

The  
Fellowship  
of Prayer



lenten season

1963-9

## FOREWORD

Lent is the season among all seasons when Christians focus their attentions upon the life and ministry, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. One way to relive some of those events with our Lord is to follow his career from beginning to end. Another way, the way used in these meditations, is to consider some dominant aspects of his character and deeds. We shall use the following sequence, recognizing all the while that we cannot separate one topic from another:

Week 1 (Feb. 27-Mar. 2): Christ the Inviter

Week 2 (Mar. 3-9): Christ the Questioner

Week 3 (Mar. 10-16): Christ the Pioneer

Week 4 (Mar. 17-23): Christ the Servant

Week 5 (Mar. 24-30): Christ the Revealer

Week 6 (Mar. 31-Apr. 6): Christ the Healer and Savior

Week 7 (Apr. 7-14): Christ the Victor

In reading the record of his career, in thinking about his acts and teachings, in praying to his Father, we may share the gifts and responsibilities that God has given the world through Jesus Christ.

Roger L. Shinn  
Union Theological Seminary  
New York City

---

Scripture quotations in this publication are (unless otherwise indicated) from the *Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, copyrighted 1946 and 1952 by the Division of Christian Education, National Council of Churches, and are used by permission.

---

10 cents per copy singly or in quantity

Order from

THE PILGRIM PRESS

14 Beacon St.

Boston 8, Mass.

EDEN PUBLISHING HOUSE

1724 Chouteau Ave.

St. Louis 3, Mo.

---

Copyright, 1962, by the Pilgrim Press. Printed in the U.S.A.

# The Fellowship of Prayer

lenten season 1963



ROGER L. SHINN

*With 20 illustrations*

*the right-hand pages*

Published annually for the Department of  
Evangelism of the Board for Homeland  
Ministries of the United Church of Christ.

THE PILGRIM PRESS • EDEN PUBLISHING HOUSE



## Christ's Invitation

*"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."* Mark 8:34-35.

"Gospel" means good news. The Christian gospel is the good news of God's activity in Jesus Christ.

This good news includes an invitation. It is a strange invitation—to service and obedience, and to abundant life. Long ago Christ invited a few fishermen, "Follow me." Now he invites us.

Christ never used any tricks to make the invitation enticing. He is not the host who says, "Come, have a wonderful time and meet the nicest people." He is not the advertiser saying, "Enjoy this product now, pay later."

Often the invitation deliberately discourages anyone who is not serious. It asks each of us to deny himself and take up a cross. Yet it promises a more wonderful life than men can ever know in any other way.

Does this mean that Christ asks us to sacrifice now for a future gain? If so, life is full of examples where a present discipline leads to a future reward. But everything about Christ points to a deeper meaning. His whole life is an invitation, not to trade pain now for enjoyment later, but to discover the glory hidden in faithfulness and service.

PRAYER: O God, whose glory we have seen in the humility of Jesus Christ, grant that we, heeding thy Word, may walk faithfully in thy way. Amen.

Thou Holy Spirit of God, who dost prefer before all temples the upright heart and pure; instruct us in all truth: what is dark in us, illumine; what is low, raise and support; what is shallow, deepen, that every chapter of our lives may witness to thy power and justify the ways of God to men. Amen.—JOHN MILTON

Who goeth in the way which Christ hath gone is much more sure to meet with him than one that travelth by-ways.—GEORGE HERBERT ✓

What you bring does not matter, provided you bring all of it.—DOUGLAS V. STEERE

Flee now, for a little while, thine accustomed occupations; hide thyself for a brief moment from thy tumultuous thoughts; cast aside thy cares; postpone thy toilsome engagements; devote thyself a while to God; repose for a moment in him; enter into the sanctuary of thy soul, exclude thence all else but God and whatever may aid thee in finding him; then, within the closed doors, inquire after thy God.—ANSELM

A man's religion is, properly speaking, what has right of way over every other thing including even life itself.—LESLIE NEWBIGIN

It is doubtful whether any race of men has ever believed that man could discover anything about God if God were not at the same time actually seeking to make himself known.—JOHN BAILLIE

## Not Bread Alone

"*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*" Matthew 4: 4. Read verses 1-4.

At the beginning of his ministry Jesus had to decide what kind of leader to be, what kind of invitation to extend. Immediately following his baptism he was tempted during forty days and nights in the wilderness. That is why the church has chosen to observe Lent for a span of forty days (plus the six Sundays).

The first temptation was to turn stones to bread. Jesus answered with the saying from Deuteronomy, "Man shall not live by bread alone."

We misunderstand that if we think Jesus has only a spiritual message with no meaning for our material life. Bread is a major theme in the gospel. Jesus fed the people with loaves and fishes. At the Last Supper he blessed the loaf and broke it. He knew that man lives by bread. He wanted the hungry to have food. Only when we know the importance of bread can we understand that man does not live by bread alone.

Christ's followers today look at hungry multitudes scattered across the world. Christ's church seeks to relieve hunger. This church knows, too, that to send food, machinery, and the skills of civilization to a needy world is not enough. Man lives also by the Word of God.

PRAYER: God of all mercies, give to us and all men, we pray, both the daily bread from the vegetation of the earth and the bread of life from thy Word. Amen.

