

LENT



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INTRODUCTION TO LENT

*O Lord and Master of my life!
Take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-heartedness,
lust of power and idle talk.
But give me rather the spirit of chastity, humility,
patience and love to my servant.
Yea, O Lord and King!
Grant me to see my own errors and not to judge my brother;
for thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.*

A COMMON FOURTH-CENTURY PRAYER OF LENT FROM ST. EPHREM THE SYRIAN

Lent is about the gospel. It is a time to narrow the focus of the Church to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, to turn from our sin and trust in His atoning work.

The season of Lent lasts approximately 40 days, excluding Sundays, between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. The 40 days have obvious biblical parallels in the flood narrative (Gen. 6-8), the giving of the Law to Moses on Sinai (Exod. 24:12-18), Elijah's journey to Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:1-12) and Jesus' fasting and temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11, Mark 1:9-12, Luke 4:1-13). The last of these accounts is most relevant to the season.

Originally a preparation period for those desiring to be baptized, Lent eventually became embedded into Christian tradition as a season for the Church to symbolically follow Christ into the wilderness. It is a time for fasting and self-denial, though not for denial itself. It is a period to empty ourselves of lesser things so that we might be filled with the greater things of the gospel. Whereas Advent is a season of ever-increasing light awaiting the incarnation of Christ, Lent is a season of ever-decreasing light approaching the cross.



THE LENTEN CALENDAR

Celebrated each spring as the days begin to lengthen (the term Lent is from a Saxon word meaning “lengthen”), Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, 46 days before Easter Sunday. It is marked by periods of fasting and feasting. Each week, participants traditionally fast during the week and feast on Sundays. This pattern continues throughout the season as the Church journeys toward the Holy Week commencing on Palm Sunday. The final period of Lent is often referred to as the Triduum, beginning Maundy Thursday and continuing through Easter Sunday.

In our context, it is easy to get lost in the cultural expectations of Easter and miss out on the meaning. Lent is a reminder that the resurrection only occurred after the crucifixion. Rather than skipping over the ministry and crucifixion of Christ, Lent is a season to prepare ourselves for the joy of Resurrection Sunday as we enter the sorrow and pain which preceded it.



HOW TO USE THE LENT GUIDE

This guide walks you through the seven weeks of Lent. Each week includes a reading from the life of Christ in the Gospel of Luke, as well as four supplemental passages to consider throughout the week. Additionally, there is a suggested fast to coincide with each week.

Each Sunday, you should read the provided passage from the life of Christ and also consider journaling, discussing, praying through and rereading the narrative and supplemental texts throughout the week. This process will hopefully stir up a few questions:

1. What do these passages of Scripture reveal about the nature and character of Christ?
2. What do these passages reveal about your own heart?
3. How can you respond to God’s provision in His Son and Spirit in light of your own deficiency?

As Lent is not intended to be pursued merely on Sundays, this guide is not intended to be picked up one day a week. We can only truly enter into the tradition of Lent by establishing a rhythm of consistency. You are encouraged to spend time considering how and when you will pursue the joyful disciplines of reading, praying, meditating and fasting during the season.



WEEKLY FASTS

Each week, we have suggested an area of fasting to apply to our lives. Far from a mere responsibility, these weekly fasts give us opportunities to pursue greater communion with Christ. By emptying our lives of commotion, clutter and noise, we hope to find greater room for Him to speak through His Word. Rather than simply subtracting something from our lives, this is an opportunity to add something greater.

Some of the fasts are traditional (food, caffeine, sweets), while others may be novel for many of us (media, sleep, shopping). These particular fasts were chosen because each represents a common comfort to which our culture runs for distraction. The hope for each is that a season of unplugging from the background buzz will be leveraged for the sake of communing with the Lord. Therefore, we should consider ways in which we can leverage the fast to engage in deeper prayer, study, community, meditation, etc.

Although encouraged to pursue a complete fast on many of the weeks (i.e. abstaining completely from the area of the week), there are two weeks in particular in which you are encouraged to plan ahead the degree to which you will engage in the fast. Weeks 1 and 7 are not expected to be absolute fasts.

