the presence of our shepherd. This electronic age keeps us wired much of the time. But, the need for rest is built into our nature. How twisted the world has become where we feel guilty for seeking to meet this basic need of rest! We are called to walk with Jesus down a path of peace. We need to trust Jesus and be willing to go out on a limb for Him. Our desire to live a risk-free life is a form of unbelief. My longing to live close to Jesus is at odds with my attempts to manage risk. I want Jesus to lead me step by step through today. If my primary focus is on Him, I can walk along perilous paths without being afraid. Eventually I will learn to relax and enjoy the journey with Him.

Jesus died to set us free so we can live freely in Him. We can try to be simple sheep listening for the voice of Jesus and following Him. He will lead us into restful green pastures and guide us along paths of righteousness.

Prayer: *Thank you Lord for being our good shepherd. Thank you for loving us. Help us always remember if we follow You, we will never be alone and your death on the cross was for our eternal life with You in heaven with you. Amen.*



PSALM 27

Friday, February 27, 2026

God is Our Defender

"Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes, for false witnesses rise up against me, spouting malicious accusations." - Psalm 27:12 (NIV)

The psalmist starts this chapter with so much faith. In verse one he writes, *"The Lord is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life — of whom shall I be afraid?"* In modern terms he's saying, "God's got this!" Jesus knew this truth more than anyone. He and the Father were One before all of creation. But that didn't mean that His earthly journey would be easy. Jesus' path to the cross was filled with unfathomable physical pain. His skin and muscles were split by whips. His blood was flowing. He suffered asphyxiation from just trying to breathe while hanging on that rugged tree. His scalp was pierced from the crown of thorns. He experienced dehydration and thirst.

Possibly even more painful to Jesus than the physical pain was the emotional and spiritual pain. The very people He was giving His life for, hurled insults at Him, mocked Him, spat on Him, and called for His crucifixion. And God, His Father, seemingly forsook Him...a separation He had never known!

Betrayal is one of the most painful things to experience. When we have been gossiped about, wrongly accused, or slandered and lost our reputation without the opportunity to defend ourselves, the agony runs deep! It hurts more deeply the more intimately we know the people who betrayed us. Our participation in Jesus' betrayal is made even greater because of His great knowledge of and love for us.

We can learn from Jesus' example. If we were in Jesus' situation we would probably pray the way the psalmist did and plead with God to not turn us over to the desire of our foes, the ones who will betray us. But Jesus resisted the urge to stand up for Himself and knew that God would defend Him in the end when the truth was revealed. By placing our trust in God, we can have peace regardless of the immediate outcome.

Psalm 27 ends with the faith-filled proclamation, *"I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."* Because we know that God is our defender we can, like the psalmist and like Jesus, rest confidently.

Prayer: Lord, I want to know You more...not only with head knowledge but also by connecting with You through the fellowship of suffering. Help me grow in grace and truth as I walk through difficult times, turning to You for comfort. You see all things and You know the truth. I leave it all in Your hands. Amen.



PSALM 28

Saturday, February 28, 2026

God is Our Only True Source of Safety

"Praise be to the Lord, for He has heard my cry for mercy. The Lord is my strength and my shield." - Psalm 28:6-7 (NIV)

We were out on a boat for a sunny evening joy ride. We marveled at our good fortune that no one else seemed to be on the lake! Then, seemingly out of nowhere the waves started churning and then we saw flashes of lightning in the distance. We had quite a few people on board having invited our friends to come along with us for a peaceful ride on the lake. But now it appeared that we had placed their lives potentially in peril. We were still far from shore and my mind kept thinking of how badly this was going to end. Stories of boats capsizing and people being struck by lightning ran like a newsreel in my head. I was imagining the headlines, "Careless boaters caught in major storm. Casualties. Details at 11:00." We pulled down the bimini and made sure everyone had on their lifejackets. We steered the boat into the waves so we would not capsize and we powered up the engine trying to head toward the closest shore. We even told everyone to stay low in the boat and to hold on. We were doing all the "things" that we were taught to do in an emergency, but the one thing we did not do that should have been the very first thing, was pray.

After the scary night was over and we were safely on shore, I remembered to send a prayer of Thanksgiving to God, but I had neglected to reach out to Him during our true hour of need. We were relying on our own strength instead of asking for His strength.

During Lent, we are reminded of the fact that God never abandons us. When we are surrounded by trouble, God is truly our only source of protection. He is our safe harbor in the storm. Psalm 91:2 says of the Lord, "*He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.*"

Prayer is our best help when trials come our way because it keeps us in communication with God. Whatever you are going through this day, remember to communicate with God through prayer. He is our true source of safety.

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, we can try to do things on our own, but we are never truly on our own. Even when we don't call out to You, You are near. Thank you Jesus, for dying on the cross for me. In Your Name we pray. Amen.*



PSALM 30

Monday, March 2, 2026

Joy Comes in the Morning

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning."
Psalm 30:5 (AMPC)

Lent invites us into the quiet honesty of the night. It is a season where we acknowledge suffering, repentance, loss, and waiting. The psalmist does not deny the reality of pain—*weeping may endure*. Faith does not pretend the darkness isn't real. Instead, it names it. There are nights of grief, disappointment, loneliness, injustice, and unfulfilled longing. Nights when prayers feel unanswered and God feels distant.

But Scripture reminds us that night is never the final word. The night is temporary. Morning is inevitable. Jesus prepared the disciples with the truth about Him dying on the cross. He would go away for a little while, but he would be back with them again, and they would rejoice. *"You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy."* There are seasons when it feels like He has gone away for a while. But He has not left your side. You will hear His voice again. You will feel His strength again. You will see Him move again.

Psalm 30:5 holds both truths together: suffering has a season, but so does joy. The "night" represents hardship—real, heavy, often overwhelming—but it does not last forever. The "morning" signifies God's intervention: a new beginning, restoration, and the return of joy through His enduring favor. Weeping may endure for a night, but nights are not forever.

This promise reaches its deepest meaning in Christ Himself. As commentator, George Horne, wrote, *"This is a most beautiful and affecting image of the sufferings and exaltation of Christ... of the night of death, and the morning of the resurrection."* The cross was the darkest night. The tomb held silence, grief, and shattered hope. But Easter morning came. Resurrection followed death. Joy followed sorrow.

God's heart has always leaned toward the broken. He calls Himself "*a Father to the fatherless*" and "*a Defender of widows*" (Psalm 68:5). You may not be an orphan or a widow—but maybe you're heartbreakingly lonely. Maybe you're facing injustice. Maybe you're waiting, like Abraham, for a promise that seems delayed. Maybe you're hurting through no fault of your own. If that's you, God sees you. And He has a promise for you today: joy is coming.

Even if you cry all night—through a dark night of the soul—the morning still arrives. With it come mercies that are "*new every morning*" (Lamentations 3:22–23). God is not absent in the night. He is working, even now, shaping redemption you cannot yet see.

So today, if the night feels long, hear the gentle invitation of the Lord: Look up. Morning is coming. And with it—joy. *"For the joy of the Lord is my strength"* (Nehemiah 8:10).

Prayer: Faithful God, You see us in the night seasons of our lives—when sorrow lingers, hope feels distant, and tears fall unseen. Help us to trust You when the darkness feels long. Remind us that You are near, even when we cannot feel You. Turn our weeping into praise, our waiting into hope, and our sorrow into joy through Christ our Lord. Amen.



PSALM 32

Tuesday, March 3, 2026

A Hiding Place

"Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

***Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit."***

Psalm 32:1-2 (ESV)

Lent has a way of slowing us down and turning our attention inward. That is not always comfortable. We spend much of our lives avoiding that inward look, keeping busy, staying distracted, or convincing ourselves that we are doing just fine. But Lent gently presses us to stop running, to listen, and to tell the truth. Psalm 32 meets us right there. David speaks plainly. He doesn't soften the language or hide behind excuses. He names sin for what it is, transgression, iniquity, deceit. Before forgiveness ever feels sweet, the burden of unconfessed sin is felt. David describes it as something heavy, something that drains the life out of him. This is a function of the Law, and it is not cruel. It is honest. God exposes what is already there, not to shame us, but to free us. What stands out in this Psalm is not David's effort, but God's promise. David does not say, "Once I fixed myself..." or "Once I made it right..." He says, "I acknowledged my sin to you... and you forgave the iniquity of my sin." Forgiveness is not earned here. It is given. Confession does not force God's hand; it simply stops hiding. That is why David can call the Lord a hiding place. This feels backward to us. We usually hide from God, not in Him. But the Gospel turns that instinct on its head. God is not the one we must avoid when we see our sin clearly, He is the very place of safety when we finally stop pretending.

