

*Prayers of  
The Passion*

*Lent 2002*

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The Passion*

*Devotions for Lent 2002  
February 13-March 31*

# *Zion Lutheran Church Stratford, Wisconsin*

*Pastor: Sue Eidahl  
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## *Prayers of The Passion 2002 Lenten Series*

For many centuries, the Christian Church has set aside a season to prepare for Easter. The forty days of Lent beginning at Ash Wednesday are reminiscent of the forty years the Israelites spent in the wilderness and the forty days Jesus spent in the desert in prayer after his Baptism.

Take time to read, think, pray and meditate along with your neighbors and friends from Zion this Lenten season. I am sure you will be blessed by their faith journeys. Each of us has experienced a life-giving faith in Jesus Christ in a little different way. People and experiences shape our life and our faith. This devotional aid is an excellent way for all of us to add to our spiritual growth during Lent.

Let the words of God, the witness of fellow members and the Spirit of God speaking through them to call us to prayer, reflection and spiritual searching and growth in our Christian faith. Thank you to all the writers for their dedicated and hard work, as well as to those who initiated the project, and to Wendy for the typing and compiling.

Read on and be blessed on your journey through Lent!

*Pastor Sue*

### *MIDWEEK LENTEN SERVICES*

Wednesday night services will center on the "Prayers of the Passion." Prayers offered up either by Christ, or to him, as he made his fateful way to the cross... and beyond. Even two thousand years later these prayers speak to us.

All Wednesday Evening services begin at 5:30 p.m. and are followed by soup and sandwich suppers. (Free will offering)

**February 13** – *Ash Wednesday Service – Imposition of Ashes – Holy Communion – "Let This*

*Cup Pass”*

**February 20** – *“Why Have You Forsaken Me”*

**February 27** - *“Father, Forgive Them”*

**March 6** – *“Jesus, Remember Me”*

**March 13** – *“Into Your Hands I Commend My Spirit”*

**March 20** – *“Simon, I Have Prayed For You”*

## *HOLY WEEK*

### **PALM SUNDAY**

March 24 – 9:00 a.m.

*“Palms and Passion”*

### **MAUNDY THURSDAY**

March 28 – 7:00 p.m.

First Communion for Fifth Graders

### **GOOD FRIDAY ECUMENICAL WORSHIP**

March 29 – 7:00 p.m. at Zion Lutheran Church

### *EASTER*

March 31

6:30 a.m. – Sunrise Service

Holy Communion – *“Three Gifts of Easter”*

7:30 a.m. – Breakfast

9:00 a.m. – Festival Service

Holy Communion *“Hear the Good News”*

## *ASH WEDNESDAY*

*February 13*

*Psalms 51:10*

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

The sentence, which is basic to all penitential prayer in the Old Testament, is the simple confession, “I have sinned.” Psalm 51 is the fullest expression of that sentence in the Bible.

Luther observed that whoever first called it a penitential psalm “knew what he was doing...” Here the doctrine of true repentance is set forth before us. This Psalm is said in full, or in part, more often in worship and devotion than any other Scripture. It has long been used by the church as a proper psalm to introduce the season of Lent, often used as a prayer of confession.

Our verse for today, verse 01, contains ritual language in prayer. The ritual verbs (wash, cleanse, purge) provide a way of speaking of God’s direct action on the person. On Ash Wednesday, God calls us to “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning and rend your hearts, not your garments.” We can do this very thing because of God’s action toward us in love. He will create in you a pure heart and he will put a new and loyal spirit in you.

*Pastor Sue Eidal*

*February 14*

*Psalm 1:1*

*Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers.*

This passage makes me reflect on our final destiny in life. We are reassured here, that by obeying God’s law and living a Godly life, we will not only prosper and enjoy a happy and healthy life here on earth, but will have eternal life in Heaven. God’s word is here to guide us, but the choice of which path we follow in life is ours to make.