You cannot find a Christian who does not pray; just as you cannot find a living man without a pulse that never stands still, but beats and beats on continually of itself, although the man may sleep or do anything else, so being all unconscious of this pulse. This inner unceasing prayer is faith itself in the form of a continual turning of the heart towards God, that goes on steadily amid all our work. This faith, which is really a life in God, breaks forth when opportunity offers into spoken prayer, interrupting work with thanks and supplication.—WILHELM HERRMANN

I had vehement longings of soul after God and Christ, and after more holiness, where-with my heart seemed to be full, and ready to break; which often brought to my mind the words of the psalmist, *My soul breaketh for the longing it hath*. I often felt a mourning and lamenting in my heart, that I had not turned to God sooner, that I might have had more time to grow in grace. My mind was greatly fixed on divine things; almost perpetually in the contemplation of them. I spent most of my time in thinking of divine things, year after year; often walking alone in the woods, and solitary places, for meditation, soliloquy, and prayer, and converse with God; and it was always my manner at such times, to sing forth my contemplations. I was almost constantly in ejaculatory prayer, wherever I was. Prayer seemed to be natural to me, as the breath by which the inward burnings of my heart had vent.—JONATHAN EDWARDS

Friday, March 1

## The Temptation of Miracle

"*You shall not tempt the Lord your God.*"  
Matthew 4:7. Read verses 5-7.

In the second temptation the devil asked Jesus to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, counting on God to save him. This is the temptation to a spectacular leadership that invites followers to come and marvel at the amazing exploits.

Notice that the devil reinforced his proposal with a quotation from the Bible. Centuries later Shakespeare wrote, "The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose." Even today people rummage through the Bible, hunting quotations to justify racial prejudices instead of interpreting the Bible by the spirit of Christ.

The specific temptation offered to Jesus was to do something foolish and count on God to save him by a startling miracle. Jesus' refusal helps us to understand his whole life. Later he does "mighty works" of healing. His life has a miraculous quality through and through. But he rejects faith that is based on his ability to perform "signs."

Perhaps he is telling us that faith sees God's wonder and glory in the commonplace. If we cannot respond to God in the midst of our daily lives, he will not oblige us with stunts that prove his power. He reveals himself not to the curious but to those of humble and contrite heart.

**PRAYER:** God, whose power we see in all thy vast creation, open our eyes that we may see thee in every common deed of mercy. Make us the channels of thy love, we pray. Amen.

Friday, March 1

He calls the worlds into being, creates man in his own image, and sets before him the ways of life and death.—A STATEMENT OF FAITH,  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime,  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Let God have your life; he can do more with  
it than you can.—DWIGHT L. MOODY

Lord, as we stand before thee, we know that we are not worthy to be called thy servants. We have not given our whole life to thee, and we have served other masters beside thee. We have not taken thy promises seriously and have not believed that thy Word has power to save man.

But, Lord, we cannot live without thee. And as we hear thee calling us again today, we would not harden our hearts. Allow us to return to thee; forgive us for our halfheartedness and help thou our unbelief, so that we may learn to live as thy children, to serve thee with all our hearts, and to be thy witnesses unto men. Amen.—W. A. VISSER 'T HOOFT

## The Worship of God Alone

"*You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.*" Matthew 4: 10. Read verses 8-11.

The devil, confronting Jesus with the third temptation, offered all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would only worship him. No doubt the devil, like the rest of us, can err, and he was mistaken when he assumed that all the world's kingdoms were his to offer. But the temptation had some reality. Persons often can gain political and economic power by avoiding God and serving the devil.

Jesus' answer was not to say that political power is bad. Jesus himself was not a political leader. Some of his followers have been. In a democracy everybody has some political power. The Christian will aim to serve God in political life as in everything else. But he will not worship the devil for the sake of power.

On the pedestal beneath the statue of the president of one of Africa's new republics are chiseled the leader's own words: "Seek ye first the political kingdom and everything else shall be added unto you." He is mistaken—as are those Americans who think that patriotism is the highest loyalty or that national interest justifies any behavior.

All of life is an opportunity to glorify God. Christ calls us to worship God alone.

PRAYER: God, who hast made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, show thy children how to love each other and to worship thee. Amen.

The purpose of prayer with Jesus was not to get God to do things for you, but to enable God to do things in you and through you.—

G. A. STUDDERT-KENNEDY

Prayer—

Its *ground*: God, by whose goodness it springeth in us.

Its *use*: to turn our will to his will.

Its *end*: to be made one with and like to him in all things.

—JULIAN OF NORWICH

What is that which gleams through me and smites my heart without wounding it? I am both a-shudder and a-glow. A-shudder in so far as I am unlike it, a-glow in so far as I am like it.—AUGUSTINE

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew  
He moved my soul to seek him, seeking  
me;

It was not I that found, O Saviour true—  
No, I was found of thee.

Thou didst reach forth thy hand and  
mine enfold;

I walked and sank not on the storm-  
vexed sea—

'Twas not so much that I on thee took  
hold,

As thou, dear Lord, on me.

I find, I walk, I love, but O the whole  
Of love is but my answer, Lord, to thee;  
For thou wast long beforehand with my  
soul,

Always thou lovedst me.

