

LET GOD ARISE!

The Wondrous Cross #3

Prayer Guide for the Season of Lent • Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis



Come, Everyone Thirsty and Hungry

Isaiah 55.1-9

Lord, Who throughout These Forty Days

Claudia F. Hernaman, 1873

To the tune "Alas! and Did My Savior Bleed"

Lord, who throughout these forty days
For us didst fast and pray,
Teach us with thee to mourn our sins,
And close by thee to stay.

As thou with Satan didst contend
And didst the victory win,
O give us strength in thee to fight,
In thee to conquer sin.

As thou didst hunger bear and thirst,
So teach us, gracious Lord,
To die to self, and chiefly live
By thy most holy word.

And through these days of penitence,
And through thy Passiontide,
Yea, evermore, in life and death,
Jesus! with us abide.

Abide with us, that so, this life
Of suffering over-past,
An Easter of unending joy
We may attain at last!

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The Way of the Cross: Come, Everyone Thirsty and Hungry

Come, Everyone Thirsty and Hungry

Isa. 55.1-7 - Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. [2] Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. [3] Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. [4] Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. [5] Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. [6] Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; [7] let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

The Fast That the Lord Seeks

Isa. 58.4-12 - Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. [5] Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the Lord? [6] "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? [7] Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? [8] Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. [9] Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and



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he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, [10] if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. [11] And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. [12] And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in."

Jesus and the Tempter

Matt. 4.1-11 - Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. [2] And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. [3] And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." [4] But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" [5] Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple [6] and said 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, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" [7] Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" [8] Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. [9] And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." [10] Then Jesus said to him, 'Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" [11] Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Luke 4.1-13 - And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness [2] for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. [3] The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God,



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command this stone to become bread.” [4] And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” [5] And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, [6] and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. [7] If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” [8] And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’” [9] And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, [10] for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ [11] and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” [12] And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” [13] And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Trusting in Our Wealth and Strength versus Following in the Way of the Cross

Luke 9.23-27 - And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. [24] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. [25] For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? [26] For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. [27] But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”

Ps. 49.6-8 - Those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches? [7] Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, [8] for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice,

Matt. 16.26 - For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?



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Mark 8.34-38 - And he called to him the crowd with his disciples and said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. [35] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. [36] For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? [37] For what can a man give in return for his life? [38] For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Mark 9.43 - And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire.

Mark 9.45 - And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell.

Mark 9.47-48 - And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, [48] “where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.”

Luke 12.19-21 - And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” [20] But God said to him, “Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” [21] So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.

2 Pet. 2.15-17 - Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, [16] but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. [17]



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These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.

Examples and Exhortations to Follow the Working of the Holy Spirit

Luke 9.28-43 - Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. [29] And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. [30] And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, [31] who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. [32] Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. [33] And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah”— not knowing what he said. [34] As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. [35] And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!” [36] And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

[37] On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. [38] And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. [39] And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth; and shatters him, and will hardly leave him. [40] And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” [41] Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.” [42] While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his



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father. [43] And all were astonished at the majesty of God. But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples . . .

Jesus' Willingness to Forgive, and His Judgment against the Unforgiving

John 8.1-12 - But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. [2] Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. [3] The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst [4] they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. [5] Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" [6] This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. [7] And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." [8] And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. [9] But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. [10] Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" [11] She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more." [12] Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Ps. 50.16-20 - But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? [17] For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you. [18] If you see a thief, you are pleased with him, and you keep company with adulterers. [19] You give your mouth free rein for evil, and your tongue frames deceit. [20] You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son."

Matt. 7.1-5 - "Judge not, that you be not judged. [2] For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be



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measured to you. [3] Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? [4] Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? [5] You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

Matt. 23.25-28 - Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. [26] You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. [27] Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. [28] So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Rom. 2.1-3 - Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. [2] We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who do such things. [3] Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?

Offer the Sacrifices That Please Him

Isa. 43.19-26 - Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. [20] The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, [21] the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise. [22] Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of me, O Israel! [23] You have not brought me your sheep for burnt offerings, or honored me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings, or wearied you with frankincense. [24] You have not bought me



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sweet cane with money, or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins; you have wearied me with your iniquities. [25] I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. [26] Put me in remembrance; let us argue together; set forth your case, that you may be proved right.

Isa. 1.11-20 - “What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?” says the Lord; “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. [12] When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? [13] Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. [14] Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. [15] When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. [16] Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, [17] learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause. [18] Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord: “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. [19] If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; [20] but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; or the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Thirsting after God

Ps. 42.1-5 - As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. [2] My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? [3] My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me continually, “Where is your God?” [4] These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead



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them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival. [5] Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation.