*Terry S.*

*February 15*

*Isaiah 58:8*

*Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing shall spring up quickly;  
your vindicator shall go before you,  
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.*

Seek the Lord. How do we do that? Fasting or other rituals won’t let the others know what is in our hearts. Only by sharing all that we have, all that we are, with others will our “light break forth like the dawning.” What do we get in return? When we give of ourselves, God will heal and protect us at all times. He will be with us always. “*The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.*”

*Marge K.*

*February 16*

*Luke 5:32*

*I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.*

Man and sin are inseparable. Jesus calls each and every one of us to repent. Jesus is there

for us to lead us, guide us, show us the way – especially when we think we don't need him. Heed his call.

*Lori U.*

*February 17*

*Mark 1:13*

*He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan;  
And he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.*

The three temptations in the desert were precisely fit for our culture. Be relevant: do something that the world can praise you for like making bread out of stones. Be spectacular: jump from the tower so that everybody can see you and you can be on television because you are so important. Be powerful: kneel before me and I will give power over the lands and people.

But Jesus said, "NO!" because he knew God's way was not to be relevant or spectacular or powerful. God's way comes to us in the Beatitudes: Blessed are the poor in Spirit, blessed are the humble, blessed are the meek, and blessed are the peacemakers.

Jesus is our example of blessedness; his face shines with the love of the Father. He is the image of god that appeared among us and continues to shine through us. That is our way. And that's the way of glory.

*Tammy B.*

*February 18*

*Leviticus 19:2*

*Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.*

Leviticus is not a favorite book of the Bible for most Lutherans. Our faith is built on the existence of a loving and forgiving God. In confirmation, I learned about Justification by Faith. I also learned that through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, we are granted automatic entry into the Kingdom of Heaven. The rules and laws commanded by God in Leviticus represent a much different God than this. In Leviticus 19:2, we are commanded to live a Holy life. The entire book provides the rules on how we should live our lives on a daily basis. Do this, don't do that or suffer the consequences. These consequences are oftentimes quite severe.

My faith is grounded in the knowledge that I have been marked with the cross of Christ forever. Nothing will ever change this. However, in Leviticus 19:2, I am reminded that although I may not be able to live my life in God's image, I should nonetheless strive for this "Holy Life" on a daily basis.

*John H.*

*February 19*

*Psalms 34:4*

*I sought the Lord, and he answered me,*

*and delivered me from all my fears.*

As I raise my children and as each child has reached a milestone in their lives, I have expressed to them that there are only three things in this world they need to keep with them.

1. Keep Jesus Christ in their life.
2. The love of their family is always with them.
3. They can survive anything life throws at them.

Keeping Jesus Christ active in their life the rest will fall into place. Life is not something to be feared. It is a great adventure with Christ at your side.

*Kathy B.*

*February 20*

*Psalm 51:2*

*Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin.*

The background of the Psalm on forgiveness is David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba. David realizes his sin and cries out in bold phrases; "blot out my transgressions;" "wash away all my iniquity;" "cleanse me from my sin." David is crying out for full forgiveness. He is aware that he does not deserve God's mercy, but he appeals to God's unfailing love and compassion.

I too am painfully aware that my sins are ever before me. When I am brutally honest with the Lord about specific sins in my life, I too need God's mercy and love. This kind of confession leads to a fresh start on the journey of life.

*Kelly O.*

*February 21*

*Psalm 138:8*

*The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.*

David praised God for the truth of his word, and had confidence in God. I often find myself not giving the praise and thanksgiving for spiritual and material things, which I have received. I must not rely on my own version of righteousness, as I know that God will work out his plan in my life, and not abandon me.

*Ruth S.*

*February 22*

*Psalms 130:1*

*Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.*

Psalms were written over a period of a thousand years...and from what I have learned, they were songs or chants that worshipers sang as they were coming and going to the temple.

For me, the most emotional and deepest way I can connect to God is through music. In Psalm 130 we hear the cry of discouragement and hopelessness among the people of God. And we know that feeling, too. We come to church looking for hope and guidance. We ask for it through prayer and in song. I want to share the lyrics of one of my most favorite songs. When I hear it, or sing it, it gives me such a sense of relief to know that God is there for me and all I have to do is ask for it.

Be My Home

By Handt Hanson/Paul Murakami

Be my Savior, Be my heart's delight

Be my vision, Be my guiding light.