—ANONYMOUS



Sunday, March 3

## Christ the Questioner

*"Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" Mark 3:4. Read verses 1-6.*

We often think of Jesus as a teacher who answers some of life's deepest questions. We are right in thinking that. But Jesus asked questions as often as he answered them. Frequently he disturbed people by his penetrating way of questioning. This week we shall look at seven of his questions.

Once he saw an opportunity to help a sick man. Some onlookers wanted to accuse him of violating the sabbath. Rather than argue, he asked the question, "Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do harm?" They were silent. Jesus healed the man.

Customs have changed since those days. Probably our danger is not overly zealous observance of Sunday. Probably we need to be reminded that Sunday is a day of worship. Certainly, we agree, it is lawful to do good on Sunday. So we may brush aside Jesus' question.

Yet the issue remains in a larger form. Too many think that they obey Christ by avoiding evil. They may be so busy restraining themselves from doing wrong that they seldom get around to doing anything worthwhile. Today as always Christ asks us, "What good are you doing?"

PRAYER: God of grace, who hast bidden us love thee and our neighbors, show us the difference, we pray, between painful conformity to law and joyful works of love. Amen.

Sunday, March 3

God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but he has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination.—AUGUSTINE

O my God, O my Love, to love and glorify thy Name is the great end of all our creation, which is still more enforced by our redemption.

O let it be the greatest business of my whole life to glorify thy Name in all the possible ways I can: by my mouth, by my conversation, by my public confession of thee before all men, even to death when thou art pleased to call me to it, by engaging all I can to glorify and love thee. O happy life, O blessed death, which is spent in glorifying and loving thee!

O my God, O my Love, fix in my soul an habitual pure intention of thy glory in all my actions, that whatever I do, I may do all to the glory of my Beloved.—THOMAS KEN ✓

That man 'prays without ceasing' who combines with the prayer the needful deeds and the prayer with the fitting actions.—ORIGEN

We would have working through our ineffectiveness thy quiet strength,

Through our blind folly thy clear-eyed discernment,

Through our changing impulses thy one direct and steady determination,

Through our indecision thine unswerving judgment.

Transform us therefore by thine own presence within us,

That so, being mastered and possessed by thee,

We may find freedom in service,

Entire liberty of our wills in entire subjection to thy will. Amen.—J. S. HOYLAND

Monday, March 4

## A Question About Healing

"Do you want to be healed?" John 5:6. Read verses 2-9.

If it did not seem irreverent, we might wonder whether Jesus was asking a foolish question. He looked at a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years and asked, "Do you want to be healed?" Could there be any doubt? Was this question necessary?

Yes, the question is necessary and important. Some people do not want to be healed because they cannot bear to admit that they are sick. Others enjoy the sickness that enables them to avoid taking responsibility for themselves. Not only the alcoholic but many another person also cannot overcome his sickness until he wants to be healed.

A man once had a guilty conscience because of a shady but successful business operation. He decided to tell the truth and change his ways at the cost of public exposure in court. His friends wanted to spare him. When they learned that the man had been consulting a psychiatrist, they saw their chance. They asked the doctor to advise the court to ignore the man's confession because he was mentally ill. The psychiatrist replied that the confession was the first healthy thing he had seen his patient do.

Christ came to heal the sick. Do we want his help?

PRAYER: O God, the giver of life and health, grant us the courage to stop pretending, to acknowledge the illness of our spirits, to accept thy healing. Amen.

Monday, March 4

Sincerity is the foundation of the spiritual life. The beginning of all spiritual life of any real value is courageous faith in truth and open confession of the same.

—ALBERT SCHWEITZER

By all means use some times to be alone.

Salute thyself. See what thy soul doth wear.

Dare to look in thy chest, for 'tis thine own,  
And tumble up and down what thou  
find'st there.—GEORGE HERBERT

Almighty Father, giver of life and strength, restore the joy of thy salvation, we beseech thee, to the sick and suffering, that by thy blessing upon them and upon those who minister to them they may be restored to health of body and mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.—THE OXFORD GREY BOOK

The discipline which we choose for ourselves does not destroy our self-love like that which God assigns us himself each day.

—FRANCOIS FENELON

Most gracious God, who art the strength of the weak and the refuge of the sorrowful; we bear on our hearts before thee the sick, the sad and the sorrowing; and all who are anywise suffering in body, or mind, or worldly estate. Draw near to the sick with sustaining strength and healing, speak to the downcast and desolate in comfort and peace, and to those who are appointed to die grant the safe keeping of thy love and in due time a peaceful entrance into rest; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.—THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND ORDAINAL AND SERVICE BOOK



Tuesday, March 5

## Who Is This Jesus?

And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Mark 8: 29. Read verses 27-30.

Here Jesus asked the question that evoked the first confession of Christian faith. He started with an easier question. "Who do men say that I am?" That called only for some reporting of opinions. The disciples gave various answers.

Then came the question that required personal response. "Who do you say that I am?" The answer came from Peter—impetuous, imaginative, changeable Peter. "You are the Christ." *Christ* meant *Messiah*. Peter was saying that Jesus was the long-expected leader promised by the prophets, the savior sent by God to help his people in their need. Peter was doing more than stating a theory. He was expressing his trust.