The same God who reveals sin is the God who covers it. Psalm 32 does not mention the cross directly, but Lent teaches us to hear this promise in light of it. We know where forgiveness ultimately comes from. The sins David confesses, the guilt he carries, the burden that weighs him down, all of it is carried forward to Christ. On the cross, sin is not ignored, minimized, or excused. It is dealt with. Covered. Forgiven. For you! For those of us who have walked long roads, raised families, buried loved ones, and carry both joys and regrets, this Psalm speaks gently and clearly. There is no blessing in hiding. There is blessing in confession. And there is deep rest in knowing that forgiveness does not depend on how well we confess, but on God's faithfulness to forgive. Lent invites us to step out of hiding and into the shelter God Himself provides. Here, in Christ, we are safe.

Prayer: Merciful God, You know our hearts better than we know ourselves. Give us the courage to confess honestly and the faith to trust Your promise of forgiveness. Draw us again to Christ, our true hiding place. Amen.



PSALM 33

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Standing in Awe of Him

"Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright.

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.

He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deep in storehouses.

Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him."

Psalm 33:1, 6-8 (ESV)

Psalm 33 is a hymn of praise and is a welcome respite after so many laments. It celebrates God's faithfulness and his awesome power. It reminds us that God is in control, which is such a needed reminder when worrying over things that can't be controlled. The psalmist calls us to rejoice in the Lord as He is our creator and redeemer. He is worthy of our praise and His power is evident in creation.

In early December of last year, my husband and I had the opportunity to take a jeep tour around the Zion National Park area and visit a couple of slot canyons that have been carved by water and wind. During the daylight hours, the sun reflects off the red sandstone canyon walls and illuminates into the deepest recesses of these cavernous rock formations. It was spectacular. What made it even more special was that our tour guide radiated with enthusiasm. He was not allowed to share his faith, but out of his very being the awe for the creator of these spectacular landmarks poured out.

Prayer: *Lord, we sing Your praises. You are faithful and you are worthy of our praise. Lord, you alone are the one in control. Help me not to worry and to give you complete control. Lord we rejoice that You are our creator and redeemer and we stand in total awe over Your power which is evident in all creation. Amen.*



PSALM 34

Thursday, March 5, 2026

Taste and See

"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!
Psalm 34:8 (ESV)

David wrote Psalm 34 from experience, not theory. The superscript tells us he composed it after feigning madness to escape King Achish—a moment of desperation, deception, and deliverance. He knew what it meant to be trapped, afraid, and utterly dependent on God's rescue.

"Taste and see," he invites us. It's an unusual command. You can't taste at a distance. You can't sample something while keeping it at arm's length. Tasting requires contact, commitment, vulnerability. You have to put it in your mouth.

During Lent, we're confronted with the depths of our spiritual hunger. We fast, we reflect, we acknowledge the emptiness inside us that no earthly bread can fill. We recognize that we've tried to satisfy ourselves with things that leave us malnourished—success, approval, pleasure, control. We've sampled everything the world offers, and we're still starving.

But here's the invitation: taste and see that the LORD is good.

This isn't about having faith in faith. It's not about positive thinking or religious obligation. It's about encountering the goodness of God Himself—specifically in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the Bread of Life who came down from heaven. He is the Living Water offered to those dying of thirst. He is the Lamb of God, broken and given for the life of the world.

On the night He was betrayed, Jesus took bread and said, *"Take, eat; this is my body."* He took the cup and said, *"Drink from it, all of you."* He invited His disciples—and invites us—to taste His goodness, to take refuge in His sacrifice, to feast on His grace.

The cross is where we discover whether God is truly good. Is He good when darkness covers the land? When the innocent suffers? When death seems to win? The answer comes three days later. The tomb is empty. Death is defeated. And now we know: the LORD is not just powerful or just or sovereign—He is good. Good enough to die for us. Good enough to rise for us. Good enough to satisfy the deepest hunger of our souls.

David concludes this psalm with a promise: *"The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."* (v. 18). He's writing from the depths, looking up at the goodness that reached down. We're in those same depths during Lent, acknowledging our brokenness, our crushed spirits, our inability to save ourselves.

But Easter is the ultimate proof of God's goodness. Christ has tasted death for us so that we might taste and see that the LORD is good. Come to His table. Taste His mercy. See His love. Take refuge in the One who brings us out of the depths.

Prayer: Father, I confess I've tried to satisfy my soul with lesser things. Forgive my wandering heart. This Lenten season, help me to truly taste Your goodness in Christ—to encounter Your grace, not just acknowledge it. You are my refuge, my deliverer, my satisfaction. Feed me with the Bread of Life until Easter joy fills my heart. Amen.



PSALM 37

Friday, March 6, 2026

Trust in the Lord and Do Good

"Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture." - Psalm 37:3 (NIV)

What an instruction manual for life! All we ever need to know is contained in the first seven words of verse 3 of this psalm. **TRUST IN THE LORD.**

When you are in the hospital for days at a time sitting at the bedside of someone you love, Trust God. When children and grandchildren are living a life devoid of God's influence, Trust God. When friends don't recognize Jesus as their Savior and challenge your beliefs, Trust God. The following verses bring me hope in the trust I place in God. *"See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame."* (Isaiah 28:16) *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."* (Romans 15:13)

DO GOOD. Believing in an all-loving God is what Jesus calls us to do. We are also called to use the strength and benefits of that love to pass it on to others. When the clerk in the grocery store is having a difficult day, smile and encourage, Do Good. When a friend is sad and scared, pray with them. Do Good. When people around you gossip and complain, stay calm and focused, Do Good. When neighborhoods are disconnected and neighbors are strangers, make a difference by planning a small get together, Do Good.

Jesus is the absolute representation of doing good. Scripture gives us so many examples like His feeding 5,000 in (Matthew 14:15-21), healing the man with leprosy (Mark 1:40-42), and removing demons from a boy (Luke 9:38-43). Jesus' final act of showing His love for us was done by His dying on the cross. Jesus is the standard for trusting in God and doing good.

The final words in verse three, *"dwell in the land and enjoy safe pastures,"* gives me the encouragement to do and say what scripture is directing me to do. The comfort and security of being held in the loving arms of Jesus can make all the difference in a world full of turmoil and uncertainty.

Prayer: Jesus, we come to you today relying on the example You set for us to always trust in You and follow Your lead to do good in this life knowing we will be with You for eternity. In the holy name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.



PSALM 40

Saturday, March 7, 2026

Patience

***"I waited patiently for the LORD; He turned to me and heard my cry.
He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire;
He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.
He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God."***

Psalm 40:1-3 (NIV)

Patience — what a wonderful concept, one that I still am trying to grasp. How often do we cry out to the Lord with a request that we believe is so important but we only wait a few moments before we "fix it" ourselves believing that we know what God wants of us.

David in this psalm reminds us of how "slimy" and thus stinky we are. I liken this verse to a teaching in my youth where we are compared to an onion. Just when we think that we have fixed an issue God will peel back another layer of our onion and we once again find just how "stinky" we truly are and how much more we have yet to learn. This onion concept continues in my life today—all I can say is, it must be one LARGE onion!

When I was first married it was on my wife's heart to do a short-term mission trip. I had so many excuses of why not to go on the trip. The first excuse was that I had a new job. But the best excuse (I thought) was that my mother was ill which concluded in her trip to Paradise with Jesus. Now that all my excuses were exhausted, I found myself on a plane to the Dominican Republic to join Mercy Ships for two weeks. Having been trained in medicine I assumed that I would be doing medical work, however it was God's grace and sense of humor that I found myself doing construction work. I only did two days in the local clinic. This experience rocked my life! Jesus put a new song in my mouth. The head surgeon on Mercy Ships was a man who by example showed what it meant to be a man of God. I had struggled with finding Jesus in medicine up to this point. Most of the doctors in my past experience were very science orientated and had no time for Jesus. God was patient with me and understood my hesitation to go on the trip...He also knew how this experience was going to change me and my desires going forward. This mission trip completely changed the direction of my relationship with Jesus. I am now much more patient, waiting upon His answers instead of just jumping in to fix things.

Prayer: Dear Lord, You show us that your timing is perfect. You give us time to acknowledge Your plans to follow You. During this time of Lent, please help us to see how You are working in our often slimy, stinky lives. Amen.



PSALM 42

Monday, March 9, 2026

Downcast, But Not Done

"My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long,

"Where is your God?"....All your waves and breakers have swept over me....

Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."

Psalm 42:3, 7, 11 (NIV)

Some days it feels like life just piles it on — one more thing breaks, one more phone call stings, one more worry keeps you awake. You don't need anyone to convince you the world can be heavy. You're living it. And Lent gives us permission to stop pretending otherwise.

Psalm 42 gives us language for those seasons, because it refuses to polish pain. It tells the truth about a soul that is thirsty, tired, and scraped raw: "My tears have been my food day and night." It tells the truth about pressure that won't let up: "All your waves and breakers have swept over me." It even tells the truth about that taunting question you may hear from outside — or from your own thoughts — when life is hard: "Where is your God?"