Storms may press against me,

Threaten to prevail;

Be my shelter from the storm,

Be the love that keeps me warm,

Be my Savior, be my light;

Be my Home.

*Peg O.*

*February 23*

*Matthew 5:44*

*But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*

What is the core message of the Gospel? It is, "Love your enemies." When we are still dealing with all our own needs and anxieties and fears, we have to divide the world into enemies and friends. But God doesn't do that. God showers the rain over the good as well as over the bad. God doesn't need to divide the world into categories.

God wants us to do the same, but we can only do it if we believe in God's unconditional love for us. If we are secure in his love, we will be able to reach out to others, both enemies and friends.

To love our enemies is the core message of the Gospel because it is a reflection of the way God loves you.

*February 24*

*Mark 9:7*

*Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!"*

The Lord shows us how mighty he is in this verse. The clouds blotting out the sun as he is speaking, reminds me of the light at the end of the tunnel.

The whiteness of his image was very frightening to his followers, but they then heard a voice from the clouds saying, "This is My Beloved Son, Listen to Him."

They were amazed at what was happening and only Jesus was left behind with Peter, James and John on the mountaintop.

"Beautiful Savior," "King of Creations" and "How Great Thou Art" are the beautiful songs that are with me when I read this verse.

*Eileen H.*

*February 25*

*Luke 6:36*

*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

I've always felt the word "merciful" as being a powerful, demanding word that was expected of us as Christians from the time we were born.

We use the word merciful and mercy in our service every Sunday, in the Gospel, and in our prayers.

I've always felt the word "merciful" was also to be thankful for what God our Father has done and given us. But the word merciful means compassion. We live with compassion every day of our lives, for our family, friends and community. By being kind, concerned and grateful for those who have touched our lives, every day and even that complete stranger at the gas station or grocery store that smiles at us. So it's very important to always remember to give compassion to our Lord, for he always has shown and given us compassion unconditionally. Especially now during Lent for the Lord has given us the greatest compassion, "His only Son," who died on the cross for our sins.

May God's Blessings Find You.

*Esther M.*

*February 26*

*Isaiah 1:18*

*Come now, let us argue it out, says the Lord:  
though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow;  
though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.*

This verse reminds me of the importance of respecting all people equally whether they are

poor or homeless and the need for us to be kind to everyone.

If we believe in the Lord and obey him we will be rewarded accordingly. No matter what our past has held for us, if we truly want to repent and change our way, God will be there to help us. All we need to do is ask for his guidance.

*Georgia T.*

*February 27*

*Psalim 31:14*

*But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God."*

How easy it is to be faithful when things are going well in my life. To acknowledge God's presence and say with confidence, "I trust you, Lord!" But how difficult it is to hold on to that presence and to fully trust when life serves me a heaping portion of adversity. Then my exclamation changes tone... "Where are you, Lord? I trusted you."

I have tried very hard over the past few years to memorize more scripture, especially short, one-liners like this Psalm. So I am constantly recalling God's promises to help me through my day. Verses like this are perfect to commit to memory and have handy as little reminders of God's caring presence. This verse pretty much says it all...short and sweet!

So many times I've questioned God's plan. When would recalling a verse like this come in handy? Many times. Facing health or aging concerns? Psalm 31:14. Are you struggling in your work or school life? "I trust in you, O Lord!" Difficulties in your family or in a personal relationship? "You are my God." Spiritual, Financial, Emotional, Physical? Psalm 31:14!

God is always present, in our triumphs and joys, in our struggles and sorrows. He is our God and we need to remember to trust in Him.

*June H.*

*February 28*

*Jeremiah 17:5*

*Thus says the Lord: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the Lord.*

In the verse, I believe, God is telling us that those who put their hope and trust in earthly things, rather than in Him, will be complete and miserable failures. We will be punished and cannot succeed by ourselves, or by any other means, if we turn our backs on God. In today's world of so much hate and uncertainty, we need him more than ever. When we put our life in His hands, we need not worry. He will see to all our needs, joy and contentment, now and forever.