- Week 1 involves a fast from food. You may choose to fast from one meal a day; others will do an entire day; others still might choose a fast of multiple days.
- Week 7 involves a fast from sleep. You are neither expected nor encouraged to abstain from sleep for the entire week. However, the hope is that we might set our alarms an hour or two earlier, stay up an hour or two later and devote one entire night or morning to prayer.

Additionally, participants should consider the possibility of building each week upon the next. For instance, an individual could continue the Week 1 fast into Week 2 and so forth to eventually do all seven fasts together. Again, this is not intended to be a burden, but rather an opportunity, and should be stewarded as circumstances allow. If we are to follow Christ in the wilderness, it will take some degree of discomfort and inconvenience. May we begin to prepare our hearts accordingly.

Check out the resources available on the website (search “fasting”) for some tips on fasting if you are unfamiliar with the discipline.

Weekly Fast Schedule

Week 1: Food

Week 2: Television and Movies

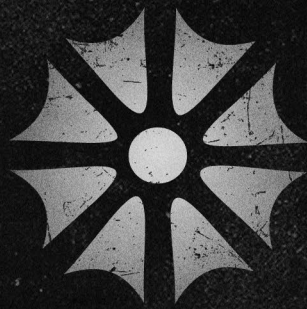
Week 3: Social Networking and Internet

Week 4: Caffeine and Sweets

Week 5: Radio and Music

Week 6: Shopping for Non-Essentials

Week 7: Sleep



Searcher of Hearts,

*It is a good day to me when thou givest me a glimpse of myself;
Sin is my greatest evil,
but thou art my greatest good;
I have cause to loathe myself,
and not to seek self-honour,
for no one desires to commend his dunghill.
My country, family, church
fare worse because of my sins,
for sinners bring judgment in thinking sins are small,
or that God is not angry with them.
Let me not take other good men as my example,
and think I am good because I am like them,
For all good men are not so good as thou desirest,
are not always consistent,
do not always follow holiness,
do not feel good in sore affliction.
Show me how to know when a thing is evil
which I think is right and good,
how to know when what is lawful
comes from an evil principle,
such as desire for reputation or wealth by usury.
Give me grace to recall my needs,
my lack of knowing thy will in Scripture,
of wisdom to guide others,
of daily repentance, want of which keeps thee at bay,
of the spirit of prayer, having words without love
of zeal for thy glory, seeking my own ends,
of joy in thee and thy will,
of love to others.
And let me not lay my pipe
too short of the fountain,
never touching the eternal spring,
never drawing down water from above.*

PRAYER FROM "THE VALLEY OF VISION"



WEEK 1
TEMPTATION

Weekly Fast: Food

Reading

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, 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. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'" 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, for it is written, " 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' and " 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

LUKE 4:1-13

Supplemental Passages to Consider Throughout the Week

Hebrews 2:14-18, Hebrews 4:14-16, 1 Corinthians 10:6-13, James 1:12-15

REFLECTION & RESPONSE

*I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger,
and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*

JOHN 6:35



Lord Jesus,

Give me a deeper repentance,

a horror of sin,

a dread of its approach;

Help me chastely to flee it,

and jealously to resolve that my heart

shall be thine alone.

Give me a deeper trust,

that I may lose myself to find myself in thee,

the ground of my rest,

the spring of my being.

Give me a deeper knowledge of thyself

as Saviour, Master, Lord, and King.

Give me a deeper power in private prayer,

more sweetness in thy Word,

more steadfast grip on its truth.

Give me deeper holiness in speech, thought, action,

and let me not seek moral virtue apart from thee.

Plough deep in me, great Lord,

Heavenly Husbandman,

that my being may be a tilled field,

the roots of grace spreading far and wide,

until thou alone art seen in me,

thy beauty golden like summer harvest,

thy fruitfulness as autumn plenty.

I have no Master but thee,

no law but thy will,

no delight but thyself,

no wealth but that thou givest,

no good but that thou blesses,

no peace but that thou bestowest.

I am nothing but that thou makest me,

I have nothing but that I receive from thee,

I can be nothing but that grace adorns me.

