



# Devotional Guide for the Season of Lent 2017

*As we journey together through the season of Lent, this devotional guide is meant to serve as weekly preparation for the Sunday to come. Email subscribers will receive each week's devotion early in the week prior, giving them several days to study the Scripture passage for the week and meditate on the questions, hymns, and prayers provided.*

*You are encouraged to spend the days leading up to each Sunday in prayer and meditation with the Scripture, opening your hearts to hear what message God may have for you. We hope that this guide will be a blessing to you, and that your season of Lent may be a time in which you are renewed and refreshed.*

*We suggest that you use this guide in this manner:*

*Day One: Read the Scripture and commentary. Circle words and underline phrases that speak to you. Reflect on them.*

*Day Two: Read the Scripture again and focus on one of the questions.*

*Day Three: Read the Scripture again and focus on another of the questions.*

*Day Four: Read through the hymn lyrics, and sing them if you so desire. How does the hymn deepen the message of the Scripture?*

*Conclude each day by praying the prayer.*

## March 5th, 2017 - First Sunday of Lent

### Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

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This week, we're looking at the Gospel of Matthew account of the temptation of Jesus by the devil in the wilderness. The common placement of this story in Jesus' ministry narrative is immediately after his baptism by John, but before his ministry begins in earnest.

Being led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted almost seems to serve as a sign that this was a test of Jesus' own spirit and will prior to his going among the people, proclaiming a new way of living and following God. He of course "passed the test" with flying colors, but not before the devil provided him with some very enticing alternatives.

## Questions to Consider

- 1) What are some of the "enticing alternatives" we are given in life? Do we ever consider giving into them instead of persisting in our walk with Christ?
- 2) In what ways do we ourselves sometimes act as the tempter? Do we ever do or say things that might be seen as putting God to the test?
- 3) In a world where consumerism and possessions have become a sort of deity unto themselves, what in our lives sometimes consumes our attention? Is it possible that this becomes the focus of our "worship", leaving God behind?

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## Hymn for the Week - "How Firm a Foundation"

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord  
Is laid for your faith in God's excellent word!  
What more can be said than to you God has said,  
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

The soul that on Jesus still leans for repose,  
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!

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## Prayer for the Week

Most holy God, we confess that there are times that we turn our eyes away from you. We ask that you give us strength to face the temptations of each day, that we might not fall down before the things of this world, but worship you alone. May we remember to not put you to the test, but to always follow in your paths. These things we pray in the name of your Son, Jesus the Christ, AMEN.

## March 12th, 2017 - Second Sunday of Lent

### John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

“Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

This week’s text is perhaps one of the best known among people of faith around the world. In verse 16, Jesus speaks the words that made up one of the first verses that many Christians memorized - “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.”

Though many take this verse as a standalone moment, it is important to place it in the greater context of Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus. A Pharisee who has come to not only find Jesus’ teachings intriguing, but who eventually becomes a dedicated follower of Jesus, he finds Jesus to gain more understanding of what he is saying.

Much like Nicodemus, we sometimes have difficulty understanding the deeper meaning behind Jesus’ teachings as we see them in the Gospel. But like Nicodemus, if we open our minds and our spirits to receive these teachings, the voice of God can help us discern what our human minds cannot on their own begin to comprehend.

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### Questions to Consider

- 1) Jesus told Nicodemus that in order to enter the kingdom of God, one must be “born again” of water and Spirit. What does it mean for us to live as though we have been “born again”?
- 2) We live in a culture that has become very skeptical and adversarial of anything that in any way stands in opposition to our beliefs. So too did Nicodemus, as he was a Pharisee - one of the religious scholars of the time. What can we do in our lives to be more like Nicodemus and be willing to examine other beliefs, even if they stand in opposition to our own?

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## Hymn for the Week - "Be Thou My Vision"

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;  
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art  
Thou my best thought by day or by night,  
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;  
I ever with thee, and thou with me, Lord;  
Thou my redeemer, my love thou hast won,  
Thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise,  
Thou mine inheritance, now and always,  
Thou and thou only, first in my heart,  
Great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.