Ps. 36.8-9 - They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. [9] For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.

Job 23.3 - Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!

Jer. 2.13 - For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Jer. 10.10 - But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King. At his wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation.

Isa. 44.3 - For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.

John 4.14 - But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

1 Thess. 1.9 - For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God



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Ps. 63.1 - A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

John 7.37-39 - On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. [38] Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” [39] Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Surrendering All for Christ

Phil. 3.3-15 - For we are the real circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— [4] though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: [5] circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; [6] as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, under the law blameless. [7] But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. [8] Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ [9] and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— [10] that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, [11] that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. [12] Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. [13] Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, [14] I press on toward the



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goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. [15] Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

Matt. 13.44-46 - The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. [45] Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, [46] who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Matt. 16.26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?

Luke 14.26 - If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14.33 - So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Luke 17.31-33 - On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. [32] Remember Lot's wife. [33] Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.

Gal. 2.15-16 - We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; [16] yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.



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Humble Yourselves in the Sight of the Lord

James 4.6-10 - But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” [7] Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. [8] Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. [9] Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. [10] Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

1 Sam. 2.9 - He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail.

Job 22.29 - For when they are humbled you say, ‘It is because of pride’; but he saves the lowly.

Ps. 27.6 - And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the Lord.

Ps. 28.9 - Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever.

Ps. 113.7 - He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap,

Ps. 147.6 - The Lord lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground.

Matt. 23.12 - Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Luke 14.11 - For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.



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Christ Receives Repentant Sinners

Luke 15.1-10 - Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. [2] And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” [3] So he told them this parable: [4] “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? [5] And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. [6] And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ [7] Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. [8] Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? [9] And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ [10] Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Luke 4.18-19 - “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, [19] to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Luke 15.7 - Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Luke 18.10-14 - “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. [11] The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. [12] I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ [13] But the tax collector, standing far off, would not



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even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ [14] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Luke 19.10 - For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

Acts 2.38 - And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 3.26 - God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.

Acts 5.31 - God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

2 Tim. 2.25-26 - correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, [26] and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

2 Pet. 3.9 - The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Come with Penitence, Leave with Joy

Ps. 126.1-6 - When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. [2] Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.” [3] The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad. [4] Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negeb! [5]



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Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! [6] He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

Job 11.13-17 - If you prepare your heart, you will stretch out your hands toward him. [14] If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away, and let not injustice dwell in your tents. [15] Surely then you will lift up your face without blemish; you will be secure and will not fear. [16] You will forget your misery; you will remember it as waters that have passed away. [17] And your life will be brighter than the noonday; its darkness will be like the morning.

Ps. 30.5 - For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

Isa. 61.3 - to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

Gal. 6.7-8 - Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. [8] For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ■



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The Futility of Religion without Brokenness and Forgiveness

Grace must come before sin can be confessed but Christians are not always good at affirming God's love for themselves or anyone else. The Church, by its nature and calling, attracts people who are aware of their own insecurity, lovelessness and failure. Though religion should be a way to work through these experiences, insecurity may opt for a safer, rigid, discipline of worship and behavior which represses difficulties and drives us to repress others whose openness threatens us.

~ Brian Pickett. *Songs for the Journey: The Psalms in Life and Liturgy*.
London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 2002. pp. 70-71.

As we contemplate and participate in the wondrous Cross of Christ by faith, we become increasingly aware of our own indebtedness because of our sin, our disobedience, our pride and folly. We are ever in need of being broken, and broken again, of facing our finiteness, our weakness, and our inner shadows—those constant, gnawing impulses to love and do the wrong. To fully participate in the Cross we must be humbled, and humble ourselves. This allows the Lord to do in and through us the very things that only he can do. We allow, through our brokenness and humility, the Spirit to continue the work within us to conform us to the image of Christ, and thereby please and honor the Father who has ordained it so (Rom. 8.28-29). A religious or spiritual life without brokenness is of no value, but rather is empty, useless, futile. It is acceptable neither to God nor others. We must walk the way of the Cross before we share in the glories of the Resurrection.

The Lenten season is that forty-day period of the Church Year which starts on Ash Wednesday and ends on Saturday of Holy Week. It calls the faithful community to reflect on Jesus' suffering, crucifixion, and death. Following our Lord in his preparation for his Passion, we prepare ourselves on the way of the Cross for full obedience to God. The season of Lent is, therefore, as one



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commentator put it, a season of “preparation, accompaniment, and journey.” As followers of Jesus of Nazareth, the Church finds its life in his sacrifice on the Cross, his victory over evil, chaos, sin, and death, and his restoration of all things through his resurrection, his ascension, and soon return.