Quarry me deep, dear Lord,

and then fill me to overflowing with living water.

PRAYER FROM "THE VALLEY OF VISION"



WEEK 2
RESPONSE TO LOVE

Weekly Fast: Television and Movies

Reading

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.” And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.”

“A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.” Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

LUKE 7:36–50

Supplemental Passages to Consider Throughout the Week

Romans 6:1-14, Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Galatians 5:16-24

REFLECTION & RESPONSE

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

JOHN 8:12



O God of grace,

*Thou has imputed my sin to my substitute,
and hast imputed his righteousness to my soul,
clothing me with a bridegroom's robe,
decking me with jewels of holiness.*

*But in my Christian walk I am still in rags;
my best prayers are stained with sin;
my penitential tears are so much impurity;
my confessions of wrong are so many aggravations of sin;
my receiving the Spirit is tintured with selfishness.*

I need to repent of my repentance;

I need my tears to be washed;

I have no robe to bring to cover my sins,

no loom to weave my own righteousness;

I am always standing clothed in filthy garments,

and by grace am always receiving change of raiment,

for thou dost always justify the ungodly;

I am always going into the far country,

and always returning home as a prodigal,

always saying, Father, forgive me,

and thou art always bringing forth the best robe.

Every morning let me wear it,

every evening return in it,

go out to the day's work in it,

be married in it,

be wound in death in it,

stand before the great white throne in it,

enter heaven in it shining as the sun.

Grant me never to lose sight of

the exceeding sinfulness of sin,

the exceeding righteousness of salvation,

the exceeding glory of Christ,

the exceeding beauty of holiness,

the exceeding wonder of grace.

PRAYER FROM "THE VALLEY OF VISION"



WEEK 3

CONFESSION AND COST

Weekly Fast: Social Networking and Internet

REFLECTION & RESPONSE

Reading

Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" And they answered, "John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen." Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? 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. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

LUKE 9:18-27

Supplemental Passages to Consider Throughout the Week

Philippians 3:7-16, Colossians 3:1-4, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Hebrews 12:1-11

Lined area for reflection and response, consisting of 15 horizontal lines.

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

JOHN 15:5



Eternal Father,

*Thou are good beyond all thought,
But I am vile, wretched, miserable, blind;
My lips are ready to confess,
 but my heart is slow to feel,
 and my ways reluctant to amend.*

*I bring my soul to thee;
 break it, wound it, bend it, mould it.*

*Unmask to me sin's deformity,
 that I may hate it, abhor it, flee from it.*

*My faculties have been a weapon of revolt against thee;
 as a rebel I have misused my strength,
 and served the foul adversary of thine kingdom.*

*Give me grace to bewail my insensate folly,
Grant me to know that the way of transgressors is hard,
 that evil paths are wretched paths,
 that to depart from thee is to lose all good.*

*I have seen the purity and beauty of thy perfect law,
 the happiness of those in whose heart it reigns,
 the calm dignity of the walk to which it calls,
 yet I violate and contemn its precepts.*

*Thy loving Spirit strives within me,
 brings me Scripture warnings,
 speaks in startling providences,
 allures by secret whispers,
 yet I choose devices and desires to my own hurt,
 impiously resent, grieve, and provoke him to abandon me.*

*All these sins I mourn, lament, and for them cry pardon.
Work in me more profound and abiding repentance;
Give me the fullness of a godly grief
 that trembles and fears,
 yet ever trusts and loves,
 which is ever powerful, and ever confident;
Grant that through the tears of repentance
 I may see more clearly the brightness and glories of the
 saving cross.*

PRAYER FROM "THE VALLEY OF VISION"



WEEK 4

LEARNING TO PRAY

Weekly Fast: Caffeine and Sweets

REFLECTION & RESPONSE

Reading

Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." And he said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation." And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

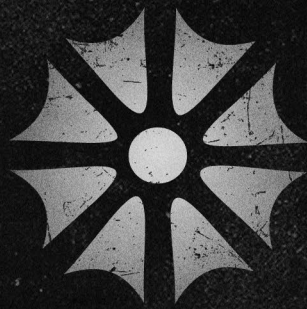
LUKE 11:1-13

Supplemental Passages to Consider Throughout the Week

Ephesians 3:14-21, Philippians 4:4-7, Matthew 6:25-34, James 5:13-18

Lined area for reflection and response

I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. JOHN 14:6



Sovereign Lord,

When clouds of darkness, atheism, and unbelief come to me,

I see thy purpose of love

in withdrawing the Spirit that I might prize him more,

in chastening me for my confidence in

past successes, that my wound of secret godlessness might be cured.

