

Walking Together in the Word

Devotions on the Weekly Scripture Readings for February 2024

The purpose of the Chapel Devotion Project is to encourage individuals and families to make prayer and devotional time in God's Word a regular part of their daily lives. We believe many good things will come from your intentional study and reflection of God's Word:

- Your relationship with God and with others will grow and be strengthened.
- Study of the Scripture and hymns for the upcoming weekend will enhance your worship.
- You will come to the Lord daily in prayer, bringing your praise, thanks, and requests to Him.

How to Use These Devotions

Each week contains five pages of devotional material. How you choose to use the material is up to you. You could study one reading or one page a day. You might read several portions every other day. You may use the short order of worship provided below. Use the material in the way that best fits you and your family.

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
All: Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

DEVOTION and REFLECTION

PRAYERS and THE LORD'S PRAYER

LUTHER'S MORNING PRAYER

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me.
Amen.

or

LUTHER'S EVENING PRAYER

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Leader: The almighty and merciful God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless us
and keep us.
All: Amen.

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Devotions and supporting material written by Pastor Ted Laesch and Mary Laesch.

Walking Together in the Word

January 29–February 3, 2024

This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, February 4.

Epiphany 5

The Gospel: Mark 1:29–39

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. 30 Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. 31 So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. 33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36 Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." 39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Devotion on the Gospel

It's so easy to be pulled "off course." So many things grab our attention and get us going in a different direction—spiritually speaking too. We know the great need and benefit of spending time with our Lord in prayer, in personal devotions, in worship and Bible study. But it seems, so very often, something takes our time, our attention, our interest—and we get pulled off course.

Jesus says: That's not going to happen with me! I will not be pulled off course. Jesus was doing wonderful things. He was healing and helping and curing. But that was not what Jesus came to this world to do. That was not His purpose. And He would not be pulled off course.

We are moving on, Jesus says. We have work to do in other towns. I must preach there also. That's why I came. My work is more than just healing. I must preach the Gospel in other places. I must tell the good news that I have come to forgive sin and save people for all eternity. I must seek and save the lost. That's my mission. That's my purpose.

And so Jesus left Capernaum to go to the other towns. And His Word spread throughout Judea and Israel and the Middle East and Europe and Africa and Asia and North and Central and South America. His Word has gone to town after town after town. And His Word eventually came to our town too!

Jesus comes, through His Word, bringing the good news that the Son of God came to rescue all people. He comes to our town proclaiming His love, His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness for all who believe. By His death and resurrection, He has made everything right between us and God. He paid for all our sin. He took away all our guilt. And He comes here to our town preaching it to all who will listen.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

People were looking for Jesus because of His miracles. But what did Jesus say He came to do? (see verse 38)?

Why did Jesus, the Son of God, feel the need to pray to His Father in heaven?

What does His going to a solitary place for prayer say to us for our personal prayer life?

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

How does Isaiah describe the authority of our God?

Israel was feeling weak and forgotten. But our God does not grow tired or weary! How does the Lord's strength become His people's strength?

*Verse to Remember:
Isaiah 40:31*

The Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 40:21-31

Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood since the earth was founded?

22 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,
and its people are like grasshoppers.

He stretches out the heavens like a canopy,
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

23 He brings princes to naught
and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

24 No sooner are they planted,
no sooner are they sown,
no sooner do they take root in the ground,
than he blows on them and they wither,
and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

25 "To whom will you compare me?
Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

26 Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:
Who created all these?

He who brings out the starry host one by one
and calls forth each of them by name.

Because of his great power and mighty strength,
not one of them is missing.

27 Why do you complain, Jacob?

Why do you say, Israel,

"My way is hidden from the Lord;
my cause is disregarded by my God"?

28 Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.

29 He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.

30 Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;

31 but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

The Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:16-27

16 For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! 17 If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. 18 What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.

19 Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. 27 No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

The Psalm: Psalm 147:1-11

Praise the Lord.

How good it is to sing praises to our God,
how pleasant and fitting to praise him!