Peter did not understand very well what he was saying. A few minutes later Jesus had to rebuke Peter, who could not believe that the Messiah should suffer. Many days later Peter would deny Christ. After he made his first "decision for Christ," he had to decide often again before he finally died, according to tradition, as a martyr.

Now Christ asks us, "Who do you say that I am?" Our answer like Peter's must be worked out in the many daily decisions of life.

PRAYER: Holy God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, show us the meaning of fidelity in the midst of all the ordinary activities of life, we pray. Amen.

Tuesday, March 5

If the soul knows God in his creatures, that is only evening light: if it knows his creatures in God, that is morning light: but if it knows God as he alone is Being, that is the clear light of mid-day.—MEISTER ECKHART

It is on the denial, not on the affirmation, of the divine, that the burden of argument rests, both for our race as a whole and for every individual within it.—JOHN BAILLIE

Meditation should be explained as a voluntary act of the mind, in which the mind out of the infinite subjects for thought at its disposal deliberately chooses to concentrate and continually to re-present to itself for consideration these particular scenes, these particular questions, these particular ideas . . . subjects of its meditation. It resolves to cease to flit over the world at large and to *think of these things*.

Is this not auto-suggestion? Instead of the mind submitting itself to the objective tyranny of hetero-suggestion, it exercises a wise asceticism, pulls up the drawbridge, and . . . becomes inaccessible to . . . outer suggestions.

—DOUGLAS V. STEERE

It is God, and God only, to whom it belongs to know the secrets of the heart; Christ sees the secrets of the heart. It is God, and God only, to whom it belongs to forgive sins; Christ forgives sins. To no man does it belong to come down from heaven; Christ came down from heaven. To no man does it belong to declare, I and the Father are one; Christ alone, in the consciousness of his divinity, utters this declaration. . . . Thomas, convinced by all the proofs of his Godhead, makes the response to Christ, "My Lord and my God,"—NOVATIAN ✓

Wednesday, March 6

## The Question No One Answered

*He asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" Mark 9: 33. Read verses 33-37.*

Peter's confession, "You are the Christ," must have sent the disciples' ambitions soaring. On the road to Capernaum afterwards there was some excited talk—talk that brought embarrassment when Jesus later asked, "What were you discussing on the way?"

This was no idle question, no offering "a penny for your thoughts." This was the question nobody wanted to answer. The disciples had been discussing "who was the greatest." They would rather not tell Jesus about that conversation. So they "were silent."

There are times when Christ comes to us as an intruder. We would rather he would stay away. If he approaches we are abashed.

In the last century the newspaper of a group of "free-thinkers" printed the prayer, "Lord, do not meddle with us; we will take care of ourselves." As Christians we are not that crude. But do we always welcome our Lord's questioning?

The disciples' silence did not help them. Jesus knew what they had been discussing. So he told them, "If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." When Christians understand that, they can meet Christ's questions with something better than embarrassing silence.

PRAYER: Eternal God, who knowest our thoughts better than we ourselves, so cleanse us that we need not flee from thee but may welcome thee into our lives. Amen.

Wednesday, March 6

What is anxiety? It is the next day. ✓

—SOREN KIERKEGAARD

As long as the Gospel nudges our conscience and we resist, we must make it up with a punctilious performance of numerous rituals, duties and offices. Thus an ancient writer speaks of scruples as a very common punishment for soft and delicate living.—

GILBERT KILPACK

Come thou almighty King,  
Help us thy name to sing;  
Help us to praise: Father, all glorious,  
O'er all victorious,  
Come, and reign over us, Ancient of Days.  
Come, thou incarnate Word,  
Gird on thy mighty sword;  
Our prayer attend: come, and thy people  
bless,

And give thy word success;  
Spirit of holiness, on us descend.  
Come, holy Comforter,  
Thy sacred witness bear,  
In this glad hour! Thou who almighty art,  
Now rule in every heart,  
And ne'er from us depart, Spirit of power.  
To the great One in Three  
Eternal praises be  
Hence evermore! his sovereign majesty  
May we in glory see,  
And to eternity love and adore.

—ANONYMOUS

## What Do You Want?

*And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?"* Mark 10:36. Read verses 35-40.

We are likely to be impatient with the disciples for their slow understanding of Jesus. True, they *were* slow. But we, who have the advantage of later insight, had better not judge them too harshly.

One day James and John came asking a favor. Jesus, who had already nicknamed these brothers "sons of thunder," was in no hurry to agree. He asked, "What do you want me to do for you?"

The two asked for the privilege of sitting at his side in glory. That right, Jesus quickly said, was not his to give. Then he faced them with another question. "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?" The sons of thunder were confident. They said, "We are able."

Clearly they did not know what they were talking about. They were far from ready to share in his suffering. Only after long learning would they find the courage to stand up for Christ at the cost of persecution.

As usual, Jesus' question leaps across the centuries. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asks. Are our answers better than those of the disciples? Do we want safety, comfort, popularity? Or do we want to share in a ministry of love? If we want the latter, we may be sure that Jesus will grant our request.

**PRAYER:** God, who hast created us in thy image, enable us in the midst of the delights of this world to see the difference between foolish temptations and worthy goals. Amen.