Help me to humble myself before thee

by seeing the vanity of honour

as a conceit of men's minds,

as standing between me and thee;

by seeing that thy will must alone be done,

as much in denying as in giving spiritual enjoyments;

by seeing that my heart is nothing but evil,

mind, mouth, life void of thee;

by seeing that sin and Satan are allowed power

in me that I might know my sin, be humbled, and gain

strength thereby;

by seeing that unbelief shuts thee from me,

so that I sense not thy majesty, power, mercy, or love.

Then possess me, for thou only art good and worthy.

Thou does not play in convincing me of sin,

Satan did not play in tempting me to it,

I do not play when I sink in deep mire,

for sin is no game, no toy, no bauble;

Let me never forget that the heinousness of sin lies

not so much in the nature of the sin committed,

as in the greatness of the Person sinned against.

When I am afraid of evils to come, comfort me, by showing me

that in myself I am a dying, condemned wretch,

but that in Christ I am reconciled, made alive, and satisfied;

that I am feeble and unable to do any good,

but that in him I can do all things;

that what I now have in Christ is mine in part,

but that shortly I shall have it perfectly in heaven.

PRAYER FROM "THE VALLEY OF VISION"



WEEK 5
HUMILITY AND JUSTIFICATION

Weekly Fast: Radio and Music

Reading

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 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. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ 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.”

Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

LUKE 18:9-17

Supplemental Passages to Consider Throughout the Week

James 4:1-10, 1 Peter 5:5-8, Philippians 2:1-13, Matthew 5:3-12

REFLECTION & RESPONSE

*I am the door. If anyone enters by me,
he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.*
JOHN 10:9



O Changeless God,

*Under the conviction of thy Spirit I learn that
the more I do, the worse I am,
the more I know, the less I know,
the more holiness I have, the more sinful I am,
the more I love, the more there is to love.*

O wretched man that I am!

O Lord,

I have a wild heart,

and cannot stand before thee;

I am like a bird before a man.

How little I love thy truth and ways!

I neglect prayer,

by thinking I have prayed enough and earnestly,

by knowing thou hast saved my soul.

Of all hypocrites, grant that I may not be

an evangelical hypocrite,

who sins more safely because grace abounds,

who tells his lusts that Christ's blood cleanseth them,

who reasons that God cannot cast him into hell,

for he is saved,

who loves evangelical preaching, churches, Christians,

but lives unholily.

My mind is a bucket without a bottom,

with no spiritual understanding,

no desire for the Lord's Day,

ever learning but never reaching the truth,

always at the gospel-well but never holding water.

My conscience is without conviction or contrition,

with nothing to repent of.

My will is without power of decision or resolution.

My heart is without affection, and full of leaks.

My memory has no retention,

so I forget easily the lessons learned,

and thy truths seep away.

Give me a broken heart that yet carries home the water of grace.

PRAYER FROM "THE VALLEY OF VISION"



WEEK 6
THE COST OF RICHES
 Weekly Fast: Shopping for Non-Essentials

REFLECTION & RESPONSE

Reading

And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.' " And he said, "All these I have kept from my youth." When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" But he said, "What is impossible with man is possible with God." And Peter said, "See, we have left our homes and followed you." And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."

And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise." But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

LUKE 18:18-34

Supplemental Passages to Consider Throughout the Week

Matthew 13:44-46, Hebrews 13:5-6, 1 Timothy 6:6-12, Matthew 6:19-24

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

JOHN 10:11



O Lord,

No day of my life has passed that has not proved me guilty in thy sight.