But Psalm 42 also gives us a single, steady lifeline. Here it is — short enough to remember when you can't remember much else: When your soul is downcast, don't just listen to it — talk to it.

Twice the psalmist does exactly that. He addresses his own heart with a pastor's tenderness and a fighter's honesty: "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?" That's not denial. That's not spiritual bravado. That's a believer naming what is real — and then refusing to let sorrow be the loudest voice in the room.

And what does he say to his soul? Not, "Get it together." Not, "Try harder." Not, "Look on the bright side." He says one thing, and he says it like an anchor: "Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God."

This is what this Psalm trains in us: a holy stubbornness that remembers. "Therefore I will remember you." When the soul feels dehydrated, remember the living God. When the heart feels stranded, remember God's presence. When the night feels endless, remember that God can put a song in the dark: "By day the Lord directs His love, at night His song is with me — a prayer to the God of my life."

So today, if you feel emptied out, do what Psalm 42 teaches. Pour out your soul. Ask your hard questions. Name your grief. Then, gently but firmly, speak to yourself again: Put your hope in God. Not because the waves aren't real, but because your Rock is.

Prayer: Living God, when my soul is downcast and my tears have been my food, meet me again with Your steadfast love by day and Your song in the night. Teach my weary heart to hope in You until I yet praise You — my Savior and my God. Amen.



PSALM 43

Tuesday, March 10, 2026

Talk to Your Soul

"Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?

***Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God.*" - Psalm 43:5 (NIV)**

Lent is a season of honesty. It invites us to pause long enough to notice what is happening beneath the surface of our lives. In Psalm 43:5, the psalmist turns inward and speaks directly to his own soul: "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God." He reminds himself of what he already knows. He speaks truth, peace, and calm to his own soul.

Did you know you can talk to your soul? You can ask it honest questions: "What's going on?" "Why are you so unsettled?" The writer of Psalm 43 doesn't ignore his inner turmoil—he addresses it. He preaches to his own soul the Truth about God. That is a crucial spiritual discipline to learn.

Years ago, I read a paragraph from Martyn Lloyd-Jones that caught my attention. I remember thinking, *I have to do that. I need to do this more.* He writes:

Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them, but there they are, talking to you. They bring back the problem of yesterday. Somebody's talking. Who's talking? Yourself is talking to you. Instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself, "Why are you cast down, O my soul?" he asks. His soul, polluted by false thinking from The Enemy, had been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says: "Self, listen for a moment, I will speak to you the Truth from the Word of God." (Spiritual Depression, 20–21)

Do you do that? Given the way I'm wired, my inner self-talk can become self-defeating. I carry worries I cannot control—concerns for my sister and family facing homelessness, for a grieving mother who lost her son to an overdose, for my daughter-in-law battling postpartum depression. I take it all upon myself, and it weighs me down. I feel it in my body—knotted stomach, tense shoulders. And I can hear my anxious self saying, "You're supposed to be giving me good news, not just the bad news." Instead of answering it with hope, I often join in, piling on more discouraging thoughts. No wonder I grow weary.

So here we are, on this side of the cross. Jesus has come. How would you preach to yourself now? You preach the gospel to yourself. It might sound something like this:

Listen, self. If God is for you, who can be against you? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for you, self, will he not with him freely give us all things? He sits at the right hand of the Father and he intercedes for you. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. When you are weak, he is strong. What can separate you, self, from the love of God?

Stop listening and start talking. Instead of letting thoughts of anxiety or guilt dominate, actively preach to your own soul. Consistently remind yourself that your acceptance is based on Christ's work, not your own performance. If there's ever a reason for memorizing Romans 8, it's to turn it into self-preaching — to preach to yourself because those words are powerful and life-changing. Actively praising God, even when reluctant, invites God's presence into your soul. So, learn to preach to yourself. And do it out loud!

Prayer: Lord, when my soul is cast down and in turmoil, send out your light and your truth to lead me out of this darkness. Guide me back to Your presence, that I may find my joy in You again. Amen.



PSALM 49

Wednesday, March 11, 2026

We Take Nothing With Us When We Die

"Do not be overawed when a man grows rich, when the splendor of his house increases; for he will take nothing with him when he dies. His splendor will not descend with him.

A man who has riches without understanding is like the beasts that perish."

Psalm 49:16-22 (NIV)

Among my many blessings from God, my primary blessing is that my father introduced me to Jesus and the good news of God's love shown on the cross. He showed me through word and action what it meant to surrender all of my life to God. In the last job he had, he taught stewardship in churches saying that it involves our time, talent and wealth. He taught that God loves a cheerful giver, not one who feels forced to give, and that the Bible speaks about giving tithes (10%) and offerings (in addition to tithes).

My father personally knew Jesus as his best friend and praised God through a life filled with great personal and family pain. When I was around four years old, we left home temporarily because of my health. While we were gone, the person he had left in charge of his business lost the business and my father's personal wealth of around \$7 million. Later, my father told me that he did not regret losing that money. He had associated with many millionaires and said that they were the most miserable people he had ever met.

Personal and family physical problems followed my father throughout his life. He had Parkinson's disease for around 30 years. One of his children had a serious illness at a young age. In addition to the needs of his immediate family, he was responsible for his parents and sisters' families. The hardest blow was watching my mother suffer from cancer for six years until she died. At that time he was \$100,000 in debt from medical bills which he eventually paid off. Although not perfect, with God's help my father continued to live as a person who has surrendered his life to God. He lived what he preached about stewardship. I was amazed that even though he lost so much, he still tithed and continued to use his time and talent in service to God. He felt that this was the least he could do since his best friend, Jesus, died on the cross for him. He taught me that what he had actually belonged to God anyway. He would agree with Psalm 49 that tells us not to envy people who trust in wealth and power over trusting in God.

My husband and I have tried to follow my father's example in our own lives. In doing so we have learned that being a committed Christian is an adventure filled with surprises and joy. One adventure came when some people needed \$5000 immediately. That was the amount we had saved up to pay insurance, taxes, etc. We trusted in God's provision when we gave them the money. A few months later we received almost that exact amount very unexpectedly from a business that told us we were owed that much. God is faithful both in times of hardship and in times of blessing. I know that all I have is because of Him.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, in our society, it is so easy to follow the false god of wealth. Thank you for your Word and for the wisdom you have given to people to share in helping us understand what it means to be a committed Christian. I am grateful for the warning you have given us of what happens to those who have riches without understanding. Help me to follow You instead. Amen.



PSALM 46

Thursday, March 12, 2026

God is Our Refuge

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea." - Psalm 46:1-2 (ESV)

Trouble! How does that song lyric go, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen!"? We all experience trouble in our lives simply by living in a sinful world. We also can bring trouble upon ourselves through poor choices. And there are circumstances beyond our control that bring trouble. So many people face what seem like insurmountable issues; cancer has returned, a marriage has failed, a job was lost, finances are strained, a loved one died, a friend is suicidal, and the list goes on. Natural disasters such as the fires in Maui and California and the floods in Texas and North Carolina, leave people homeless and destitute, and leave communities with great burdens to rebuild. National disputes over politics in areas of healthcare, affordability, and immigration have caused tension and death in many communities. And world tensions rise in response to all of these things. These days it's overwhelming to just read the headlines!

Trouble! Imagine the trouble people were experiencing at the time of Jesus' life and death. He had brought a new and loving way to be united with God. He empowered women in a culture that saw them as property. He healed the sick regardless of what day it was. He gathered a following and formed a movement that seemed to die when He did. His disciples were distraught. Scripture doesn't share much about the response of people beyond His closest disciples and friends. But His impact was so huge. Imagine the lepers who were healed hearing that the One Who had changed their lives forever had died. Or the woman at the well who found living water through meeting Jesus. Or Jairus, whose daughter was healed by Jesus even from a distance! They all believed Jesus was who He said He was but then He died...that didn't make sense. Without social media, perhaps they never heard. But countless had witnessed His miracles and heard His teaching. Some most likely lost their faith while others questioned theirs.

Matthew wrote about what happened after Jesus died in chapter 27, *"At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life."* Imagine that trouble and the terror that ensued back then.

Jesus said, *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33) Jesus promised trouble. How about that? But He also promised that He would be with us in trouble, so we have no reason to fear.

May we remember what Psalm 46 repeats twice, *"The Lord Almighty is with us."*

Prayer: Lord, help me keep my eyes on You as I look around and see so much uncertainty. These are troubling times and yet I know that You are with me and You have overcome the world! May Your kingdom come and Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen, let it be so!



PSALM 51

Friday, March 13, 2026

Even King David...

"Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow."