*Janet C.*

*March 1*

*Matthew 21:45*

*When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them.*

The Pharisees were indignant when they heard Jesus speaking about them. They didn't want to believe that they were not the righteous people they thought they were. So we must think then, are we the righteous people we think we are? We go to church, we give our offerings and do good deeds. Aren't we righteous people? We start to think that we can make it to heaven by ourselves because we deserve it. But not one of us will ever live eternally without Jesus and his death on the cross. Jesus speaks not only to the Pharisees, but also to us in this verse.

*Katie L.*

*March 2*

*Deuteronomy 4:9*

*But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children.*

Only be careful and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.

In order to understand this verse, I had to read the verses leading up to it. It turns out, Moses was warning the people of Israel to follow God and his Ten Commandments. Moses was not coming with them into the Promised Land; therefore, he was doing his best to encourage them not to forget all the hardships they had suffered while traveling through the wilderness. He reminded them that they had to tell their story to their children so their children wouldn't take their lives for granted. He wanted his people to remember and follow God's commandments.

The question is, how do we tie this into our lives? I can't say I've traveled through miles and miles of desert! But we all have been through difficult times be it physical or emotional. It is at those times that we remember what we were taught as children; to trust God and to pray. It seems natural in times of trouble to turn to God.

What is hard to remember is to follow His commandments throughout our everyday lives. I think that's what Moses was talking about when he said, "Watch yourselves closely..." It's easy to forget Dad's lows but we must remember all he has done for us.

Moses reminds me of a parent sending his children off to school. "Be nice to other kids. Don't hit. Respect the teacher. And the most important thing...Follow the rules!" Okay, maybe that's the simplistic version, but it makes sense.

When we send our children off to school we cross our fingers and toes that they will remember some of the things we have taught them. Sometimes they may question why they have to follow the rules. We try to explain to them that these rules will help them to be better people and make our little part of the world a better place.

We once were those children heading off to school and it looks like we still are. Didn't someone once say that "life is like a classroom?" Well, kids, let's follow God's rules.

*Melanie N.*

*March 7*

*Psalms 95:7*

*For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.  
O that today you would listen to His voice!*

The psalmist almost explodes with praise in this moving enthronement psalm. He sings for joy to the Lord and worships the very one providing security and deliverance. Next he moves to celebrate God's marvelous wonderful creativity, for he is the "great King above all gods," who made the mountain peaks, the sea, and the depth of the earth.

There are times when we feel this same need for exaltation. We respond by bowing down or kneeling to show the awe that fills us. God is so great, so awesome that we wonder about our small offering of praise. Yet he is also my tender shepherd and desires to have intimacy with the people of his pasture.

*March 8*

*Hosea 14:1*

*Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God,  
for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.*

I think the key to this passage is the word "return." For we all have started our lives with God on the day of our baptism. Then we stray away through our daily sin, or as it says, stumbled because of our iniquities.

I think it's important the author uses the word 'stumble', for just like a runner in a race you stumble, but still can finish the race. So we daily need to get our footing solid again in Jesus and continue on. This is the struggle we all face, to reach that goal we all seek. To finish that race of life with the Lord at the finish line, to give us a welcoming hug and say, "Great job, I knew you could do it."

*Dan T.*

*March 9*

*Luke 18:14*

*"I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."*

This scripture is the culmination of the famous parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Verse 14 standing by itself creates a very strong image of the lesson we all need to hear and heed regarding our station in life, and how we approach this concern.

Additional insight is gained by reading "into" verse 14, beginning at verse 10. The Pharisee and the tax collector, paragons of power in their day, might well be compared to the present day blustering CEO's who boastfully declare how much they have given to causes... (as witness present day headlines...) as compared to the "unsung" workers, who late in their lives

have been discovered to have given of themselves and their resources to a cause, without fanfare.

Taken by itself, verse 14, refers to the quiet humble doer, who in deep sincerity and without notice becomes the one who will be exalted in God's sight.

Might it be that this is how we should look at ourselves as we pray to God that his gifts to us might not be squandered in useless application and headlines, but that we might recognize ourselves as to where we are as we pray for forgiveness...for as the scripture says..."the exalted will be humbled, and the humble will be exalted."