Prayers have been uttered from a prayerless heart;

Praise has been often praise sound;

My best services are filthy rags.

Blessed Jesus, let me find a covert in thy appeasing wounds.

Though my sins rise to heaven thy merits sour above them;

Though unrighteousness weighs me down to hell,

thy righteousness exalts me to thy throne.

All things in me call for my rejection,

All things in thee plead for my acceptance.

I appeal from the throne of perfect justice to thy throne of boundless grace.

Grant me to hear thy voice assuring me:

that by thy stripes I am healed,

that thou wast bruised for my iniquities,

that thou hast been made sin for me

that I might be righteous in thee,

that my grievous sins, my manifold sins,

are all forgiven,

buried in the ocean of thy concealing blood.

I am guilty, but pardoned,

lost, but saved,

wandering, but found,

sinning, but cleansed.

Give me perpetual broken-heartedness,

Keep me always clinging to thy cross,

Flood me every moment with descending grace,

Open to me the springs of divine knowledge,

sparkling like crystal,

flowing clear and unsullied

through my wilderness of life.

PRAYER FROM "THE VALLEY OF VISION"



HOLY SATURDAY SACRIFICE

Reading

“Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, ‘We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.’ And Pilate asked him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ And he answered him, ‘You have said so.’ Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, ‘I find no guilt in this man.’ But they were urgent, saying, ‘He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place.’”

When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other. Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, ‘You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. I will therefore punish and release him.’”

But they all cried out together, ‘Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas’— a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, but they kept shouting, ‘Crucify, crucify him!’ A third time he said to them, ‘Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.’ But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. But turning to them Jesus said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?’ Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ And they cast lots to divide his garments. And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, ‘He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!’ The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, ‘If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!’ There was also an inscription over him, ‘This is the King of the Jews.’ One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, ‘Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!’ But the other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.’ And he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ And he said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.’”

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun’s light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this he breathed his last. Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, ‘Certainly this man was innocent!’ And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.

Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

LUKE 23

REFLECTION & RESPONSE

*I am the resurrection and the life.
Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.*
JOHN 11:25



O God of my Exodus,

*Great was the joy of Israel's sons, when Egypt died upon the shore,
Far great the joy*

when the Redeemer's foe lay crushed in the dust.

Jesus strides forth as the victor,

conqueror of death, hell, and all opposing might;

He bursts the bands of death,

tramples the powers of darkness down,

and lives for ever.

He, my gracious surety,

apprehended for payment of my debt,

comes forth from the prison house of the grave free,

and triumphant over sin, Satan, and death.

Show me herein the proof that his vicarious offering is accepted,

that the claims of justice are satisfied,

that the devil's scepter is shivered,

that his wrongful throne is leveled.

Give me the assurance that in Christ I died,

in him I rose,

in his life I live, in his victory I triumph,

in his ascension I shall be glorified.

Adorable Redeemer,

thou who was lifted up upon a cross

art ascended to highest heaven.

Thou, who as Man of sorrows

wast crowned with thorns,

art now as Lord of life wreathed with glory.

Once, no shame more deep than thine,

no agony more bitter,

no death more cruel.

Now, no exaltation more high,

no life more glorious,

no advocate more effective.

Thou art in the triumph car leading captive

thine enemies behind thee.

What more could be done than thou hast done!

Thy death is my life,

thy resurrection my peace,

thy ascension my hope,

thy prayers my comfort.



EASTER SUNDAY LIGHT AND HOPE

Reading

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." And he

said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."



*Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those who thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, not yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure – then, from thee much more must flow;
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou'rt slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well,
And better than they stroke. Why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more. Death, thou shalt die.*

“DEATH, BE NOT PROUD”
JOHN DONNE (1572-1631)

The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:26



REFERENCES

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Eternal Father (pp. 124-125)

Lord Jesus (pp. 134-135)

O Changeless God (pp. 128-129)

O God of Grace (pp. 136-137)

O Lord (pp. 150-151)

O God of my Exodus (pp. 86-87)

Searcher of Hearts (pp. 122-123)

Sovereign Lord (pp. 142-143)



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