Psalm 51:7 (NIV)

Not all psalms are as closely associated with an actual event in Israel as is Psalm 51. King David has just been "hit between the eyes" by the Prophet Nathan after David's dual acts of adultery and murder (I suggest you read 2 Samuel 11:1-12:10). After seeing Bathsheba from the roof of his palace, David lusted for her; sent for her; and slept with her. She became pregnant and David had her husband Uriah, killed in battle. That's the Reader's Digest version. Thus adultery and murder were committed in one kingly swoop.

When David was confronted by Nathan, his guilt was uncovered and David learned that his life and that of his family would be forever changed because of those two sinful acts. He had thought that there would be no repercussions from them but he was greatly mistaken. God saw and God knew. David forgot... or simply ignored the fact that even as king he was not above reproach.

With his sin revealed, David gifts us with Psalm 51; his sorrowful and heartfelt, yet beautiful confession. Instead of letting his guilt consume him, he bares his soul with words that ring familiar in verses still heard today in our traditional Lutheran worship (51:10-12, 15, and 17). But maybe less recognizable is verse 7: *"Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow."*

Used for wiping sacrificial blood on the Israelite doorposts in Egypt at the time of the first Passover, as well as a cleansing ritual, David's use of hyssop in verse 7 was his way of beseeching God to forgive him for his egregious actions. The words of the Psalm begged God to cleanse him and he would be clean; to wash him and he would be whiter than snow.

David knew the forgiveness that was there for him just as we do. During this time of Lent, we are reminded of our sin. We, like David, have been convicted. Like David being confronted by the Prophet Nathan, the season of Lent confronts and reminds us of our sin... as if we were looking in a mirror. In the same way that David looked to God for forgiveness, we can look to the cross and an empty grave for that same forgiveness.

With Lent as a reminder during this time of year, we are assured that forgiveness is not just seasonal, but year 'round. So like David, hyssop is used to sprinkle the blood of Jesus as our sins are washed away. May you always rest in the knowledge and faith that no matter what your sin is, there is none that is too great to be forgiven. Jesus' death on the cross has spread any and all of our sin as far as "the east is from the west."

Prayer: *Good and Gracious God, in-as-much as our sin is always before us, so is your forgiveness. King David knew it and we know it, too. Our assurance of such is always before us in the sacrifice of your Son, Jesus. We remember and pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*



PSALM 62

Saturday, March 14, 2026

God is Our Fortress

*"Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from Him.
Truly He is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I will never be shaken."*
Psalm 62:1-2 (NIV)

I remember the first earthquake I experienced. I stood at the bathroom vanity curling my hair before work (it was the 80s!) and suddenly I became aware that the combination tub/shower was coming away from the wall! Then I heard the rumbles and thuds and the glass shattering outside. As I stood in the doorway – as one is supposed to do in an earthquake – the linen closet doors opened up emptying its contents on the floor next to me and I heard dishes and bottles crashing in the kitchen. I never again bought vinegar in a glass bottle! After that – before the aftershocks – came the quiet “ohs” and “aahs” from neighbors along with screaming car alarms. There is something unsettling about having the ground beneath your feet move. The very thing you think you can count on — your foundation — gives way. Shock. Terror. Panic. I can tell you that an alarm was going off in more than just the cars! I definitely was shaken.

The earth shook when Jesus died. The creation groaned when its creator breathed His last. No doubt people ran for cover. No doubt people were afraid. As darkness fell, no doubt more questions loomed, “What just happened?” “What do we do now?” “Maybe He was Who He said He was?”

Think of your life and those moments that had you ask the same questions. “What just happened?” and “What do I do now?” Maybe you’re asking those questions now. You may have even questioned if Jesus is indeed Who He said He is. Difficulties cause us to question our faith at times. Doubts are not threats to Jesus, but we can find ourselves in trouble when we let our doubts turn to unbelief.

People choose many ways to escape the realities of life. We go to the gym to work off our frustrations. We get a massage to ease our stress. We use retail therapy to bring momentary fulfillment. We numb our minds by binge watching TV shows to distract us. We eat too much for momentary gratification and sleep too much to live in denial. We read a book, do yoga or go for a walk. Not all escapes are unhealthy in themselves. But it’s what or Who we turn to that will make all the difference.

Because Jesus IS Who He said He is, we truly find rest in Him alone! Because of His death and resurrection, He is our rock and our salvation. He is our fortress! Because we are in Christ, we will NOT be shaken. Before letting our doubts turn to bitterness, or even unbelief, let us turn to Jesus instead! In Matthew 11 Jesus invites us to, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

Prayer: *Lord, forgive me when I turn to other things to find my rest, when I think that other things will bring me salvation, even for a moment. Help me to look to You as my rock when the realities of life try to shake me. You are all I need. Amen.*



PSALM 69

Monday, March 16, 2026

Better Than Sacrifice

"May your salvation, God, protect me. I will praise God's name in song and glorify Him with thanksgiving. This will please the Lord more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hooves. The poor will see and be glad— you who seek God, may your hearts live!"

Psalm 69:29b-32 (NIV)

I chose this psalm to reflect on because I can relate to the way it begins—feeling as though I am sinking into the miry depths, where there is no firm foothold; feeling worn out from calling for help, my throat parched. The imagery is so vivid and powerful, capturing the desperation that can so often mark our own seasons of struggle.

Thankfully, by the end of the psalm, the writer turns toward salvation and praise. While they didn't understand it at the time, we now know that God's ultimate answer to their cry for salvation would come through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—God's only Son, given as a perfect sacrifice. This salvation is far more than freedom or protection in this physical world; it is true liberation from the weight and wages of our sin. As humans it's easier for us to see the physical realm than the spiritual realm but having a heart for the things of God will help us with our everyday troubles as well, because for God both things are important. Because as His children, we are important.

Verse 31 is easy to overlook. We don't often talk about sacrificing oxen or bulls to the Lord today. Instead, we may think of sacrifice in terms of our time, our finances, or our talents—things we offer to God as acts of worship. Yet this verse reminds us that God values something even greater than our sacrifices. He desires our thanksgiving. He desires our praise. He longs for us to glorify Him with the posture of our hearts—to seek Him and worship Him in spirit and in truth—so that our hearts may be fully alive in Christ Jesus.

It is easy to fall into days when we do not truly seek God—when we fail to sit and listen and spend time in His Word, or we fail to express gratitude for His presence in our lives and all He has done and continues to do out of His great love for us. Perhaps every time we see a cross, we could let it serve as a reminder: to thank the Lord for something, to praise Him for a new day, and to rejoice in the hope we have in His salvation—both for today and for tomorrow.

Prayer: *Lord, may Your salvation protect us, and may You be glorified in my life and in the life of my family. Help me choose daily to lift up Your name with praise and thanksgiving. May my heart become fully alive in You as I seek You during this season of Lent. Amen.*



PSALM 71

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

Wickedness, Evil, Cruelty—It's Inevitable

"Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of those who are evil and cruel." - Psalm 71:3,4 (NIV)

As I read these verses from Psalm 71, I immediately thought of my granddaughter's husband who recently was sworn in as a police officer. Having retired after 30 years in law enforcement, I know that it is inevitable that he will encounter wickedness, evil and cruelty. Unlike the rest of us, his encounters with these things are intentional, it's part of the job. He chose to do it because he answered the call to protect and serve. Very few choose to do this, and we all should be grateful for their service on our behalf. The "thin blue line" protects us from the wickedness, evil and cruelty that surrounds us. The nightly news clearly shows how prevalent it is in this world.

The Bible tells of another person who answered a call to protect and serve others. Jesus voluntarily came down from heaven and became a man so that he could pay the price for all of sinful mankind, so that we might become righteous in the eyes of a just God. That price was extremely high, requiring Jesus to suffer all of the wickedness, evil and cruelty that the world could give, and He endured it all, for you and me, on the cross at Calvary. Our sins killed him. But through His death, the price for our sin has been paid in full, for all time, for all who believe. Wickedness, evil and cruelty still exist in the world, and we are all victims of them. But we can take comfort in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ who said, "*In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world.*" (John 13:33b). His victory, and ours, came when He walked out of the grave that first Easter morning. He conquered death so that we might have life. Hallelujah! Thank you Jesus!

Prayer: *Blessed Lord, thank you for taking my place and suffering the wickedness, evil and cruelty that I was due, and freeing me from the ravages of sin. I pray that I always recognize the price you paid and give you the praise, honor and glory you deserve. Thank you for being my Savior, my rock and my fortress. My help in times of trouble. Protect me from wickedness, evil and cruelty, and help me to call on you when I encounter it. I pray for all law enforcement officers and other emergency personnel who faithfully and sacrificially perform their duties to protect and serve. Keep them safe from all harm and the psychological effects of the evils they face. Bring them safely home to their families at shift's end. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



PSALM 74

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

How Much Can I Lose?

"They set your sanctuary on fire, they desecrated the dwelling place of Your name, bringing it to the ground. They said to themselves "We will utterly subdue them."