*Elmer H.*

*March 10*

*Ephesians 2:8*

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing;  
it is the gift of God.*

My parents' example and persistence in teaching me the importance of the love of Jesus in my life taught me many things.

The main lesson was that I am saved by the Grace of God. When I perform good deeds without boasting they will not, alone, save me or obtain for me the Kingdom of Heaven. This is only accomplished with faith and a desire to do the Lord's will. This must be complete with a simple childlike love and trust in Jesus. This has become my foundation and cornerstone upon which I build my life.

*Ed J.*

*March 11*

*Isaiah 65:17*

*For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth;  
the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.*

This was a difficult time for Israel. The Israelites were allowed to return home from exile in Babylon after the Persian King Cyrus took over control of the Babylonian Empire. But the home they came to was in ruins. Their beloved temple destroyed. The initial joy of the people turned to bickering and uncertainty. People began to turn away from their faith. Hope and peace seemed distant and far off. Then Isaiah begins to speak to the people of peace, hope and joy. He speaks about all the things that God is about to change.

Most of us don't like change. Change is difficult. Change may bring uncertainty to our lives. Change can be frightening. Yet, in this verse God tells us everything is going to be made new, everything is going to change. How does God do this? Through us and through the ministry that Zion offers.

Following is a story I read a few years ago:

"It seems that during the time when long distance phone calls weren't very practical and quite expensive, a woman went on a long trip to New York. She was an antique lover and spent some time looking at the various antique stores. During her visit to one store, she saw a chair that

she fell in love with. It was beautiful until she looked at the price tag. The owner wouldn't come down on the price. She decided not to buy it; her husband wouldn't spend that much money. So she went looking at all the other shops. But she couldn't get that chair out of her mind. So, she sent her husband a telegram explaining about the chair and the price. She received her reply "No price too high." She knew her husband loved her but had no idea that it was this deeply. She purchased the chair and headed home.

When she got home, she rushed into the house and started thanking her husband. He was startled and confused and then got angry that she bought the chair. When he finally calmed down, she unfolded the telegram and said, "I only did what I thought you wanted me to do. The telegram said, 'No price too high.'" And he said, "But that's not what I sent. I told them to send, 'NO! Price too high.'" (Author: Rev. John Aymond)

What a change one little punctuation mark can make! Let us be God's punctuation mark in His ever-changing world.

*Janice L.*

*March 12*

*Psalms 46:1*

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*

This familiar verse reminds me of the saying, "Before you go to bed, give your troubles to God. He will be up all night anyway." In other words, God is always with us and will be our refuge and strength in times of trouble. We often spend a great deal of time worrying about troubles, or potential troubles, in our lives. But only when we trust God and take our problems to him in prayer, can we find peace and solace. He not only protects us, but gives us the courage and strength to go on and to face our problems. This can be very difficult for us to do, especially in times of tragedy or extreme distress caused by physical or emotional pain. But this psalm is a true reminder of "What A Friend We Have in Jesus."

*Marge R.*

*March 13*

*John 5:23*

*So that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.  
Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.*

I had learned back in catechism classes that the Triune God is composed of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – 3 separate entities with different titles, positions and responsibilities, and yet ALL are equal. You cannot worship or honor one without the other as they ALL are part of the Triune God, one dependent and intertwined on the other.

Just as all the vital organs of the body work together in perfect harmony, each depending on the other, while performing its own separate functions, but yet as ONE. You maim or ignore one part and the whole entity is rendered null and void. So it is with the Father without the Son or the Son with the Father or the Holy Spirit without the Father or the Son. They are equal – 3 in 1.

More importantly and most emphatically – anyone who listens to the Son’s message and believes in God the Father, who sent the Son, has justification (just as if you had not sinned) and will never be damned for his sins, but will have eternal life.

*Ruth A. P.*

*March 14*

*John 5:43*

*I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me;  
If another comes in his own name, you will accept him.*

Unless Jesus appears before us with a scarlet letter J on His forehead and unless Jesus shows us the wounds in His side we treat Him as just another of life's encounters or acquaintances. In other words, to those associates who do appear before us with "bells and whistles," with glamour and/or degrees and similar "credentials," – to these do we pay homage; at the same time we fail to see Jesus in our everyday associations with friends, co-workers, relatives, fellow students, elderly parents, and so forth.