2 The Lord builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the exiles of Israel.

3 He heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.

4 He determines the number of the stars
and calls them each by name.

5 Great is our Lord and mighty in power;
his understanding has no limit.

6 The Lord sustains the humble
but casts the wicked to the ground.

7 Sing to the Lord with grateful praise;
make music to our God on the harp.

8 He covers the sky with clouds;
he supplies the earth with rain
and makes grass grow on the hills.

9 He provides food for the cattle
and for the young ravens when they call.

10 His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his delight in the legs of the warrior;

11 the Lord delights in those who fear him,
who put their hope in his unfailing love.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

St. Paul declares that he "becomes all things to all people" so that he "might save some." What does he mean by this and why is this his attitude?

Paul uses the metaphor of sports to point to the discipline that apostleship and discipleship requires. Why should we be even more motivated than an athlete in a competition in our dedication to run the race as a Christian?

What does it say about our God that He who has the power to number and name the stars (verse 4), also sustains the powerless and the humble (verse 6)?

God provides for all of his creation: He supplies the earth with rain, provides food for cattle, even takes care of the lowly raven! Compare the psalmists words to Jesus' words in Matthew 6:25-34.

Notes,
Thoughts,
Questions

The author of this hymn, Edward Plumptre, wrote these words to be used at the King's College Hospital in London.

How does this text convey the divine healing power of Jesus in His day—and in ours?

The Hymn: Your Hand, O Lord, in Days of Old *LSB 846*

Your hand, O Lord, in days of old
Was strong to heal and save;
It triumphed over ills and death,
O'er darkness and the grave.
To You they came, the blind, the mute,
The palsied and the lame,
The lepers in their misery,
The sick with fevered frame.

Your touch then, Lord, brought life and health,
Gave speech and strength and sight;
And youth renewed and frenzy calmed
Revealed You, Lord of light.
And now, O Lord, be near to bless,
Almighty as before,
In crowded street, by beds of pain,
As by Gennes'ret's shore.

O be our great deliverer still,
O Lord of life and death;
Restore and quicken, soothe and bless,
With Your life-giving breath.
To hands that work and eyes that see
Give wisdom's healing pow'r
That whole and sick and weak and strong
May praise You evermore.

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Faith + Life Connections

Have you ever been sick? Who helped you? Simon Peter's mother-in-law was sick with a fever. Jesus came to help. He took her hand, helped her up . . . and she was healed! Soon everyone was bringing sick people to Jesus so He could heal them. Jesus didn't use medicine to help them. He could heal them because Jesus is God!

Mark 1:29-39

Do you remember a time, maybe when you were very little, when you were so tired, someone picked you up and carried you? We become tired, but God never does. God says, "Come to me when the world makes you tired. I will give you strength!"

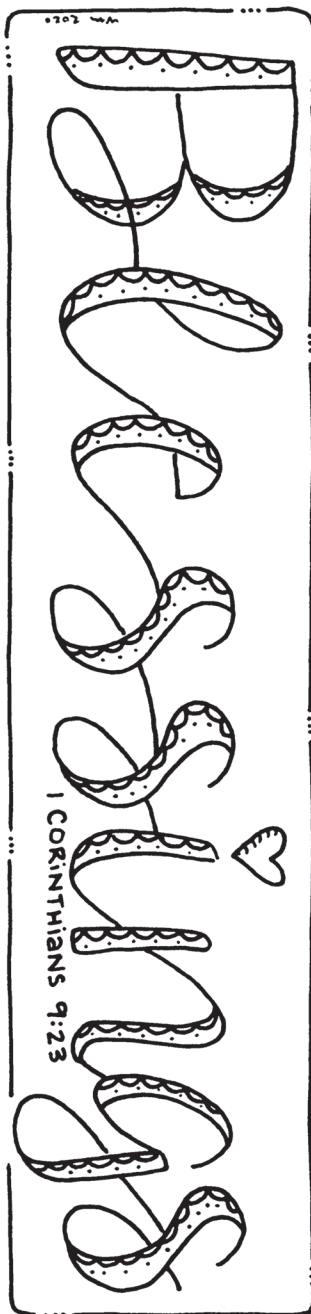
Isaiah 40:21-31

St. Paul says living the Christian life is like running a race. But our prize is so much better than a medal—we will have eternal life with Jesus!