Psalm 74:7,8 (CSB)

"Have regard for your covenant, for the dark places of the land are full of the haunts of violence. Do not let the downtrodden be put to shame; let the poor and needy praise Your name."

Psalm 74:20-21 (CSB)

Recently while talking with God about my financial worries, I was given what I believe to be a Spirit inspired moment. Throughout our life journey we find ourselves in peril of losing what we have spent a lifetime building up. This includes monetary security, possessions, relationships, and even faith in God's promises.

Back to my story; as I was sharing my concerns with God, somehow my thoughts were transported from my story to that of my brothers and sisters in Christ, living in Palestine. Quite a leap yes, but perhaps not so surprising after spending a lengthy amount of time pondering Psalm 71.

Did you know there is a strong Christian community in Palestine? In 2015, there were about 3000 Christians living in or near the Gaza Strip. (About 13% of the population). They belong to the oldest Christian community on the planet. I remember in the late 80's while I was attending seminary, hearing of the wonderful & exciting work the Lutheran Church was a part of in Palestine.

Today those Christian Churches are part of the rubble we see on the news. Those brothers and sisters in Christ are some of the people we see crying over bodies of loved ones or scavenging for food and water. Most recent news confirms many Palestinian Christians made a commitment to stay and shelter within remaining church compounds. I can imagine they are crying out as the Psalmist *"They set your sanctuary on fire; they desecrated the dwelling place of your name. Have regard for your covenant...Do not let the downtrodden be put to shame."*

Upon seeing such horrific images of war, destruction, and absolute poverty, I find myself coming to the realization that I have a very compromised understanding of what it means to lose everything. In addition, I keep asking myself, how can I respond to this reignited concern for war weary sisters and brothers in Christ?

Lenten journeys often include giving up something.... perhaps it is a time to give up hiding from the sufferings of God's Children, wherever they are, because we fear losing what we hold too dear. Can I, can we who are so blessed, hold those who are crying out like the psalmist in our hearts as we journey to the cross this Lenten Season?

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, guide my heart and mind this Lenten Season as I seek to lift up others in far greater need than myself. Allow me to empathize in a way that peels away my protective armor and leads me to Christ like understanding and action. Amen.*



PSALM 77

Thursday, March 19, 2026

God's Final Word

"I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me. When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands, and I would not be comforted."
Psalm 77:1,2 (NIV)

Asaph, the psalmist, wondered if God's promises had failed. His current experience did not match what he had heard God had done for others. As he questions God's love, and expresses his feelings of despair and doubt, one can't help but relate, especially when going through tough times. These kinds of emotions are real for many believers facing suffering and feelings of abandonment by God.

However, Asaph chose not to let God's silence be the final word to him. Instead, he remembered what God did in the past as the best indication of God's plans for his future.

When Jesus was dying on the cross, He quoted a Psalm that was similar to this one. He asked God why He had abandoned him. Unlike the Psalmist here who lived, Jesus actually died! But just when all hope seemed lost, Jesus rose from His grave after 3 long days of divine silence. Like God was to Israel, Jesus rose to become an all powerful shepherd. Jesus has conquered death. He leads the dying to new and eternal life. This is God's final word to His people. There is no suffering or silence, power or pain that can separate us from God's rescuing power and resurrection and love.

So we can always remember that God's love is measured by His cross and His power is measured by His resurrection. God's current silence is not God's last word to us, Jesus is.

Prayer: Dear Lord, open our eyes so that we can see the God who saves. May we see Jesus as the one who is God's final Word to us. Amen.



PSALM 90

Friday, March 20, 2026

From Dust to Dust

"You turn people back to dust, saying, 'Return to dust, you mortals.' A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night." - Psalm 90:3-4 (NIV)

This passage from Psalm 90 always brings Ash Wednesday to mind. The season of Lent begins with the sign of the cross traced on our foreheads in ashes—a reminder that we are dust, and to dust we will return. It confronts us with the frailty and brevity of life. And the older I get, the more I feel the truth of it: time passes quickly. No wonder that for the Lord, a thousand years are like a single day. He is eternal.

I've always felt a little "dirty" after receiving the ashes. I can feel them sitting on my forehead, and my first instinct is to wipe them away. It makes me wonder how I would feel if my hidden sin were actually visible for everyone to see. The ashes symbolize repentance, of course, but perhaps they also symbolize confession. If I have no need to confess, then why bother bearing the mark of the cross as a public sign of faith?

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8,9)

I have to admit—when I finally wash my forehead at the end of the day, it feels *extra clean*. Jesus chose to die for us while we were still trapped in sin, and through the power of the cross He has washed away the sin of all who trust in Him.

What if we marked ourselves with the cross everyday of Lent? The God of the universe is at work in our lives, making something extraordinary out of DUST.

As the poet Jan Richardson writes so beautifully: "Ash Wednesday: Blessing the Dust."

So let us be marked *not* for sorrow. And let us be marked not for shame. Let us be marked not for false humility, or for thinking we are less than we are but for claiming what God can do within the dust.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father during this season of Lent may you help me to remember that I came from dust and to dust I will return. Help me also to remember that you are a God who loves me and you are at work in me, your child. Making something beautiful out of my dust. Amen.*



PSALM 91

Saturday, March 21, 2026

From My God in Whom I Trust

"Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. This I declare of the Lord. He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; He is my God, and I am trusting Him. He will shield you with His wings, He will shelter you with His feathers, His faithful promises are your armor and protection. Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night, nor fear of the dangers of the day." - Psalm 91:1-5 (NLT)

I am most blessed to have been given the gift of faith at an early age. When I sang. "Jesus loves me this I know.", I was singing what was fact to me and not just words.

I was legally blind for much of my childhood. That means I could see with glasses, but not very well. At age 13 the ophthalmologist told me that I would be totally blind by my mid teens. I remember thinking at the time that it was strange that I had no fear. I never did fear that I would be blind. By my mid teens, after another doctor had given me eye exercises and contact lenses, I could see well!

Even though God has been faithful to me, I haven't always been faithful about trusting Him. One trap I have fallen into is that of fearing about the safety of my loved ones. I have been consumed with fear that harm would come to my father, my husband and my sons. Even though it could be said that there was good reason for that fear in each case, they were all safe eventually. At those times I was being controlled by my fear and not by God.

The Bible says that God is faithful and will never leave us. I am thankful that Jesus stuck with me and brought me back to trusting Him. I know now that it has been the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised to send after His ascension who has been my guide and protector. God's love that sent His son Jesus to the cross is very personal to me. Yes, Jesus does love me, and I have been shielded with His wings my entire life.

Prayer: *Thank you Jesus that I know without a doubt that you love me and that Your Holy Spirit is always with me. Even though I have gone through rough patches in my life, you've always helped me through. I have no fear of the future as I trust giving all aspects of my life to you. Amen.*



PSALM 103

Monday, March 23, 2026

The Great Exchange

"He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear Him." – Psalm 103:10-11 (ESV)

If we got what we deserved, none of us would be here. That's the uncomfortable truth Psalm 103 forces us to confront. David begins with a command to his own soul: *"Forget not all his benefits."* What follows is a stunning inventory of grace—forgiveness, healing, redemption, crowning with love and compassion. But the heart of the psalm is found in what God doesn't do: *"He does not treat us as our sins deserve."* **This is the great exchange!**

Lent is the season when we take an honest inventory of what we actually deserve. We examine our lives and find pride, selfishness, broken promises, wounded relationships, secret sins, and public failures. We discover that the depths we're trapped in aren't simply unfortunate circumstances—they're consequences. We've earned our condemnation. Justice demands payment. The ledger must balance.

But here's where the gospel explodes into our darkness: on the cross, Jesus got what we deserved so we could get what He deserved. The great exchange happened on Good Friday when the sinless One was treated as the sinner and the sinners were treated as righteous. Our guilt was placed on His shoulders. His righteousness was credited to our account.

"As far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us." (v. 12). Think about that distance. East and west never meet. They're infinitely separated. That's how far God has removed our sins through Christ. Not hidden, not overlooked, not minimized—removed. Gone. Separated from us by an infinite distance because Jesus carried them to the cross and buried them in His tomb.

The psalm continues with a tender image: *"As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear Him."* (v. 13). God knows our frame. He remembers we are dust. He understands our weakness, our frailty, our mortality. And still He loves us—not because we've earned it, but because that's who He is.

This is why Easter follows Good Friday. The compassion of God doesn't leave Jesus in the tomb. Death cannot hold the sinless One. And when Christ rises, He rises as our representative, our substitute, our Savior. The exchange is complete. What we deserved—death—He took. What He deserved—resurrection life—He shares.

As we journey through Lent toward Easter, let us not forget all His benefits. Let us remember the great exchange: our sin for His righteousness, our death for His life, our despair for His hope, our depths for His heights.