*Bernie H.*

*March 15*

*John 7:28*

*Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple,  
"You know me, and you know where I am from.  
I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true,  
and you do not know him."*

This verse speaks about identity. Jesus makes it clear that he understood his identity flowed from the Father, and the Father is truth. Sometimes our identity seems blurred. We listen to what other people think of us. If they reject us, we are hurt. If they encourage us, we feel wonderful.

But our true identity is not in what people think or say. The truth about our identity is about faith in a God who names us and claims us as his very own. We are sons and daughters of the living God who loves us unconditionally. When we are hurt he heals us, when we are joyful he laughs with us. Thank you, Father, for the gift of our identity.

*March 16*

*Psalms 7:9*

*O let the evil come to an end, but establish the righteous,  
you who test the minds and hearts, O righteous God.*

This verse is very comforting because we know that God is always looking out for us and helps us try to make the best decisions.

It is reassuring to know that God has the power to punish those who do wrong and bless those who do good.

*Stacy W.*

*March 17*

*Hebrews 5:8*

*Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.*

It says Jesus' learned obedience through his suffering. During his suffering he called out to God, the one who could save him from death.

Just as Jesus cried out to God, our suffering brings us closer to God as we cry out through our prayers. It is reassuring to know that when Jesus walked upon the earth, he suffered just as we suffer at times. And we, too, need to remember to ask him for help, for he understands.

As an adult it is hard to ask for help. We must remember that Jesus, the high priest designated by God, is ready to help us in any circumstance. Once we realize that we are able to believe and trust in God's mercy and grace will be saved, not only from our suffering here on earth, but given eternal salvation.

*Brian L.*

*March 18*

*Psalms 23:4*

*Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff – they comfort me.*

As I opened up the letter asking me to write a devotion I looked at Psalm 23 and thought, "OK good, a familiar passage." Then I took out my Bible, read Verse 4 over and over again and really thought about its meaning. I would guess I'm like others that when we hear a passage so familiar it moves into a rote memory passage and we often don't really think of its true, deeper meaning.

'The valley of the shadow of death' is so automatically actually physical death, but as I think of it with deep meaning I realize it also pertains to every 'dark' period of our lives. We've all had them; loss of a loved one, times of loneliness, days of despair, confusion over decisions or rejection, personal illness or that of someone we love.

I think it's important at those times for us to remember God's protection from evil, God's never-ending presence, God's guidance, comfort and promise that beyond the 'valley' there is new life.

*Mary W.*

*March 19*

*Numbers 21:4-5*

*From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food."*

The people of Israel lacked faith. They did much murmuring and backsliding. I believe the bread in these verses illustrates bread of life.

The experience these people had which often happens today was to warn people of the dangers in the lack of faith and efforts to serve the Lord.

Martin Luther wrote that faith is a living and unshakable confidence, a belief in the grace of God.

In everything we do there is faith. Our lives are mostly daily routine (if we are so lucky), and when a situation arises that seems to have no solution we sometimes find it difficult to believe that God is there to help us (I've been there a few times), but in his time he will make something beautiful from the chaos, in which he did in blessing me with a wonderful husband and family.

Faith rests on the word of God and when we have him at his word we also have peace in our hearts.

*Charlotte S.*

*March 20*

*John 8:42*

*Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me."*

Jesus is the fullest expression of who God is.

To tell the truth is easier than telling lies. You don't have to make up excuses for my lies and try to remember them. Egad! That is the hard way to do things.

It is easier to kill with kindness than hate and dislike all the time. It makes for a lot of wrinkles. I don't even like to be around such negative people.

*Nancy W.*

*March 21*

*John 8:54*

*Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, he of whom you say, 'He is our God.'"*

I feel this verse is saying that God gives glory to his Son so we may see God's glory through his Son, Jesus Christ.

To me, this is a lesson in humility, teaching us to be humble. We need to remember in all things to give glory to God and not to ourselves.