Great God of heaven, my victory won,  
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

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### Prayer for the Week

God of all wisdom and grace, we pray that you would open our eyes, our ears, our hearts, and our minds. Let us be receptive to those things we find astonishing and unbelievable, knowing that your grace is beyond our human comprehension. Let us be like Nicodemus, willing to set aside our own skepticism to come before Christ. Grant us the new birth of water and your Spirit, we pray, given to us by one in whose name we pray, Jesus Christ, our Lord, AMEN.

## March 19th, 2017 - Third Sunday of Lent

### John 4:5-42

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here,

when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or, “Why are you speaking with her?” Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” They left the city and were on their way to him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”

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The woman at the well. A story we’ve heard time and again, it demonstrates that Jesus wasn’t just interested in one set of people, but all. As a Jewish man who was acknowledged as a teacher among his people, he shouldn’t have even been anywhere near a Samaritan woman who had been divorced repeatedly, but yet, there he was, where he “didn’t belong”, carrying out the ministry for which he was sent to earth.

We have to remember that this was not a “one-and-done” sort of thing for Jesus, either. He often associated with the outcasts, the marginalized, the forgotten of society. Whether they were lepers, tax collectors, Roman centurions, or prostitutes, Jesus made time for everybody with whom he came into contact. His love knew no bounds, and his ministry was for all people.

If we are to live our lives as Jesus did, then we, too, must minister to those people with whom we would not commonly associate. Don’t let societal pressures hold you back - be like Jesus at the well, and don’t be afraid to bring the good news to all.

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### **Questions to Consider**

- 1) Living lives modeled after Christ can often call us to do things with which we’re not ordinarily comfortable. How might God be stretching you beyond your comfort zone?
- 2) Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman of “living water” that would quench our thirst forever, yet so often, we forsake the living water in favor of the things of this world. What changes can we make in our lives to seek out God’s living water first?
- 3) What constitutes living water for you?

## Hymn for the Week - "Woman in the Night"

Woman in the night, spent from giving birth,  
Guard our precious light; peace is on the earth!

*Come and join the song, women, children, men;  
Jesus makes us free to live again!*

Woman in the crowd, creeping up behind,  
Touching is allowed, seek and you will find!

Woman at the well, question the Messiah;  
Find your friends and tell; drink your heart's desire!

Woman at the feast, let the righteous stare;  
Come and go in peace; love him with your hair!

Woman in the house, nurtured to be meek,  
Leave your second place; listen, think, and speak!

Women on the road, from your sickness freed,  
Witness and provide, joining word and deed!

Women on the hill, stand when men have fled!  
Christ needs loving still, though your hope is dead!

Women in the dawn, care and spices bring;  
Earliest to mourn; earliest to sing!

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## Prayer for the Week

O God, you know the ways of our hearts, and you know that far too often, we both ignore the Samaritan woman at the well and seek for the water that this world provides, rather than accepting the living water that you give to us. We ask that you grant us the wisdom to drink deeply of the living water, that we may thirst no more, and the grace to be as Christ to the marginalized, the outcast, and the downtrodden. Let our hearts be after the one in whose name we pray, our Lord, Jesus Christ, AMEN.

## March 26th, 2017 - Fourth Sunday of Lent

### W.A. Mozart, *Requiem*, "Dies Iræ" - Luke 21:25-36

"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

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Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was a brilliant and troubled man. Composing and performing before European royalty as early as the age of 5, he composed more than 600 works, his compositions being acknowledged as the peak of several musical genres during the classical period. A contemporary of Franz Josef Haydn, Mozart also served as an influence on the early works of Ludwig van Beethoven.

Mozart died in December 1791, at the rather young age of 35, and though no firm cause of death was ever determined, it is widely believed that self-neglect played a significant role. Before his death, he had completed all of the choral parts of the **Requiem Mass**, though the symphonic accompaniment was still in progress at the time of his death. Numerous composers have undertaken various completions of the symphonic portions of the mass in the just over 225 years since.

The portion of the mass on which we focus here is based on a section from the 21st chapter of the Gospel of Luke, about the end of days. Though typically read on the first Sunday in Advent, it seems appropriate to look at this passage as we draw near Holy Week. The Son of Man cannot return to Earth until he has first died, risen from the grave, and ascended into heaven. And so it is that the “Dies Iræ” warns us to be on guard, for nobody knows the time and place - none but God alone.