Prayer: *Gracious Father, when I consider what I truly deserve, I am undone. But when I look at the cross, I am overwhelmed by Your mercy. Thank You for not treating me as my sins deserve. Thank You for the great exchange—Jesus taking my place, bearing my sin, dying my death. Help me live in the freedom of Your forgiveness as I walk toward Easter morning. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



PSALM 107

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

Life is a Box Of Chocolates

"Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. They were hungry and thirsty and their lives ebbed away. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle. Let them give thanks to the Lord for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for mankind, for He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things."

Psalm 107:4-9 (NIV)

This psalm tells of the highs and lows that the Jewish people experienced as the chosen people of God. In reading this psalm one can easily relate to their journey. Don't we all have times in our life when all seems to be a bed of roses and other times when life hits us square in the face? Don't we all experience those times when we hunger and thirst for something better and life seems to be ebbing away, and other times when we are satisfied and we experience good things in our life?

The psalmist uses many terms to describe the good in our lives: delivered, satisfies, fills, saves, brought out, broke away, breaks down, cuts through, healed, rescued, guided, and blessed. He does the same describing the times when life is difficult; times when we: wander, hunger and thirst, sit in darkness, suffer, stumble, feel helpless, rebel, feel our courage melt away, reel and stagger, are at our wits end, and are humbled by oppression calamity and sorrow. We can all relate to several of these good and bad periods in our lives and none of us knows what the future holds. Will it be good or bad? As Forrest Gump says, "Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're going to get." This is true, but the psalmist makes it very clear that there is one thing that is known for certain; God is right there in the midst of it all. We can count on life being very unpredictable, mixed with both good and bad circumstances, but as Romans 8:28 says: *"In all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."*

So let's join the psalmist and cry out to the Lord in times of trouble and give Him thanks and praise for His unfailing love...both in the good times and the bad, for He is with us through it all. He is faithful. He promises: *"I will never leave you or forsake you."* (Hebrews 13:5b)

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, as we take this journey through Lent, let us be ever mindful of where it ends...at the foot of the cross and at the empty tomb. That is where your unfailing love for us is shown most clearly. You died so that we might live! Help us to more fully comprehend what great love you have for us and help us to remember that you are always with us in both the good times and the bad times in our lives. We give you thanks Lord for your goodness and your love, which endures forever. Amen.*



PSALM 109

Wednesday, March 25, 2026

Help Me To Love My Enemies

"O God, Whom I praise, do not remain silent, for wicked and deceitful men have opened their mouths against me...they repay me evil for good..."

Psalm 109:1-2, 5a (NIV)

Perhaps you've heard the phrase, "No good deed goes unpunished." What a cynical expression! Yet, have you ever felt this way? Perhaps you have tried to go out of your way to do kind things for someone only to have them turn around and slander you or respond in an ungrateful manner. You are left wondering, why should I even bother to be nice to this person?

David in Psalm 109 felt extremely angry and betrayed. He was so tired of being dragged down by evil people who lied about him and were mean towards him. King David was certainly not defenseless. The Bible describes David as a great warrior capable of defending himself. David most likely could have taken matters into his own hands to deal with these evil and deceitful men. But, instead David cried out for God to judge these wicked people. David remembered that God will judge the wicked. David trusted God's righteousness. (Psalm 7:10,11) *"My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart. God is a righteous judge."*

David, instead of acting out with vengeance himself, asked God to help him, (Psalm 109) *"Help me O Lord my God; save me in accordance with your love; let me know that it is Your hand, that You O Lord have done it."*

David, like Christ, endured many false accusations. Perhaps you have too? I think if we're honest, there are times when we burn in effigy those that have harmed us. Or we imagine God coming down from heaven with a ball of fire and smiting them before our eyes.

Is that the way we as believers should respond? Lent reminds us of the sacrifice that Jesus made on our behalf, while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8). He died on the cross for us. While it is true, there are times when we encounter evil and broken people, we too are often evil and broken people. Because we are undeserving of Christ's love even on our best days, we should prayerfully turn to God and ask Him to help us to love our enemies, seeing them as complex people really no different than ourselves. We need to pray for them, just like the Psalmist David did, and to trust God that He will one day judge the living and the dead and His Kingdom will have no end.

Prayer: Dear God, our lives are not supposed to be a Rambo episode. Vengeance is not ours. It is the Lord's. Thank you for the sacrifice you made with the death of Your Son, for our sake. We trust you to rightly judge those who harm us. We rest in Your protective care. Amen.



PSALM 113

Thursday, March 26, 2026

No One Loves Me Like the Lord

"Who is like the Lord our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?" - Psalm 113:5 (NIV)

While it's true that most people have a hard enough time sharing their french fries, God our Father, shared His Son. Think about that. God gave His Only begotten Son for us so that we could truly experience His love for us and be able to share in eternal life with Him.

I remember when I was little, the one thing I never doubted was that my parents loved me. I didn't necessarily hear the words, in fact "I love you" wasn't really spoken by my parents to me or my brothers, and as far as I knew, they didn't even really even say it to each other, but I just "knew" they loved me by their actions. We didn't have a lot of money, but I always felt safe and I never worried that they would leave me or forsake me. Even when I got into trouble and they punished me, I never doubted that they had stopped loving me just because I banged up the car (which I did) or I came home at 4:00am (which I did) or I yelled at them (which I did on more than one occasion). Now that both my parents are gone, I find myself reflecting on all the trouble I caused, all the times I messed up, and all the times I didn't even apologize. Yet, they still kept feeding me and they still kept a roof over my head, and they still kept loving me.

I think about my time as a parent and about how many times my children disappointed me by their choices. There were the sleepless nights praying that they would come home safely, the last minute school projects that really weren't last minute - they had just failed to tell me, the tall tales about how something got lost or broken...Yet, I never, not for a minute, stopped loving them.

And then I think of our Lord, hanging on the cross. He loves me so much that He willingly took every dumb, terrible, sin-filled thing that I have done and He took it to the cross with Him. No one, EVER, has loved me or you like that. John 15:13, *"There is no greater love than this, to lay down one's life for a friend."* Jesus considers me a friend! After all the awful things I have done and continue to do, consciously and unconsciously, He still loves me unconditionally. He tells me that He loves me even though I am undeserving of His love. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."* Romans 5:8 reminds us, *"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

No one loves us like Jesus.

Prayer: Dear Jesus. You love us like no other. We are not worthy of Your love and yet You look upon us and say, "what sin?" Thank you Jesus for taking all my sins to the cross. Amen.



PSALM 116

Friday, March 27, 2026

The Death of His Faithful Ones

"The death of His faithful ones is valuable in the Lord's sight."
Psalm 116:15 (CSB)

In medicine I often saw death. The first person I saw die was a little five-year-old girl. She had been beaten by the mother's boyfriend. I felt many emotions at that moment which I am sure everyone would. The boyfriend's comforting words were "we can make another one" as if that was what the little girl's mother needed to hear. When I reflect on that little girl (frequently early in my career but unfortunately less often now after seeing so many people die) and the lessons learned, I am comforted by knowing that little girl is with Jesus and no longer in pain.

Over the years I have watched my parents, friends and many patients die, the vast majority in their senior years. The followers of Jesus were the easiest to let go of for they knew their pain would be replaced by the everlasting love of Jesus. Verse 15 is comforting to know that Jesus will love and care for those who have put their trust in Him.

What does the biblical meaning of "faithful ones" mean? It is those people who have been sanctified, set apart, declared righteous, by the grace of God through their faith in Him. I believe that "faithful one" implies that we have worth or value to God.

BUT what about the non-believer? In the biblical lesson of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) those in Hades are aware of their place in the fire. But what about those in Heaven? Lazarus seems completely unaware of the rich man. I would often wonder about my patients and even a close friend (a non-practicing Jew) who died without accepting Jesus as their Lord and savior. My friend knew and respected my faith. He would jokingly ask if I was still praying for him. He was a very learned man of science whose Jewish aunt would read the Torah to him, but he was agnostic to the end—he was HIS OWN GOD. We don't know what happened in those final moments of life; did he finally accept Jesus? I miss him and I don't know what to think of heaven without him.

It is always hard to comfort the family of these non-believing individuals for the true knowledge of hell is beyond their grasp. The platitudes used by their loved ones are so empty and usually statements about their loved one's soul are very incorrect e.g. "He was a good person so they will be in heaven looking down on us."

Prayer: Dear Jesus. Lent is a wonderful time to reflect on how blessed we are that we have the knowledge of the cross and that God loved us so much that He sent His Son to die in our place. Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen.



PSALM 121

Saturday, March 28, 2026

A God Who Never Sleeps

"...indeed, He who watches over you will neither slumber nor sleep." - Psalm 121:3 (NIV)

Called a psalm of ascent, Psalm 121 was likely composed by a Jew on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They were anticipating the walk up to the city and ultimately to the Temple, located on a hill (Psalm 121:1). This was a familiar trek for Jews as they obeyed the call to honor sacred festivals such as the Passover, the Festival of Booths, and Pentecost.