We have many opportunities in our daily lives to do things deserving of praise. These things are only possible through God which again remind us we need to give him all the glory.

*Sandy A.*

*March 22*

*Jeremiah 20:10*

*For I hear many whispering: "Terror is all around!  
Denounce him! Let us denounce him!"  
All my close friends are watching for me to stumble.  
"Perhaps he can be enticed, and we can prevail against him,  
and take our revenge on him."*

When I first read this verse, I was reminded of times in my life when I felt the sting of gossip. Why is it that we are so quick to talk about others behind their backs. We all do it from time to time. Most of us are sorry when we do. The old saying, "sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me" is absolutely false. Words do hurt.

In order to really appreciate this verse, please read verse 11, because it holds the answer to all gossip and hurt. "But the Lord is with me like a dread warrior, therefore my persecutors will stumble, and they will not prevail." Thanks be to God that he is always there to protect us.

*Jeremiah L.*

*March 23*

*John 11:50*

*"You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed."*

The words of this verse are very important for us to understand that Jesus not only died for each of us, but also for the whole nation, for all people. What comforting thoughts these are as we go through our days. As a young person I didn't fully understand the importance of memorizing Bible verses and familiar spiritual songs, but not those same Bible verses and songs come back to me to help me through my day. I thank God daily for all the gifts that he has given me. I feel that I am truly blessed to have a loving husband and children, to have beautiful grandchildren and wonderful friends, to have a beautiful church to worship in and the freedom to worship. All that I have is a gift from God.

*Marilyn S.*

*Palm Sunday, March 24*

*Mark 15:18-19*

*And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him.*

When I think of Palm Sunday, I am reminded of how similar it is to a sporting event – like a Tiger game or the Super Bowl. The story draws you into the action and we want to be a part of it.

We cheer for the “good guys,” boo a cheap shot or a dirty play. We want the officiating to be fair, to win because we worked the hardest, “deserved” to win. Jesus rode into Jerusalem a winner. The people cheered and joined in the celebration. We tend to follow winners.

But these verses in Mark remind us how quickly the crowd can change. They say, “We knew it was too good to be true.” The same person we followed with joy is now mocked and beaten. Jesus suffered for us even when we left him alone in the stadium. He never lost sight of the truth he came to share. In the end Jesus wins the victory and we are again in the cheering section, saved by his grace.

*Jon C.*

*March 25*

*Psalms 27:13*

*I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*

The final thought of this magnificent Psalm is a statement of faith. David had the assurance that God was worth waiting for, and he had freely placed his confidence in the goodness and fairness of the Lord. He knew that the Lord would have the last word.

Sickness in a family can be traumatic for a family. Ray’s stroke caused to experience many conflicting emotions – sometimes feeling sad, uprooted, and confused, but other times excited about improvements and love that continued to flow between us. I believe the best way to get through traumatic circumstances is to wait on the Lord.

He is our Light and our Salvation. Praise and prayer brings the shining light of his presence into our lives to replace the darkness. And confidence in the Lord builds patience.

*Nancy C.*

*March 26*

*John 13:21*

*After saying this, Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared,  
“Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.”*

When Jesus had thus spoken he was troubled in spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” What pain was in Jesus’ heart, knowing that one of his chosen ones would betray him. These were the men that he hand picked and trained to be his followers and now one of them would bring about betrayal. Ouch. Yet, this could only happen because Jesus gave each of us free will. We get to choose our course in life. Let us not make that choice lightly. My prayer: Thank you Jesus for the free will to choose and always give me the strength to make the right decisions. Help me, guide me, and walk with me forever. Amen.

*Jim J.*

*March 27*

*Psalms 69:33*

*For the Lord hears the needy, and does not despise his own that are in bonds.*

Have you ever felt like crying? Does no one care? Am I the only one? Why is it dark in my heart? Why is my mind empty and my heart dark and unfeeling?

Yes, there is hope, love and caring if one just looks deep and accepts the Lord!

The Lord does help and not only those who help themselves, but he answers prayers and most times in quiet ways we do not realize. We open our hearts and our minds to him daily and He is there, whether we know it or not. We do not have to disguise nor are we captive in our own minds. We BELIEVE and therefore we continue to live in HIS love and grace.