1 Corinthians 9:16-27

Memorize:

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:31



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Devote Yourselves to Prayer *Colossians 4:2*

Throughout the week, write prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and requests on slips of paper and place them in your prayer bowl. Take turns praying when you gather for devotions.

Walking Together in the Word

February 5–February 10, 2024

This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, February 11.

The Transfiguration of Our Lord

The Gospel: Mark 9:2–9

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. 3 His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.

4 And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

5 Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” 6 (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

7 Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

8 Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Devotion on the Gospel

Mountain tops are wonderful places, aren't they? And I guess it is from the beauty and grandeur and sheer significance of mountains that we get the whole idea of mountain top experiences. Those things that you just can't forget—and don't want to forget! A birth of a child, a wedding day, a graduation, to name just a few. Mountain top experiences.

Mark 9 shares a mountain top experience—which took place, literally, on a mountain! Peter, James, and John were with Jesus on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun and His clothes became dazzling white. And then Moses and Elijah appear. And then the voice of God: This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to Him. What a mountain top experience!

But for as much as Peter might have wanted to stay on that mountain, Jesus doesn't stay on the mountain top. He came down to serve. He came down to set His face toward Jerusalem. He came down to be nailed to a cross. And the disciples came down off the mountain to serve too, and they carried their own crosses, in one way or another.

Maybe you have had spiritual mountain top experiences: God working and acting in your life, hearing God's Word, worshiping our Lord, receiving the Sacrament. Spiritual mountain top experiences. But we too come down from the mountain and live lives of service.

But those mountain top experiences we have here on earth are just a small taste of what's to come. One day we will go up that mountain and stay on that mountain. We will stand before our Lord and bask in His glory. We will be with Him and share in His glory forever.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

The voice of God thunders: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!” When have we heard similar words from God? (see Matthew 3:13-17)

Why did Jesus order the three disciples not to tell about this experience until after He had risen from the dead?

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

What do you think Elisha and the company of prophets were reminded of as Elijah stuck the water with his cloak and the water of the Jordan River divided so they could walk across on dry land (See Exodus 14)?

How does this Old Testament reading tie in with the Gospel reading appointed for Transfiguration Sunday (see Mark 9:2-9)?

What is it about humanity that causes a "blind spot" when it comes to the Good News of Jesus (See 1 Corinthians 2:14)?

What is the only solution to alleviate and heal spiritual blindness (see 4:6)?

*Verse to Remember:
2 Corinthians 4:6*

The Old Testament Reading: 2 Kings 2:1-12

When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. 2 Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the Lord has sent me to Bethel."

But Elisha said, "As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

3 The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, "Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know," Elisha replied, "so be quiet."

4 Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, Elisha; the Lord has sent me to Jericho."

And he replied, "As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you."

So they went to Jericho.

5 The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know," he replied, "so be quiet."

6 Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the Lord has sent me to the Jordan."

And he replied, "As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you."

So the two of them walked on.

7 Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. 8 Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?"

"Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied.

10 "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not."

11 As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. 12 Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!"

And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two.

The Epistle: 2 Corinthians 3:12-13; 4:1-6

3:12 Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. 13 We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away.

4:1 Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. 2 Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. 3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

The Psalm: Psalm 50:1-6

The Mighty One, God, the Lord,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to where it sets.