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### Questions to Consider

- 1) Throughout Lent, we as a church have been engaged in a congregational sabbath. Mozart was an acknowledged workaholic who is believed to have taken such poor care of himself as to have gone to an early grave. What lessons can we draw from Mozart’s life when considering our own need for Sabbath and adequate self care?
- 2) Too often, our concerns about life and its problems prevent us from focusing on God. What self care steps can we take to ensure that we are open and receptive to God’s presence at even the most unexpected times?
- 3) On Ash Wednesday, we were reminded that “from dust we have come and to dust we shall return”. This Sunday, we will hear a requiem for the dead. How can an awareness of our mortality be an impetus to live our lives more fully?

### Hymn for the Week - “O for a Thousand Tongues”

O for a thousand tongues to sing  
my great Redeemer’s praise,  
the glories of my God and King,  
the triumphs of God’s grace!

Jesus, the name that charms our fears,  
that bids our sorrows cease;  
’tis music in the sinner’s ears,  
’tis life, and health, and peace!

My loving Savior and my God,  
assist me to proclaim,  
to spread through all the earth abroad  
the honors of thy name.

Glory to God and praise and love  
be ever, ever given  
by saints below and saints above,  
the church in earth and heaven.

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### Prayer for the Week

Heavenly Creator, grant us peace, we pray. Grant us rest from the worries of the world, that we may set our eyes upon you. Grant us respite from the continuous work of our day-to-day lives, that we may be prepared and open to your presence. May our hearts remain open that we may always receive your Spirit. We ask that you grant us these things that we may always be in the service of the one in whose name we pray, our Lord, Jesus Christ, AMEN.

## April 2nd, 2017 - Fifth Sunday of Lent

### Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord."

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act," says the Lord.

"These bones cry out, these bones cry out to You to live and move." The plaintive cry of Christian artist Michael Gungor in his 2011 song "Dry Bones" reaches out to us from Ezekiel's prophecies. The dead, dry bones of Israel lay amidst the valley of Ezekiel's vision, scattered by Babylon during the exile, crying out to the Lord for new life. Here, Ezekiel witnesses God speak to the bones of Israel, and sees them return to life once more.

In this passage, God promises a resurrection, a return to life for the people Israel. God instructs Ezekiel to prophesy hope to the people, telling them that they will be returned to their land and they will be given new life, and so they will know that the Lord God has spoken to them.

How often do we look at hopeless situations and imagine that God could not possibly be present within them? A valley full of dry bones would seem to be the most desolate of places, and yet, even there, we see that God can move and work to give new life to God's people. "Dry Bones" closes with the words, "Jesus, You're the one who saves us, constantly creates us into something new." The new life we have been given through Christ is a new creation - dry bones given flesh once more through grace and mercy.

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### Questions to Consider

- 1) Lent is often a time during which we reduce ourselves to the barest of minimums, and indeed, that has been especially true for us during our Lenten Sabbath this year. In what ways can we look forward to God putting new flesh on our bones as Lent approaches its end?
- 2) When we see desolate situations where there appears to be no hope, how can we draw upon the promise that God will speak new life into the dry bones? What can give us hope where there seems to be no hope at all?



## Hymn for the Week - "Spirit of the Living God"

Spirit of the living God,  
fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the living God,  
fall afresh on me.

Melt me, mold me,  
fill me, use me.

Spirit of the living God,  
fall afresh on me.

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### Prayer for the Week

Our God, our bones cry out, our bones cry out to you to live and move, to make us new. Give us the faith to see the new life being breathed into the dry bones, to see the new flesh covering them as they move in your promise once more. Grant us our own hope in the times of dryness and desolation, that we may know the promise of renewed life when all seems lost. We give you thanks for the new life received through the one in whose name we pray, Jesus Christ, our Lord, AMEN.

## April 9th, 2017 - Palm Sunday

### Matthew 21:1-11

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

"Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

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"Hosanna, hosanna!" cry the crowds as Jesus enters the city. He is acclaimed as the Son of David, the one who comes in the name of the Lord, and blessings are called upon him from the highest heavens. The people get caught up in a whirlwind of emotions, riding high on the adrenaline of the people around them.