However, there is more to it than going up the hill. Israel was and always had been surrounded by pagan nations; nations who worshiped idols of all sorts, shapes, and purposes. There were idols for crops & harvest, fertility and illness to name only a few. Baal was well known then and is still prominent as we read Scripture. But there was one thing that all of these idols had in common; they had no power, no authority. They were man made out of materials that could not stand the test of time: wood, clay, and other earth substances.

When Elijah was challenging the prophets of Baal to bring down fire on their altar, he suggested that maybe it was not happening because their god was asleep. Therein lies the difference between the gods of their neighboring nations and the one true God of Israel. Israel's God, our God, was and is over all; over everything, because He created it all.

In verse 4 we read ...*"indeed, He who watches over you will neither slumber nor sleep."* This reference that the God of Israel "who watches over you will neither slumber nor sleep" is a statement that was as true then as it is now. Our God is always with us; He never takes a break; never takes a nap; never stops watching over us.

What a tremendous proclamation, indeed an affirmation, of what God promised and we see fulfilled in the anticipation of Lent and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. From the first promises of a Messiah, a Savior, in Genesis 3:15 ("He shall bruise your head, and you will strike his heel") to Jesus' well known truth of salvation in John 3:16, we are invited to hold onto these promises.

It is true, my friends, that God is always watching over us; you and me. He is always in our homes, at our jobs, in our classrooms, just waiting to hear from us. Waiting and wanting us to have that intimate conversation with Him known as prayer. Whether we're grieving or rejoicing; anxious over a relationship or celebrating the birth of a child; enduring a burned down home or moving into that dream home. He is always awake. Forever in our corner. God is there.

Prayer: *Good and gracious God, knowing that You are always by our side should be of comfort to us in our hardships and a reason to celebrate the many blessings you continue to bestow on Your children. May our memories always rest there. In Jesus name. Amen.*



PSALM 150

Monday, March 30, 2026

Making Room for Praise

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord." - Psalm 150:6 (NIV)

During Lent, we walk the road of sorrow and hope, discovering that praise is not silenced by suffering but deepened through it. Our journey should be marked by quiet reflection, repentance, and waiting on God. It begins with Ashes and moves toward the Cross. We arrive at Holy Week with the disciples, Peter's denial, Gethsemane, and the darkness of Good Friday. We can connect our own stories with theirs. Like them, we carry grief, fear, weakness, and unanswered questions.

Psalm 150 offers a powerful path forward for weary travelers on the Lenten Road. The Psalms end with an exclamation mark, and for good reason. It issues an invitation to offer God unrestrained praise. This is not to deny our pain, but to declare our trust in Him. Praise becomes a pathway for faith, when life overwhelms us. God invites His people to lift their eyes beyond their circumstances and anchor their hope to Him. The psalmist encourages God's people nine times. Praise Him: In His sanctuary and mighty heavens! For His acts of power! For His surpassing greatness! For the ability to express praise! *"...with trumpet, lyre and harp, tambourine and dancing, strings and pipes, resounding cymbals, loud cymbals"* (150:3-5). Martin Luther wrote, *"Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to man that he should proclaim the Word of God through music."*

How do we complete our own Lenten Journey? First, enter into God's presence: "Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty heavens!" God is near and He is our stronghold. During Lent, when we are more aware of sin, mortality, and weakness, we are reminded that God still reigns over all His creation. Lent teaches us not to run from pain, but to draw closer to God within it. Even quiet, humble praise is real praise when it flows from trust.

Second, reflect upon God's greatness: "Praise Him for his mighty deeds; praise Him according to His excellent greatness!" For Christians, Lent focuses attention on God's greatest deed—the saving work of Jesus Christ through His suffering, death, and resurrection. Scripture reveals that Calvary stands at the center of God's mighty acts. Praise, then, is anchored not in our strength or performance but in God's grace. Even in our spiritual desert, God's greatness creates a refreshing oasis.

Third, come together in community. The variety of instruments and joyful sounds point to a people praising together. Lent can turn us inward in confession, but God also calls us outward in shared worship. Repentance should lead to praise. We are God-forgiven, so we unite and lift our voices, bodies, and lives in gratitude to the God who restores. Praise rises from our frailty, sustained by an ever-present Savior who gives life. *"Let everything that has breath praise the LORD!"*

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, teach me to praise You daily with my whole heart. Let my voice be strong with praise. Let my breath become a prayer of trust. I join my hands and heart with all your saints. I look upon Your mighty deeds and excellent greatness, revealed in Jesus Christ by His unconditional love and death on the cross for my sin, Amen.*



PSALM 139

Tuesday, March 31, 2026

Search Me, Heal Me, Restore Me

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: test me and know my anxious thoughts."
Psalm 139:23 (NIV)

Lent invites us into holy honesty. It is a season of slowing down, of allowing God to shine light into places we often keep hidden—even from ourselves. The psalmist's prayer in Psalm 139 is not one of fear, but of trust. To ask God to search us is to believe that what He finds will be met not with condemnation, but with love.

Many of us have spent years trying to be someone we are not. We shape ourselves around expectations, comparisons, and survival strategies. Compulsive behaviors, people-pleasing, and constant striving may be less about ambition and more about escape—escape from the quiet voice inside that wonders, Am I enough? We may struggle to accept our personality, our appearance, our limitations, or even our gifts. Sometimes it feels safer to live at a distance from our true selves than to face the shame we carry within.

When we spend a lifetime caring for others while neglecting our own souls, self-contempt can quietly take root. That contempt often shows itself as envy or jealousy—longing to be in someone else's life, wishing for what they have, believing that their story must be better than our own. Beneath these feelings are negative belief systems that whisper lies about our worth. These beliefs are powerful. Like magnets, they attract "proof" that we are lacking and repel anything that might challenge the lie.

Lent is also a season of unlearning. When we invite God to search us, we are asking Him to help us get rid of the false narratives—the B.S., the broken Belief Systems—that have shaped how we see ourselves. The same psalm that calls for God's searching gaze also declares, *"Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous"* (Psalm 139:14, NLT). Scripture reminds us of a breathtaking truth: we are not mistakes to be fixed, but masterpieces already formed by a loving Creator.

God's knowledge of us did not begin when we achieved something or finally "got it together." He knew us while we were being formed in the womb. Every day of our lives was seen and recorded by Him. Rejection may have taught us that we lacked value, but God tells a different story. We are His workmanship—unique, intentional, and deeply cherished.

As we journey through Lent, may we courageously invite God into our inner world. As He searches us, may He also heal us. And as we begin to see ourselves as God sees us, may we learn to rest—not in who we pretend to be, but in who we truly are: known, loved, and wonderfully made.

Prayer: *Gracious God, search our hearts and reveal the truth within us. Gently uncover the lies we have believed about ourselves and replace them with Your truth. Heal the places shaped by shame, rejection, and fear, and teach us to see ourselves as You see us—wonderfully made and deeply loved. Amen.*



PSALM 140

Wednesday, April 1, 2026

Surrounded but Not Forsaken

"Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men; preserve me from violent men, who plan evil things in their heart and stir up wars continually." – Psalm 140:1-2 (ESV)

Psalm 140 is a cry from the depths, but not the depths of abstract despair—the depths of real danger. David is surrounded by enemies who plot his destruction, who sharpen their tongues like serpents, who set traps and dig pits to capture him. This isn't paranoia; it's reality. The threat is genuine. The danger is imminent. And David has no human solution.

We may not face ancient warriors with swords, but we understand being surrounded. The enemy prowls like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Temptation encircles us. Accusation hounds us. Our own failures ambush us from the past. Sin sets traps ahead. And in our most honest moments, we realize we cannot rescue ourselves from these depths.

The power of Psalm 140 is found in what David does when he is surrounded: he cries out. *"Rescue me, Lord."* Not *"I'll figure this out."* Not *"I just need to try harder."* Not *"Maybe if I'm more careful next time."* No—he acknowledges his complete dependence on God's intervention. He needs rescue, protection, and deliverance that only the Lord can provide.

This is the posture of Lent—honest desperation. We stop pretending we're fine. We stop maintaining the illusion of control. We admit that we're surrounded by forces stronger than ourselves and that we need a Savior.

And here's the stunning truth: God answers that cry. But not from a safe distance. Not by throwing us a rope from heaven. No, God enters the depths with us in the person of Jesus Christ. On Good Friday, Jesus was surrounded by enemies—religious leaders plotting His death, Roman soldiers mocking Him, crowds crying *"Crucify!"* Even His closest disciples abandoned Him. The traps closed in. The pit seemed complete.