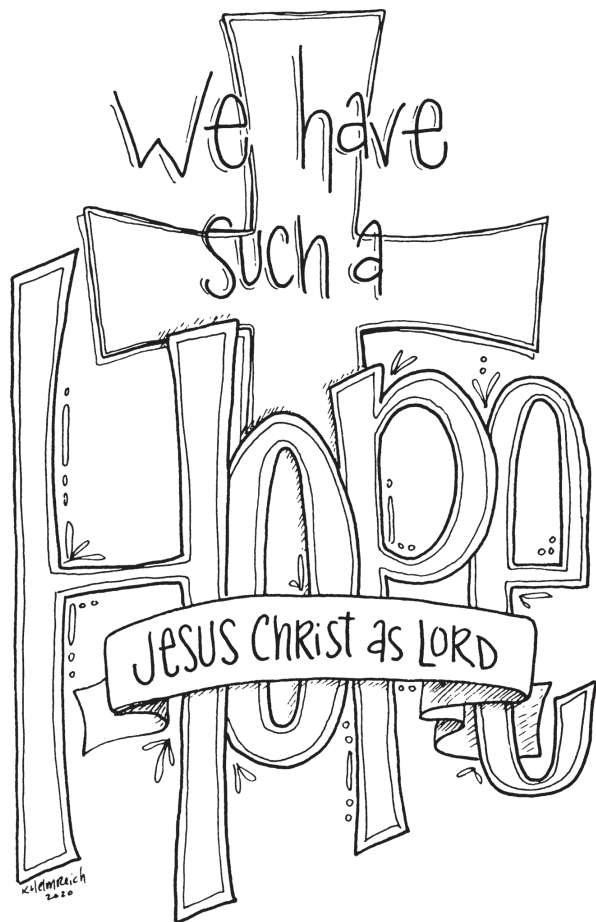
2 From Zion, perfect in beauty,
God shines forth.

3 Our God comes
and will not be silent;
a fire devours before him,
and around him a tempest rages.

4 He summons the heavens above,
and the earth, that he may judge his people:

5 "Gather to me this consecrated people,
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

6 And the heavens proclaim his righteousness,
for he is a God of justice



Notes, Thoughts, Questions

God comes to His people in worship! He comes in the sweet Gospel providing love and mercy. He also comes in the Law, admonishing and condemning sin.

As you read this portion of Psalm 50, what Gospel do you see? What Law do you see?

The psalmist describes God as judge. Does the fact that our God is the almighty Judge give you fear and dread, or peace and comfort?

Notes,
Thoughts,
Questions

This hymn is a poetic retelling of the story of the transfiguration of Jesus. Read once again the Gospel (Mark 9:2-9), then meditate on the words of the hymn.

The Hymn: O Wondrous Type! O Vision Fair

LSB 413

O wondrous type! O vision fair
Of glory that the Church may share,
Which Christ upon the mountain shows,
Where brighter than the sun He glows!

With Moses and Elijah nigh
The incarnate Lord holds converse high;
And from the cloud the Holy One
Bears record to the only Son.

With shining face and bright array
Christ deigns to manifest today
What glory shall be theirs above
Who joy in God with perfect love.

And faithful hearts are raised on high
By this great vision's mystery,
For which in joyful strains we raise
The voice of prayer, the hymn of praise.

O Father, with the eternal Son
And Holy Spirit ever one,
We pray Thee, bring us by Thy grace
To see Thy glory face to face.

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Faith + Life Connections

When have you said, "This is the best day ever!" Maybe it was your birthday, or a trip to the amusement park. It was an incredible day when Jesus' disciples saw Him shining with glory. Someday we will be with Jesus forever, and it really will be the best day ever! *Mark 9:2-9*

What amazing thing did Elisha see? What amazing thing was Elisha able to do? Our God is amazing. He took Elijah to heaven in a fiery chariot and gave Elisha power to part the water. What else has our amazing God done? *2 Kings 2:1-12*