I am Ground of thy beseeching; first, it is my will that thou have it; and after, I make thee to will it; and after, I make thee to beseech it and thou beseechest it. How should it then be that thou shouldest not have thy beseeching?—JULIAN OF NORWICH

Lead on, O King eternal, the day of march has come;

Henceforth in fields of conquest thy tents shall be our home.

Through days of preparation thy grace has made us strong,

And now, O King eternal, we lift our battle song.

Lead on, O King eternal, till sin's fierce war shall cease,

And holiness shall whisper the sweet amen of peace.

For not with swords' loud clashing, nor roll of stirring drums,

But deeds of love and mercy, the heavenly kingdom comes.—ERNEST SHURTLEFF

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings, with thy most gracious favor, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy name, and finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.—BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

A love-relationship is threefold: the lover, the beloved, the love; but the love is of God. And, therefore, to love another man is to help him to love God, and to be loved is to be helped to love God.—SOREN KIERKEGAARD

## Which Son Obeyed?

*"A man had two sons; and he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he repented and went. And he went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Matthew 21:28-31.*

The question was so plain that only one answer was conceivable. The first son won no commendation for courtesy, but he came through on the job. The second son had better manners, but when it came to getting the work done, he let his father down.

Alan Paton, the eloquent novelist who has led in the struggle for human rights and brotherhood in South Africa, has written this: "Christians often imagine that the danger to Christianity and true religion is communism or something of that nature. The greatest danger to Christianity in Africa is pseudo-Christianity."

There is a remark to set us thinking. We live in a world that is conscious of public relations. Nations, corporations, political parties, persons are often worried about the "image" that they present to the world. God is less concerned with the image than the reality. Through Jesus Christ he constantly asks which of us are doing his will.

**PRAYER:** Almighty God, whom we cannot deceive, let us not deceive ourselves. Grant us the honest faith that prompts deeds of love. Amen.

The notion of obligations comes before that of rights, which is subordinate and relative to the former. A right is not effectual by itself, but only in relation to the obligation to which it corresponds, the effective exercise of a right springing not from the individual who possesses it, but from other men who consider themselves as being under a certain obligation toward him. . . . An obligation which goes unrecognized by anybody loses none of the full force of its existence. A right which goes unrecognized by anybody is not worth very much. . . . A man left alone in the universe would have no rights whatever, but he would have obligations.—SIMONE WEIL

Thou knowest well how to excuse and color thine own deeds, but thou art not willing to receive the excuses of others. It were more just that thou shouldest accuse thyself, and excuse thy brother.—IMITATION OF CHRIST

It is what you leave out that wrecks you.

—DOUGLAS V. STEERE

O Lord and Master of us all,  
Whate'er our name or sign,  
We own thy sway, we hear thy call,  
We test our lives by thine.  
To thee our full humanity,  
Its joys and pains belong;  
The wrong of man to man on thee  
Inflicts a deeper wrong.

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER



## Who Is a Neighbor?

*"Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"*  
 Luke 10: 36. Read verses 30-37.

The question is about neighborliness. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The commandment from the Old Testament, repeated in the New, is so short and clear that one can hardly misunderstand it. But one can ask, "Who is my neighbor?" That question may leave room for a lot of stalling and excuses. Perhaps that is why a man, wanting to "test" Jesus, asked it.

Jesus met the question with his parable of the Good Samaritan. By telling of a Jew and a Samaritan he deliberately exposed a deep antagonism in his society—as though in our society one were to tell a story of a Negro and white man, of a Jew and Christian, or of a Puerto Rican and a fifth-generation New Englander. By the end of the story Jesus could throw the question back to the man who asked it.

It is not always easy to love neighbors. Dostoevsky's Ivan Karamazov admits, "I could never understand how one can love one's neighbors. It's just one's neighbors, to my mind, that one can't love." Yet Jesus asks us to love not some vague idea of mankind but our neighbors. And he requires us to discover, in the midst of the sore spots of our society, who our neighbors are.

PRAYER: O God, creator of the world and of man, we pray that in knowing thee as Father we may know thy children as brothers. Amen.

If one subjects everything to reason, our religion will lose its mystery and its supernatural character. If one offends the principles of reason our religion will be absurd and ridiculous. These are two equally dangerous extremes, to shut reason out and to let nothing else in.—BLAISE PASCAL

Lord, in this hour of tumult,  
 Lord, in this night of fears,  
 Keep open, oh, keep open  
 My eyes, my ears!  
 Not blindly, not in hatred,  
 Lord, let me do my part;  
 Keep open, oh, keep open,  
 My mind, my heart!

—HERMAN HAGEDORN

We would be building; temples still undone  
 O'er crumbling walls their crosses scarcely  
 lift,  
 Waiting till love can raise the broken stone,  
 And hearts creative bridge the human rift.  
 We would be building; Master let thy plan  
 Reveal the life that God would give to man.  
 O keep us building, Master; may our hands  
 Ne'er falter when the dream is in our hearts,  
 When to our ears there come divine commands  
 And all the pride of sinful will departs.  
 We build with thee, O grant enduring worth  
 Until the heavenly kingdom comes on earth.  
 Amen.

—PURD E. DEITZ

## Pioneer of Faith

*Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.* Hebrews 12: 1-2. Read all of verses 1-2.

Of the many tricks people play on Jesus the most curious is to make him the symbol of a safe, stodgy, harmless life. He is "the pioneer of faith," the bold leader who asks us to be a pilgrim people.