But what looked like defeat was, in fact, victory. What seemed like Jesus being overcome by His enemies was Jesus overcoming our ultimate enemies: sin, death, and the devil. On the cross, surrounded by evil, Christ crushed the serpent's head. He disarmed the powers and authorities. He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Easter morning proves that no trap can hold the Son of God. No enemy can keep Him down. No depth is too deep for His resurrection power. And because we are united to Christ through faith, His victory becomes our victory. We are still surrounded, yes—but we are not forsaken. We are still in battle—but the war is already won.

David ends this psalm with confidence: *"Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name; the upright shall dwell in your presence."* (v. 13). That's our Easter hope. We who were surrounded by enemies will live in God's presence. We who cried out from the depths will stand in His light.

Prayer: Lord, I am surrounded by enemies I cannot defeat on my own. Temptation, sin, fear, and death close in around me. But I cry out to You, my Rescuer and Defender. Thank You for sending Jesus to be surrounded in my place, to face my enemies, to win my victory. As I journey through Lent, remind me that no depth is too deep for Your deliverance. Bring me to Easter morning with praise on my lips. In Jesus' name, Amen.



PSALM 123

Thursday, April 2, 2026

Looking to God for Mercy

"I lift my eyes to you...Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on us." - Psalm 123:1, 3 (NIV)

Do you remember as a child looking up at the clouds and trying to figure out what they looked like? I always remember seeing elephants and dinosaurs and maybe a funny looking fish! Looking up created a sense of wonder and comfort for me. I've found that it's when we look down that we start to become consumed with worry. When we start to focus our gaze earthward on ourselves we begin to become consumed with self doubt, self loathing, and self evaluation. Looking up reminds us that there is something bigger than ourselves, bigger than our problems, bigger than our worries. God created the whole universe and He also created us — uniquely and wonderfully made!

What do you see when you look up? The Jews 2000 years ago, when entering Jerusalem would look up and see their beautiful Temple where they could encounter the presence of God. Millions of Jewish pilgrims, including Jesus Himself, walked up these massive steps that were 200 feet wide so many people could ascend at the same time. The steps were designed in an alternating pattern of wide and narrow steps which forced pilgrims to walk with a slow, deliberate, and dignified pace as they approached the sacred temple. As they walked up these stairs, they would be reciting the Psalms, praising and worshipping God.

Looking up to ask for God's mercy is something that I think we have a hard time doing. God's mercy is so different from what we see in the world. In this world we seek justice! Give us what we deserve. Give them what they deserve, we say. Life is not fair, we say. But, true mercy is God not giving us what we truly deserve, because as sinners we deserve death. But it is through the blood of the cross, that we experience His mercy toward us in offering us redemption and new life. God's mercy is His faithful love and unending compassion toward us. This Lenten season as we walk to the cross reciting the psalms, let us remember the amazing gift He has given us through the blood of His Son. He has given us mercy. *"Look up and see the wonders of God!"* (Exodus 14:13) May you look up this day and experience God's wondrous mercy.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we look to You as undeserving sinners and yet You look upon us with compassion and mercy and through the blood of Your Son, you forgive us. Thank you, Jesus for Your unending mercy. Amen.



PSALM 130

Friday, April 3, 2026

The Scoreboard That Doesn't Work

"Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; ...If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?...But with you there is forgiveness... I wait for the Lord...and in His word I put my hope... With the Lord is unfailing love, and with Him is full redemption."

Psalm 130:1,3-4, 5, 7 (NIV)

I was sitting in the stands at a high school football game when, late in the second quarter, the scoreboard suddenly went blank. In an instant, I stopped watching the field and started guessing — what down is it, how many yards to go, how much time is left? I even forgot who was winning. The crowd grew restless. Thankfully, it came back on for the second half.

But there is one scoreboard I'm very glad doesn't work.

It's the one that would keep a running tally of my sins — every selfish thought, every sharp word, every excuse, every failure, every secret. If that scoreboard lit up with the full record, Psalm 130 asks the only honest question: "If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?" And the answer is: nobody. Not you. Not me.

That's why Psalm 130 is such a gift for Lent. It's the prayer you pray when life isn't tidy — when you can barely breathe: "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord." Out of the deep — where guilt clings, regret echoes, fear multiplies, and you wonder if you'll ever feel steady again.

Psalm 130 doesn't pretend the depths aren't real. It doesn't minimize sin or explain it away. It tells the truth — and then it refuses to let sin be the final score: "But with you there is forgiveness."

That sentence is the turning point. God brings truth into the light, not to shame you, but to rescue you. Lent is clarity, not cruelty. It's God's invitation to stop managing appearances and start being honest about what's pulling you under: the impatience that's becoming harshness, the worry that's turning into control, the comfort that's sliding into apathy, the habit you've hidden because you're afraid of what confession will cost.

So we take the Lenten posture: "*I wait for the Lord...and in His word I put my hope.*" Waiting isn't passive. It's trust. It's choosing God's Word over your feelings.

That's what Jesus gives you: certainty. The scoreboard of your sin doesn't get the last word, because Jesus took your record upon Himself. He carried your debt to the cross and canceled it there. So bring Him what's true — and receive what's truer still: "*With the Lord is unfailing love, and with him is full redemption.*"

Prayer: Lord Jesus, when sin, sorrow, and regret pull us under, meet us in the depths and teach us to cry out to You, waiting for You with hope. Thank You that our condemning record was carried to the cross; hold us steady in Your forgiveness, and let Your unfailing love be the final word over our lives. We ask in Your precious name. Amen.



PSALM 147

Saturday, April 4, 2026

He Calls You By Name

*"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.
He determines the number of the stars; He gives to all of them their names."*
Psalm 147:3-4 (ESV)

At first glance, these two verses seem disconnected. What does healing the brokenhearted have to do with naming the stars? Why does the psalmist move from intimate personal care to cosmic astronomical power in the same breath? But that's precisely the point. The God who numbers and names every star in the universe—billions upon billions of them—also knows your name. The God who upholds the cosmos with His power also tenderly binds up your wounds. He is both transcendent and immanent, both infinitely powerful and intimately personal.

During Lent, we confront our brokenness. These forty days are designed to strip away our pretenses and bring us face to face with the fractures in our souls. We are broken by sin—our own and others'. We are wounded by loss, betrayal, disappointment, and death. And if we're honest, we often feel lost in the vastness of the universe, like forgotten specks of dust floating in the darkness. But Psalm 147 declares something revolutionary: the same God who names the stars knows your brokenness. You are not lost in the cosmic shuffle. You are not too small to matter. You are not beyond His notice or beneath His care.

This is the God who came to us in Jesus Christ. He who holds the universe together by the word of His power became small enough to be held in Mary's arms. He who created the stars allowed Himself to be nailed to a cross. He who numbers the heavens let Himself be numbered among sinners. Why? To heal the brokenhearted. To bind up wounds. To pull us from depths we cannot escape.

On Good Friday, Jesus' heart was literally broken for us. The soldiers pierced His side, and blood and water flowed out—medical evidence of a ruptured heart. He knew our brokenness so intimately that He became broken Himself. He descended into our deepest wound—death—and there He defeated it from the inside. But Easter changes everything. The tomb couldn't hold Him. Death couldn't bind Him. And now He lives to heal and restore all who come to Him. The risen Christ still bears the scars of His wounds, transformed into marks of glory and love. Our brokenness, brought to Him, becomes the place where His grace shines brightest.

The psalm continues: *"The LORD lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground."* (v. 6). Lent teaches us humility—we acknowledge our brokenness, our need, our inability to save ourselves. And that humility positions us to receive what Easter offers: healing, restoration, resurrection life. You are not forgotten. The God who calls the stars by name calls you by name. He sees your brokenness. He knows your wounds. And He is mighty to save.

Prayer: Great and tender God, You who number the stars also number the hairs on my head. You who hold galaxies in Your hand also hold my broken heart. Thank You for seeing me, knowing me, calling me by name. This Lenten season, I bring You my wounds—the ones I've caused and the ones inflicted on me. Heal me. Bind me up. Lead me to Easter morning where Your resurrection power makes all things new. In Jesus' name, Amen.



2026 LENTEN WORSHIP

ASH WEDNESDAY

February 18 @ 4pm & 6pm

LENTEN WORSHIP

February 25-March 25, Wednesdays @ 4pm

Soup Suppers @ 5pm

PALM SUNDAY

March 28 & 29

Traditional • Saturday 4pm

Sunday 8 & 9:30am

Contemporary 11am

MAUNDY THURSDAY

April 2 @ 4pm & 6pm with Communion

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

April 2 & 3 @ 3-7pm

A Self-Guided Experience

GOOD FRIDAY CANTATA

April 3 @ 4pm & 6pm

Rutter Requiem, Choir & Orchestra

EASTER SERVICES

April 4 & 5

Sunrise • 6am Outdoor Communion

Traditional • Saturday 4pm

Sunday 8 & 9:30am

Contemporary • 11am



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