Beginning with the recognition of Ash Wednesday, we accompany our Lord on his journey to the Cross, humbling ourselves before him who gave his all for us in order that we might be set free from sin, Satan, and the grave. Ash Wednesday historically has been observed as a day of fasting and repentance that reminds us that as disciples we journey with Jesus which ends in the Cross (Luke 9.51). Ash Wednesday begins the observance of Lent.

A Way of Initiation and Restoration: The Role of Lent in the Ancient Church

As candidates for baptism did in the ancient Church, so we too strive during our observance of the Lenten season to be faithful with Jesus on our way to the Cross and the Tomb. This is the heart of our participation and witness of the covenant of faith confirmed in our baptism. Even as Jesus died upon the Cross, so we too by faith have died with him to sin, and even as he lives forevermore, so too we live in newness of life (Rom. 6.4-6). In all phases of our personal and private worship, in our small groups, our congregational times, and all disciplined seeking of the Lord, we acknowledge our Lord’s lowliness, humiliation, and sacrifice on our behalf, and ask for his grace to become more like him in his death. Only through this humbling, this brokenness and openness to his Spirit, can we as followers of Jesus come to fully know the freedom and life that he alone can provide.

In the ancient Church, this season was a dedicated time of preparation for those seeking baptism and incorporation into the Church. Their Lenten season of preparation was climaxed with an exorcism and vigil on Holy Saturday, with all converts being welcomed into the Church through baptism on Easter morning! Also, backsliders who had returned to the Church joined in these observances, readying themselves for a fresh start



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as recommitted disciples. Over time, the whole Church joined these converts and penitents in this season of readiness, with all believers affirming together their desire to flesh out in tangible and compelling ways their discipleship. Discipleship is not merely for those seeking baptism or to be restored after sin; rather, it is also for all who love the Lord Jesus and who strive to honor him in truth and deed. During this season, we all accompany these seekers and together follow the journey of our Lord as he traveled to the Tree where our redemption was won.

The work of winning our lost cities for Christ involves first and foremost a kind of preparation and readiness that allows the Lord to use us in a fresh, unhindered way. No obstacles must block the Lord's highway; all rough places must be made plain, and the crooked places straight. This echoes the wonderful message of the Advent season, where we could hear, as spoken in Isaiah 40.3-4:

A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. [4] Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain."

We see the integrated, connected, and continuous message of Scripture for those who desire life, who seek the goodness of the Lord, who wish to live forever, for them to repent and come to Christ by faith. To be sure, repentance is not a work of human effort, and therefore cannot be considered as "working for one's salvation." Yet, all true faith is saturated in the kind of repentance that is genuinely sorry for sins committed, determined to turn one's back on the transgression, and to restore and renew a new way based on the Lord's grace and help of the Holy Spirit. Urban ministry's aim is to see the holy people of God inhabit the cities of America and the world, and for that holiness to be concretely fleshed out in practical holiness and genuine righteousness.



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Lent as Journey toward Holiness by Following the Footsteps of Jesus

Those of us who love the Lord Jesus willingly yield to the sacrifice, discipline, and longing of the Lenten season. Lent is our chorus of Amen! to the lowliness of Jesus Christ, our resounding “Yes!” to follow in his steps of meekness and courageous fortitude for his Father to the Cross.

Truly, this is our deliberate season to unashamedly and every day take up our crosses and follow the Nazarene to his appointed place of victory—the Cross of Calvary. We are clear that no life can come unless the grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies; yet, if it does in fact die, it will certainly bring forth much fruit (John 12.24-25). Desirous to grasp hold of everything for which Christ saved us, we willingly wrestle and struggle, doing battle with the will of the flesh, the lies of the enemy, and the lure of the world. We wholeheartedly yield to the struggle, unafraid to strain through the fight to its end, and unwilling to surrender the full blessing for which our Lord died to retrieve for us. We embrace his journey to the Cross as our very own journey, and affirm the truth of our baptized life, now made clear in the Apostle Paul’s extended commentary of the meaning of Christ’s Passion for our spiritual lives:

Rom. 6.1-11 - What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? [2] By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? [3] Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4] We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. [5] For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. [6] We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. [7] For one who has died has been set free from sin. [8] Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with



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him. [9] We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. [10] For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. [11] So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Indeed, we who have been baptized have been baptized into his very death on the Cross. His death is our death, and his burial is our burial. Now through his resurrection we are raised to new life, and ultimately, his reign in the Kingdom of God will be our reign with him. A glorious mystery indeed, but sure, incontrovertible fact as well!