Who would true Valour see,  
Let him come hither;  
One here will Constant be,  
Come Wind, come Weather.  
There's no Discouragement,  
Shall make him once Relent,  
His first avow'd Intent,

To be a Pilgrim.

Hobgoblin, nor foul Fiend,  
Can daunt his Spirit:  
He knows, he at the end,  
Shall Life Inherit.

Then Fancies fly away,  
He'll fear not what men say,  
He'll labor Night and Day,

To be a Pilgrim.

Those vivid words express John Bunyan's loyalty during the persecutions of the seventeenth century. It is our privilege to find the ways of loyalty for today.

PRAYER: O God, who hast opened before us the wondrous opportunities of life, grant us a share in the courage and constancy we have seen in Christ our Lord. Amen.

All things are possible to him who *believes* . . . less difficult to him who *hopes* . . . more easy to him who *loves* . . . and still more easy to him who perseveres in the practice of these three virtues.—BROTHER LAWRENCE

The habitual vision of greatness.

—A. N. WHITEHEAD ✓

There is a conspiracy of silence in the churches about the hollowness of religious activism and about the precarious psychological state of many of the clergy. Every religious organization conspires in one way or another to maintain the hypocrisy that the religious enterprise is significant, and yet the religious professional knows better than anyone else how little the religious meanings are penetrating the American consciousness. Every serious study indicates unequivocally that the detachment of Americans from fundamental meanings of the Christian message is almost total, whatever be the pious phrases that people can still repeat.—GIBSON WINTER

The great enemy of any civilization is the enemy within. Its name is not subversion or revolution or decadence but *rigidity*.

—ARNOLD TOYNBEE

He had an eager enthusiasm for the possible. ✓  
—E. J. SCOTT, of Booker T. Washington

When we fail in our discipleship it is always for one of two reasons; either we are not trying to be loyal, or else we are trying in our own strength and find that it is not enough.

—WILLIAM TEMPLE



## New Directions

"No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; if he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made." Mark 2: 21. Read verses 21-22.

When something new enters our experience, we often can add it quite conveniently to the old—a new bit of jewelry with an old dress, a new necktie with an old suit. But Jesus will not let us do that with him. Like an unshrunk patch sewed to an old garment, he tears apart our old ways. He threatens our habits and traditions. As pioneer he sets us on new courses. He asks of us thorough-going renewal.

In *Moby Dick* Herman Melville describes a whaleman's chapel in which the pulpit is built to resemble the prow of a ship. He comments: "What could be more full of meaning?—for the pulpit is ever this earth's foremost part; all the rest comes in its rear; the pulpit leads the world. From thence it is that the storm of God's quick wrath is first described, and the bow must bear the earliest brunt. From thence it is the God of breezes fair or foul is first invoked for favorable winds. Yes, the world's a ship on its passage out, and not a voyage complete; and the pulpit is its prow."

Actually, we know, most pulpits are not much like that. They occupy a far lesser place in our world. But when a church preaches and hears Christ truly, then the pulpit sets the direction for life.

PRAYER: O God, whose Word is sharper than any two-edged sword, so speak to us that we may not fit thee into our lives but may fit ourselves to thee. Amen.

The propagation of Christianity, even within the churches, cannot depend on putting the old doctrines into contemporary language that can be easily assimilated. To do so may change people's ideas, but it will not change their minds. Neither can Christianity depend on the fostering of religious experiences or of scrupulously virtuous lives. The task of convinced Christians is rather to demonstrate the difference between the radically new world of Christ and other worlds.

—MARY MCDERMOTT SHIDELER

We shall have no renewal of the church till we declare Christ to be Lord, but we can do so only in the power of the Holy Spirit. What is lacking today is the reality and power of the Holy Spirit. . . . I have a concrete suggestion to this end. We must restore core-Christianity, through intimate life and worship in small groups. . . . Let there be less of the world in the church and there will be more of the church in the world.—NELS S. F. FERRE

Thou God of all, whose spirit moves from pole  
to silent pole,

Whose purpose binds the starry spheres in  
one stupendous whole,

Whose life, like light, is freely poured on all  
beneath the sun,

To thee we lift our hearts, and pray that  
thou wilt make us one.

—JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

Tuesday, March 12

## A Dangerous Faith

*"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*  
Matthew 5: 10. Read verses 10-12.

A popular magazine has advertised across the country, "Discover 8 practical ways to avoid 'the wages of sin.'" Not sin, but the wages of sin. Avoiding trouble is one of the main themes of life now as in ancient times. Religion is often promoted as a technique for safety.

But Jesus calls his followers to a risky adventure. Far from offering escape from difficulties, he tells his disciples to expect suffering. The cross stands at the center of Christian faith.

No Christian has any business seeking suffering. The unhealthy desire for pain and the martyr complex do not belong in the Christian life. Like Jesus the Christian will be grateful for friends who love and appreciate him. But, remembering his Lord, the Christian knows that God does not promise safety.

Religious persecution is not common in our part of the world today. But we know of Christians who have died because they refused obedience to evil tyrants. We know others whose friends have turned against them because in Christ's name they recognized men of other races as brothers. None of us knows when faithfulness may become costly. Christ is the leader in a dangerous pilgrimage.