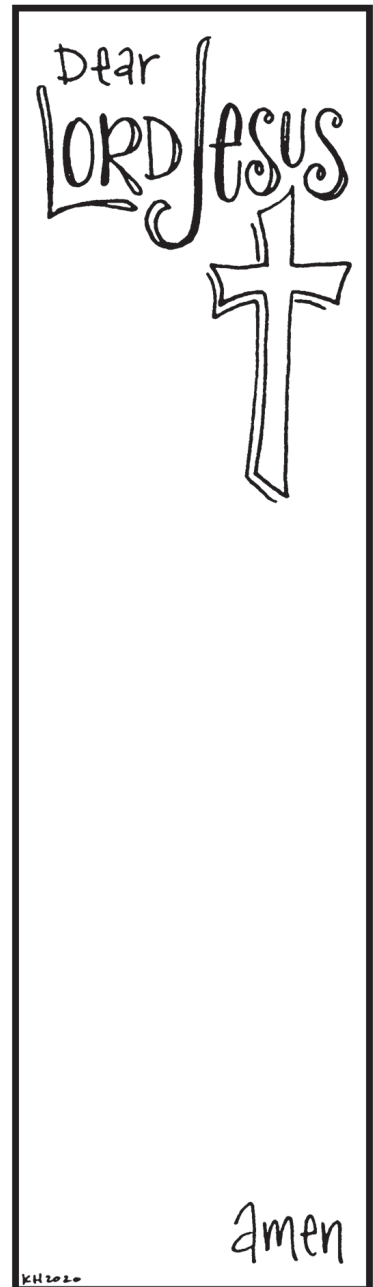
Sing "This Little Light of Mine." What is the light that shines in the darkness? What is the light that God puts into our hearts? The Good News of Jesus! How will you let the light shine this week? *2 Corinthians 3:12-13; 4:1-6*

Memorize:

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. *2 Corinthians 4:6*

Shine
IN OUR
HEARTS
Give the
Light
OF THE
Knowledge
OF THE
glory
OF
God

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Devote Yourselves to Prayer *Colossians 4:2*
Throughout the week, write prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and requests on slips of paper and place them in your prayer bowl. Take turns praying when you gather for devotions.

Walking Together in the Word

February 12–February 17, 2024

This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, February 18.

Lent 1

The Gospel: Mark 1:9–15

9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

12 At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, 13 and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Devotion on the Gospel

40. 40 is a significant number in the Bible. 40 days and 40 nights of rain as the flood engulfed the earth. 40 years of wandering for the children of Israel in the desert. 40 days of taunting by the giant, Goliath. 40 days of warning by Jonah to the citizens of Ninevah.

And here we see it again. 40 days in the wilderness for Jesus. He is hungry, weak, vulnerable. And the devil thinks he has Jesus right where he wants Him. What does Satan offer? Temptations. Enticements. Shortcuts. But Jesus will not be moved. He cannot be swayed. He won't be taken in by the devil's temptations. “It is written!” And the devil cannot stand against the Word of God.

We are at the beginning of another 40—40 days in the season of Lent. 40 days of repentance and contrition. 40 days of confession and remorse for our sin. It's a 40 day journey to the Calvary and the cross, to the suffering and the death of our Savior.

But let me remind you of something: Easter is coming. During Lent we wait for the Lord to come and save and rescue and forgive us. At Easter we see that He has come in all His glory. During Lent we confess our sins and humble ourselves before God. At Easter we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord. Right now is the season of Lent. But Easter's coming! During this 40 day season of Lent, we pray with the hymn writer:

Be with us through this season, Lord,
And all our earthly days,
That when the final Easter dawns,
We join in heaven's praise.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Mark's account of the temptation of Jesus is the shortest of the evangelists. Read Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 to learn more details of the account.

What does it mean for us in our lives as Christians that Jesus overcame all temptations and passed all tests? (See Hebrews 4:14-16)

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Every parent must feel the torture in Abraham's heart as he makes his way to the place of sacrifice with his son.

Can anyone love so much that he would sacrifice his own son? (See John 3:16)

Read verse 5 again. What did Abraham tell his servants?

What do these words tell us about Abraham's expectations of God concerning Isaac?

The Old Testament Reading: Genesis 22:1-18

22 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. 4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, 7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."

15 The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

The Epistle: James 1:12-18

12 Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

16 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

The Psalm: Psalm 25:1-10

In you, Lord my God,

I put my trust.

2 I trust in you;

do not let me be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.

3 No one who hopes in you

will ever be put to shame,

but shame will come on those

who are treacherous without cause.

4 Show me your ways, Lord,

teach me your paths.

5 Guide me in your truth and teach me,

for you are God my Savior,

and my hope is in you all day long.

6 Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love,

for they are from of old.