Have you had to take care of elderly parents? Are you burdened with the cross you must bear? Well, there is help out there and unbeknownst to us "He" is there. We only survive with the help of the Lord and his salvation – "I died for your sins therefore you may live." May we all live in peace and prayers within our lives daily...

HELP IS OUT THERE!

*Sue W.*

*Maundy Thursday, March 28*

*John 13:8*

*Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet."*

*Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."*

Some years back when I first read the verse assigned to me and the verses surrounding it, I was as confused as Peter. It took some time after some Bible study and some powerful sermons to try and comprehend what Jesus was saying and doing.

It all became very clear to me one Maundy Thursday. The congregation I belonged to in Massachusetts participated in foot washing as part of the Maundy Thursday worship.

My youngest son, Kent, then about 11 years old and I participated in the foot washing. When Kent took off his sneakers and socks, I, as his mother, was mortified at the sight of his feet. He had played baseball in our backyard after school and it looked like he had half the dirt from the base paths on his feet. When it was his turn and the pastor poured the water on his feet the water in the basin turned an ugly gray.

In that moment, it was so viewed what Jesus came to earth to do. He was the ultimate servant. On the cross he shed his blood to wash away our dirt (sins). He gave his life for us. He hung on that cross and died for us. I know of no greater servant. Do you?

With the exemplification of the servanthood of Jesus, let us live the new commandment he gave us, "Love one another even as I have loved you."

*Grace C.*

*Good Friday, March 29*

*John 19:30*

*When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished."*

*Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

It is finished. These were the last words Jesus said on the cross, telling us that His work on earth was done, and our souls were forever in His hands.

When I think of this, I remember a scene from the movie “Jesus.” In the movie, after Jesus died, the sky turns dark and rain starts falling as a big storm rolls in. You are left with the feeling that the world has changed forever.

It is amazing when you think of the sacrifice Jesus made for us. He did this just so we could have forgiveness for our sins.

So next time you find yourself wondering how strong love is, remember Jesus so loved you that he died for you.

*Dale F.*

*Holy Saturday, March 30*

*Mark 16:8*

*So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*

As I read this verse over a few times, what led up to this verse to be written? Actually other amazing events, the birth of baby Jesus, his life and death.

To go to the tomb and find a heavy stone rolled away and an angel telling that Jesus had risen from death on the cross, it is unbelievable, then and now.

In amazement, trembling and being so afraid, how wonderful He is risen for all of us, saving us and forgiving our sins. No one has ever done this before and this event is amazing and unbelievable.

As I think very hard and also share this verse, it’s almost too easy to conclude, that it’s my belief each and every day to truly believe and faithfully live my life to follow Jesus who died and rose again! May we all, young and old, pray and praise and truly believe and be thankful for miracles.

As the last word in Mark 16:8 is ‘afraid’ – with a loving remark from my mother as I entered kindergarten riding the big yellow bus the first time, “Cari, you don’t have to be afraid, because Jesus is always with you. You are not alone.”

Jesus our Savior is Risen. Believe! I do. Do not be afraid to share his word.

*Cari F.*

*Easter Sunday, March 31*

*Matthew 28:5-7*

*But the angels said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him. This is my message for you.”*

One thing Easter teaches us is that Jesus keeps his promises. The women who went to the

tomb on Easter morning learned that lesson in a very dramatic fashion. There were greeted at the tomb by angels who said that Jesus' words can be trusted. We see that most profoundly on the Easter morning, when Jesus did what he said. He rose on the third day and granted eternal life to all who believe. These were the promises that Jesus had made throughout his ministry, and these are the promises that have now come to pass.

The good news of our salvation is celebrated by the church, not just on Easter Sunday, but all the way to Pentecost when we'll celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus wanted this Good News to be shared, because it is meant for everyone. And to help us do it, Jesus promised to be with us, not just through the next fifty days of the Easter season, but forever. May we celebrate this day with great joy, remembering that God has promised to stay with us forever, no matter what happens.

*Pastor Sue Eidahl*