PRAYER: Almighty God, we who are timid ask for courage. We who fear suffering ask for strength. Empower and support us, as thou didst Christ our Lord, we pray. Amen.

Tuesday, March 12

Trusting to God I have dared, but I was not successful; in that is to be found peace, calm, and confidence in God. I have not dared: that is a woeful thought, a torment in eternity.—SOREN KIERKEGAARD

If within us we find nothing over us, we succumb to what is around us.

—P. T. FORSYTH

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;

Our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.

For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;

His craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate,

On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,

Were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing.

Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he;

Lord Sabaoth his name. From age to age the same, and he must win the battle.

That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;

The Spirit and the gifts are ours through him who with us sideth.

Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;

The body they may kill; God's truth abideth still, his kingdom is forever. Amen.

—MARTIN LUTHER

## Radical Exposure

*"Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."* Mark 10:21. Read verses 17-22.

It is easy to argue that Jesus' advice to this rich man was not intended for everyone. If all started selling their goods, the result would be social chaos.

But that reasoning does not remove all the sting from Jesus' words. At least once, facing a man who loved his wealth too much, Jesus urged him to get rid of everything in order to become a disciple. Probably many of us let our possessions get in the way of obedience. Probably all of us cling to something that tempts us to ignore or oppose God.

A missionary once chose a sun dial as a gift to take to his friends in Africa. The African villagers were delighted. They treasured the gift so much that they built a shelter to protect it from the weather.

The Christian gospel, like a sun dial, can be only an ornament when it is isolated and protected. It serves its purpose when exposed. Christ risked himself completely to the scorn and cruelty of the world. Now he asks his church not to build a shelter for its faith but to release that faith in radical exposure, that it may serve men in their need everywhere.

PRAYER: Eternal God, if ever we seek to find thee by fleeing from human needs, turn our steps into the paths of service where thou art surely to be found. Amen.

It is by an excess of self-love that we should like to be perfect all at once and at such slight cost.—FRANCOIS FENELON ✓

O Lord my God,

My whole heart I lay on the altar of thy praise,

a whole burnt-offering of praise I offer thee.

Let the flame of thy love set all my heart on fire;

let naught in me be left to myself,

naught wherein I may look to myself;

but may I burn wholly towards thee.

All that is mine, Lord, let thy fire consume;

let all be thine.—AUGUSTINE

Creation's Lord, we give thee thanks

That this thy world is incomplete,

That battle calls our marshaled ranks,

That work awaits our hands and feet,

That thou has not yet finished man,

That we are in the making still,

As friends who share the Maker's plan,

As sons who know the Father's will.

Beyond the present sin and shame,

Wrong's bitter, cruel, scorching blight,

We see the beckoning vision flame,

The blessed kingdom of the right.

What though the kingdom long delay,

And still with haughty foes must cope?

It gives us that for which to pray,

A field for toil and faith and hope. Amen.

—WILLIAM DEWITT HYDE

## Fidelity in Pilgrimage

*"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."* Luke 9: 62. Read verses 57-62.

Christian faith is not a struggle to be good. It is grateful response to God's love. Jesus warns that enthusiasm is not always lasting fidelity.

Temptations to be unfaithful are not always spectacular. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, imprisoned by Hitler and later executed, understood the dramatic conflicts. Yet he wrote from his prison cell, "Great battles are easier to fight and less wearing than daily skirmishes."

When General Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, lost his sight, his son Bramwell had to break the sad news to him. The following dialogue took place.

General Booth: "You mean that I am blind? I shall never see your face again?"

Bramwell: "No, probably not in this world."

Booth: "Bramwell, I have done what I could for God and for the people with my eyes. Now I shall do what I can for God and for the people without my eyes."

We can give thanks for those men of faith who, in loyalty to our Lord, have put their hands to the plow and walked faithfully to the end of the furrow.

PRAYER (from Sir Francis Drake): O Lord God, when thou givest to thy servants to endeavor any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning, but the continuing of the same until it be thoroughly finished which yieldeth the true glory. Amen.

Give us, O Lord, steadfast hearts, which no unworthy affection may drag downwards; give us unconquered hearts, which no tribulation can wear out; give us upright hearts, which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside. Bestow on us, O Lord my God, understanding to know thee, diligence to seek thee, wisdom to find thee, and a faithfulness that may finally embrace thee. Amen.—THOMAS AQUINAS

O holy Jesus, Son of the most high God,  
Thou that wast scourged at a pillar,  
stretched and nailed upon a Cross,  
for the sins of the world,  
unite me to thy Cross,  
and fill my soul with thy holy, humble, and suffering spirit.

O Fountain of mercy,  
Thou that didst save the thief upon the cross,  
save me from the guilt of a sinful life.  
Thou that didst cast seven devils out of Mary Magdalene,

cast out of my heart all evil thoughts and wicked tempers.

O Giver of life,  
Thou that didst raise Lazarus from the dead,  
raise up my soul from the death and darkness of sin.

Thou that didst give to thy apostles power over unclean spirits,  
give me power over my own heart.

Thou that didst appear unto thy disciples when the doors were shut,  
do thou appear unto me in the secret apartment of my heart.

—WILLIAM LAW



## The Leader in Conflict

*"Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."* Mark 11:17. Read verses 15-19.