7 Do not remember the sins of my youth

and my rebellious ways;

according to your love remember me,

for you, Lord, are good.

8 Good and upright is the Lord;

therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.

9 He guides the humble in what is right

and teaches them his way.

10 All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful

toward those who keep the demands of his covenant.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

It is clear that God does not tempt us to sin. It is our own evil desires that cause us to fall into sin. But whom do we blame for our sins? Whom did Adam and Eve blame (Genesis 3:11-13)? Why are we so hesitant to blame ourselves?

Since God does not change in any way, what peace and assurance does that give us when we are tempted by the devil or our own sinful desires?

*Verse to Remember:
Psalm 25:5*

Martin Luther wrote that Psalm 25 "belongs to the Second Commandment and the Second Petition (of the Lord's Prayer)." Where in this psalm do you see this?

Read verses 6-7 again. What is the psalmist asking God to remember and to not remember? Take time to make this prayer your own.

Notes,
Thoughts,
Questions

As we look forward to the gift of heaven, how does this hymn describe the journey that we travel as Christians?

What words from the hymn give special peace and comfort to you?

The Hymn: Jesus, Lead Thou On

LSB 718

Jesus, lead Thou on
Till our rest is won;
And although the way be cheerless,
We will follow calm and fearless.
Guide us by Thy hand
To our fatherland.

If the way be drear,
If the foe be near,
Let not faithless fears o'ertake us;
Let not faith and hope forsake us;
For through many_a woe
To our home we go.

When we seek relief
From a long-felt grief,
When temptations come alluring,
Make us patient and enduring.
Show us that bright shore
Where we weep no more.

Jesus, lead Thou on
Till our rest is won.
Heav'nly leader, still direct us,
Still support, console, protect us,
Till we safely stand
In our fatherland.
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Faith + Life Connections

Do you know what it means to tempt someone? It means to cause someone to want to do something wrong. The devil tempted Jesus to do wrong things. The devil tempts us to do wrong things too. We sometimes give in and sin. But Jesus never did! Jesus never sinned. He overcame the devil's temptations. He helps us resist temptation too.

Mark 1:9-15

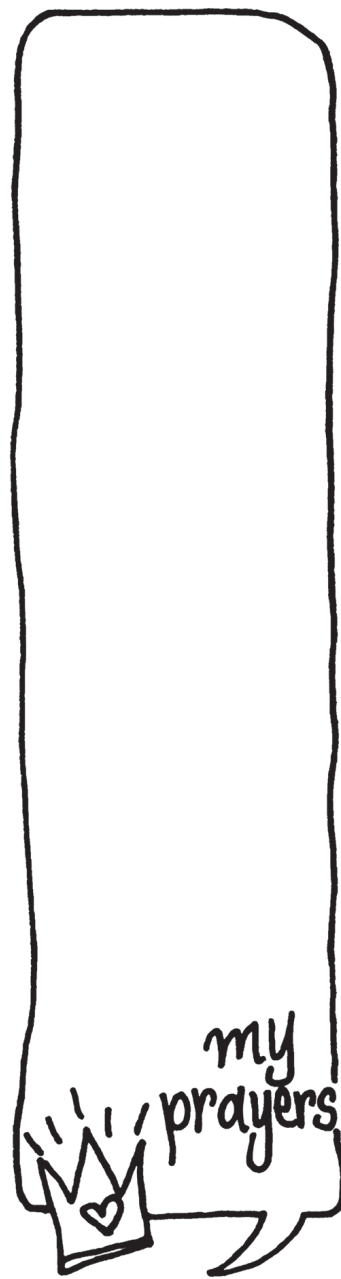
God tested Abraham. Abraham obeyed and trusted God. God would never have us do something wrong. God always does what is best for us. Abraham did not have to give up his son, but God did. God gave up His Son Jesus to die on the cross to pay for our sins. What a loving God we have! *Genesis 22:1-18*

When we are tempted to sin, we can't say, "It's God's fault." God doesn't tempt us. But He does help us do what's right. Only good comes from God!