Lent invites us into ourselves, to share with Christ his journey, which in fact, is our very own. Of course, different traditions and churches reflect and reenact the journey using different means, disciplines, rituals, and observances. Using ashes made of the previous year's palm leaves from Palm Sunday celebrations, many congregations start the journey on Ash Wednesday, signifying their commitment to brokenness with the mark of ashes on their foreheads on that day. Others begin with special times of discipline, reading, and practice of spiritual and ministry disciplines to show their solidarity with all other believing congregations who spiritually accompany our Lord to the Cross once more during the Lenten season. The variety of ways in which believers express their identification with Christ on his lowly journey to the Cross reveals both its necessity and wonder. Our freedom and our love for him suggests multiple ways to affirm this elemental truth—that in Christ we who believe share in his death in order to share in his resurrection.

Near the Cross, Be My Glory Ever

The Lenten season is a time for reflection on the suffering and death of Jesus. During this time we emphasize our own dying with him, and so, like Jesus, we must prepare ourselves to obey God no matter what sacrifice it involves. Lenten observance calls for people to fast as a way of affirming this attitude



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of obedience (Luke 5.35; 1 Cor. 9.27; 2 Tim. 2.4; Heb. 11.1-3). Let us then humble ourselves, inviting one another to new levels of identifying with our Lord in his death through times of fasting, sacrifice, prayer.

Some traditions challenge their members to engage in tangible acts of “self-denial,” in order to visibly make oneself more open to God’s leading. Others invite members, couples, and families to deny themselves of things which hinder or distract during this season, and to serve in ways that reflect obedience to God and love to neighbor. As those made free through the shed blood of Christ (Gal. 5.1), we ought to emphasize that, whatever our observances during the season of Lent, we are free in Christ to respond as he leads us. We ought neither to mandate nor insist that we fast during this season; such practice cannot be seen as an emblem of spiritual superiority or uniqueness.

However you choose to express your unity with Christ and your fellow pilgrims on the Way during this season, recognize that what is at stake is our deepening in our Lord’s humility and availability. We do not need to get lost in our own man-made fancies and privatized observances; what is critical is that we gladly and humbly admit our own vulnerability, the lack of humility and brokenness in our lives, and reaffirm our commitment to more and more daily be like him. This is the meaning of Lent: that everything within us seeks to identify with the Lord in his unconditional availability to his Father and his remarkable brokenness before God in his obedience on the Cross.

There’s Room at the Cross—for You

What is extraordinary for us who love Christ in the city is that we, like all others who love Jesus, must constantly remind ourselves of what is at stake in our lowliness and brokenness as we ponder the Cross of Christ. Love for God and love for our neighbor, the great and second commandments respectively, grow out of a dependence and neediness and yieldedness whose best picture is the image of the Savior on the Tree. If you love the city and its



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inhabitants, you must participate in the journey represented by the forty-day reflection and practice of Lent. Let your conscience, tradition, context, and situation guide you as you explore ways to tangibly demonstrate your identification with our Lord and his people as they journey to Calvary.

Come, all you who are thirsty and hungry, and seek the Lord while he may be found. He will travel beside you on the journey. ■

The Season of Lent: The Lowliness of Christ – God’s Dwelling Place Formed by His Holy Spirit

1 Pet. 5.6 -7 - Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, [7] casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Biblical Principle of the Season: Seek the Lord Sacrificially with Passion and Desire

The Lenten season is that forty-day period of the Church year which starts on Ash Wednesday and ends on Saturday of Holy Week. It calls the faithful community to reflect on Jesus’ suffering, crucifixion, and death. Following our Lord in his preparation for his Passion, we prepare ourselves on the way of the Cross for full obedience to God. As those determined to be conformed to the image of God’s Son, let us prepare our hearts as we accompany our Savior by faith to the Tree, and journey with him as we yield all to the Father on behalf of the world. As 21st century disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, let us renew our spiritual lives as we rediscover our life in Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross, his victory over evil, chaos, sin, and death, and his restoration of all things through his resurrection, his ascension, and soon return.

Isa. 55.1-7 - Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. [2] Why do you spend your money



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for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. [3] Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

Luke 9.23-26 - And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. [24] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. [25] For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? [26] For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."

An Example of Being Humbled before God: Paul

Gal. 2.20 - It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.



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