And yet, imagine: in a mere five days' time, those

“Hosannas” will become “Crucify him!” In an about-face as unlikely and unpredictable as anything else we can imagine, the very people proclaiming Jesus as the one who comes in the name of the Lord will denounce him as a criminal and call for his most horrifying and painful death at the hands of their Roman occupiers.

It is all too easy to get caught up in those whirlwinds, to proclaim the Gospel with our words, and then walk out of the church and deny God by the way we live our lives. We must always be on guard, remembering to live our lives in the world but not of it, keeping watch over our “Hosannas”, so that they never again become, “Crucify him.”

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**Questions to Consider**

- 1) There is a phenomenon known as a “mountaintop experience”, wherein we have what seems to be an incredibly powerful and close encounter with God, that we swear would transform our lives forever; however, much like those proclaiming loud Hosannas on the road to Jerusalem, we find our mountaintop experience quickly fading and becoming a mere memory. Why do we allow these experiences to fade from truth to memory, and what can we do to keep them strong and active in our lives?
- 2) Sometimes, we just tend to go along with the crowd, whether that means shouting, “Hosanna,” or crying, “Crucify him!” As Christians, we are called to be in the world but not of the world. How can we separate ourselves from the crowd, being faithful to the lives to which we are called while still living in community with those all around us?
- 3) What can we do in our lives to maintain our own faith, ensuring that our “Hosannas” indeed never become “Crucify him”?

**Hymn for the Week - “All Glory, Laud and Honor”**

All glory, laud, and honor, to you, Redeemer, King,  
To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring!  
You are a child of Israel, great David’s greater son;  
You ride in lowly triumph, Messiah, blessed one!

The company of angels are praising you on high,  
And we with all creation in chorus make reply.  
The people of the Hebrews with palms before you went;  
Our praise and prayer and anthems before you we present.  
To you before your passion they sang their hymns of praise;  
To you, now high exalted, our melody we raise.  
As you received their praises, now hear us as we pray.  
Since you delight in goodness, rule in our hearts today.

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**Prayer for the Week**

O God, guard our hearts, we pray. Preserve us from our failings, keep us from the snares of the world. Guide us away from the calls of crucifixion, and give us joy as we proclaim our loud Hosannas. Grant us the strength, we pray, to remain always faithful. Hosanna, blessed is the one in whose name we pray, he who comes in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ, AMEN.

## April 14th, 2017 - Good Friday

### Luke 23:34

Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.

### Luke 23:43

Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.

### John 19:26-27

Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your mother.

### Mark 15:34

*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*

My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

### John 19:28

I thirst.

### John 19:30

It is finished.

### Luke 23:46

Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit.

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These passages are commonly referred to jointly as “The Seven Last Words of Christ”. Though coming from three different Gospels, together, they make up the narrative that we have come to know of Jesus’ death on the cross. It is a remarkable journey of a few hours’ time - Jesus asks forgiveness for those crucifying him; he grants pardon to the thief hanging to his right; he places his mother, Mary, and his apostle, John, into each other’s care; he cries out to God, quoting the 22nd Psalm, asking why he has been forsaken; he expresses his physical, human need for something to drink; he acknowledges the end of his struggle; and he commits his spirit into the care of God.

For us as Christians, we have a tendency to want to jump ahead in the narrative to Sunday morning, when

Jesus rises from the tomb, triumphant and glorious. And yet, it is vital that we recall the hours he spent on the cross. We must remember that our salvation was not given to us without struggle - there was great darkness before there could be light.

It vitally important that we remember this in today’s world. We hear so often that great darkness has fallen upon our land and our world. And yet, we remember that even in the greatest darkness of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, we can look forward to the light that is coming, in just days.

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### Question to Consider

What gives us hope in the darkness? When we feel that we have been forsaken, how do we commit ourselves to God?

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### Hymn for the Week -

#### “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”

When I survey the wondrous cross,  
on which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

See, from his head, his hands, his feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all!

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### Prayer for the Week

O God, you guide us. You protect us. You lift us up.  
Into your hands, we commit our spirits. AMEN.