James 1:12-18

Memorize:

Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. *Psalm 25:5*



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Devote Yourself to Prayer *Colossians 4:2*

Throughout the week, write prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and requests on slips of paper and place them in your prayer bowl. Take turns praying when you gather for devotions.

Walking Together in the Word

February 19–February 24, 2024

This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, February 25.

Lent 2

The Gospel: Mark 8:27–38

27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?” 28 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” 29 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.” 30 Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

33 But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? 37 Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

Devotion on the Gospel

“Get behind me, Satan!” Oh, we wince at Jesus’ words to Peter. Peter had just confessed his faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the very Son of God. But in his next breath, Peter is telling Jesus that he will not allow his Lord to suffer and to die. He can’t stand the thought of Jesus going to the cross. Peter even had the audacity to take Jesus aside and rebuke Him.

But then those difficult words come: “Get behind me, Satan!” It’s so hard to hear those words. But Jesus, of course, is right on. So much is at stake. If Jesus doesn’t go to the cross, if He doesn’t suffer and die, then Peter (and we) are still in our sins and we have no hope for eternal life. Jesus knew that. No, Jesus would have nothing to do with Peter’s plan.

In fact, Jesus says, not only must I carry a cross—but my disciples will carry a cross too. These are hard words too! We live in a world that not only encourages, but relishes in self-seeking and self-loving attitudes. “Look out for number one!” But Jesus leads us in another way altogether. “If you want to follow me, deny yourself, and take up your cross and follow.”

Being a Christian does not mean that we live a crisis-free life, a problem-free life, a sorrow-free life. Sometimes there are crosses we bear because we are Christians. But in those difficult times in our lives, the hard times, the cross-bearing times, God leads us to understand that in our weakness, God is strong. When we hurt, God is there with His love and His care. When we are bearing a cross for Him, God says, I bore a greater cross, so you can trust in me and you can lean on me and you can rely on me.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Why do you think Jesus responded to Peter by saying “Get behind me, Satan!”

Compare Peter’s rebuke of Jesus with Satan’s temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (see Matthew 4:1-11).

What are the “crosses” that we as believers might carry? (See Matthew 5:11-12; 10:37-39; John 16:33)

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

God's covenant with Abraham rings out throughout this section of Scripture. What does God promise to Abraham and Sarah and what does that mean for us?

In changing his name from Abram (meaning "exalted father") to Abraham (meaning "father of many"), how does God mark Abraham in a special way as His servant?

St. Paul says that when God's people suffer, we can still rejoice. What reasons does Paul give for this?

In this text Paul describes how we have been justified, redeemed, and reconciled to God. Why is the past tense of these verbs a source of great confidence and comfort for Christians?

*Verse to Remember:
Romans 5:8*

The Old Testament Reading: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. 2 Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

3 Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, 4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. 5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

15 God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. 16 I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

The Epistle: Romans 5:1-11

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11 Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

The Psalm: Psalm 22:23-31

You who fear the Lord, praise him!

All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!

Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!

24 For he has not despised or scorned

the suffering of the afflicted one;

he has not hidden his face from him

but has listened to his cry for help.

25 From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;

before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows.

26 The poor will eat and be satisfied;

those who seek the Lord will praise him—

may your hearts live forever!

27 All the ends of the earth

will remember and turn to the Lord,

and all the families of the nations

will bow down before him,

28 for dominion belongs to the Lord

and he rules over the nations.

29 All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;

all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—

those who cannot keep themselves alive.

30 Posterity will serve him;

future generations will be told about the Lord.

31 They will proclaim his righteousness,

declaring to a people yet unborn:

He has done it!

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Psalm 22, especially the first part of the psalm, points so very clearly to the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus even quotes the first verse as He suffers on the cross. How does this last section of the psalm give foresight into Jesus' ministry and spread of the Gospel?

How does Jesus fulfill the last four words of this psalm (see John 19:30)?

*They will proclaim his righteousness,
declaring to a people yet unborn:
He has done it!*

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Each of the six stanzas of "Take My Life and Let it Be" is a short prayer.

Throughout this week—before you begin your day, at meals, as you go to bed—pray one of the stanzas of this hymn.

The Hymn: Take My Life and Let It Be *LSB* 783

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice and let me sing
Always, only for my King;
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect and use
Ev'ry pow'r as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.

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Faith + Life Connections

Who is Jesus? Some people think He was just a good man, but not God. Some people don't even believe He was real. What do you believe? The Bible tells us that Jesus is the Son of God, our Savior! Think about what you know about Jesus. What would tell someone who asks you about Jesus? Talk about it.

Mark 8:27-38

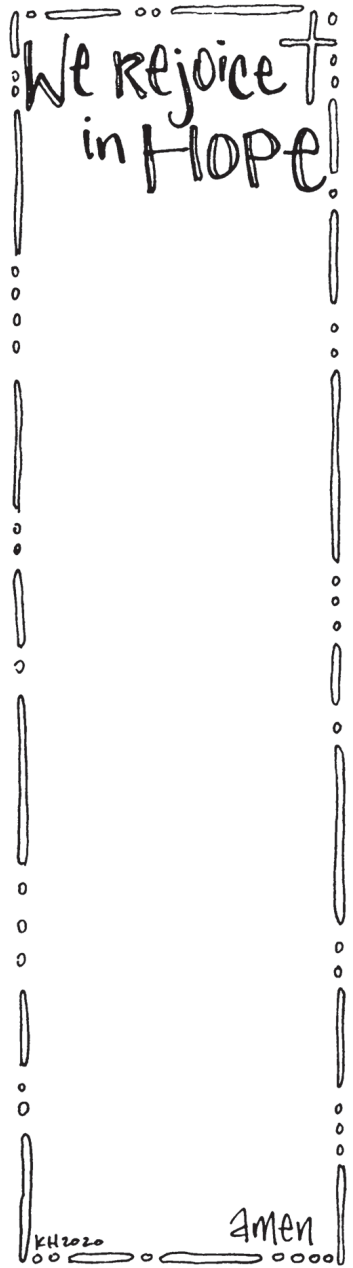
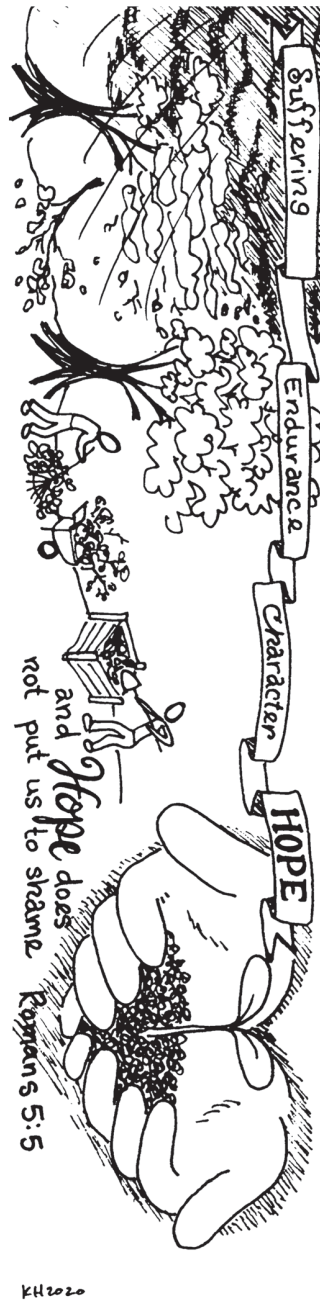
A covenant is a promise. God made some incredible promises to Abraham: He would be the father of many nations, and kings would come from him. What great nation came from Abraham? (Israel). What kings came from him? (David and Jesus, the King of kings, our Savior.) Sing "Father Abraham."

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

How do you show love to someone? God showed His love to us in an amazing way: while we were still sinners, Jesus died for us. What great love God has for you and me!

Romans 5:1-11

Memorize:
God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. *Romans 5:8*



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Devote Yourself to Prayer *Colossians 4:2*
Throughout the week, write prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and requests on slips of paper and place them in your prayer bowl. Take turns praying when you gather for devotions.