It is a strange paradox that Jesus, the man of forgiving love, should be also a man of strenuous controversy. The gospel records show both characteristics with absolute clarity. He who was so gentle and compassionate was never timid about entering into conflict. Those who urge the church to "stick to religion" and "avoid controversial issues" have misunderstood the Lord of the church.

Sometimes, it appears, Jesus' enemies instigated the conflicts. But, to be fair to them, we must recognize that during the last week in Jerusalem it was Jesus who started the trouble. He picked the most dangerous possible foes: the leaders of the city, the chief priests and scribes, the financial interests. He drove the merchants out of the temple, overturned the tables of the money-changers, and accused powerful men of turning God's house into a den of robbers. After that, we read, his enemies "sought a way to destroy him."

Christians, like everyone else, may get into controversies for the wrong reasons. But sometimes they are there for the right reasons. They serve a Lord who will not let them avoid conflict.

PRAYER: Gracious God, quiet our fears by showing us in the midst of life's tumult thy peace that passes understanding, the peace of Christ our Lord. Amen.

Where thou art obliged to speak, be sure to speak the truth. For equivocation is half-way to lying; as lying, the whole way to hell.

—WILLIAM PENN

Lord, save thy world: in bitter need  
Thy children lift their cry to thee;  
We wait thy liberating deed  
To signal hope and set us free.

Lord, save thy world: our souls are bound  
In iron chains of fear and pride;  
High walls of ignorance around  
Our faces from each other hide.

Lord, save thy world: we strive in vain  
To save ourselves without thine aid;  
What skill and science slowly gain,  
Is soon to evil ends betrayed.

Lord, save thy world: but thou has sent  
The Savior whom we sorely need;  
For us his tears and blood were spent,  
That from our bonds we might be freed.

Then save us now, by Jesus' power,  
And use the lives thy love sets free  
To bring at last the glorious hour  
When all men find thy liberty.

—ALBERT F. BAYLY

Everything that is evil, cruel and corrupt rises up to defeat you when you face that most difficult-to-believe statement: 'God so loved the world.'—FLORENCE ALLSHORN

## Death and Life

"I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:2.  
Read verses 1-7.

Of all life's events none is so certain, yet so mysterious as death. Jesus Christ, the pioneer of faith throughout life, is also the pioneer in death and eternal life. He gives us little information to satisfy our curiosity about life beyond death. But by trust in him men and women have met death in confidence.

Reinhold Niebuhr, the distinguished theologian, has told of his experience as a young pastor ministering to a dying woman. Her life had been hard, and just when her children were eager to provide for her, she was taken sick with cancer. "I stood weekly at her bedside while she told me what passages of Scripture, what Psalms and what prayers to read to her; most of them expressed gratitude for all the mercies of God which she had received in her life. She faced death with the utmost peace of soul.

"I relearned the essentials of the Christian faith at the bedside of that nice old soul. . . . And that was not the only time in parish duties in which I learned the meaning of Christ's prayer: 'I thank Thee, Father, that Thou hast withheld these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes.'"

By his trust in God and by his own victory over death, Christ has shown us that we need not be afraid.

PRAYER: Creator Spirit, the giver and renewer of life, make us ready through all the days of our years for thy gift of eternal life. Amen.

Lawrence ended his book on America (1924) with a very short paragraph:

The only riches, the great souls. At the time it seemed flamboyantly romantic. Now it reads like a sober estimate of the requirements of survival.—GERALD SYKES

And to replace that thought Ivan Ilych called up a succession of others, hoping to find in them some support. He tried to get back into the former current of thoughts that had once screened the thought of death from him.—LEO TOLSTOY

Since I am coming to that holy room,  
Where, with thy quire of saints for evermore  
I shall be made thy musique, as I come  
I tune my instrument here at the dore,  
And what I must do then, think here before.

—JOHN DONNE

Alone thou goest forth, O Lord,  
In sacrifice to die;  
Is this thy sorrow naught to us  
Who pass unheeding by?  
Our sins, not thine, thou bearest, Lord,  
Make us thy sorrow feel,  
Till through our pity and our shame  
Love answers love's appeal.

—PETER ABELARD



## The Servant

*"For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10: 45. Read verses 42-45.*

Someone, perhaps it was Napoleon, once said, "I'd rather face an army of lions led by a sheep than an army of sheep led by a lion." Jesus Christ is the amazing man who confronted evil with the boldness of a lion, yet went like a lamb to the slaughter. Last week we saw him as the daring leader, the pioneer of faith. This week we shall look at his courage expressing itself in humility.

"To be vested with enormous authority is a fine thing; but to have the on-looking world consent to it is finer." But God, the source of all authority, turns the tables on us. In Jesus Christ he shows us the divine glory forsaking pomp and flattery for the radiance of humble service.

PRAYER: O Master, let me walk with thee  
In lowly paths of service free;  
Tell me thy secret, help me bear  
The strain of toil, the fret of care.  
In hope that sends a shining ray  
Far down the future's broadening  
way,  
In peace that only thou canst give,  
With thee, O Master, let me live.

PRAYER: God of all glory, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, may we discover in thy servant Jesus Christ the wonder of thy power. Amen.

O Lord our Christ, may we have thy mind and thy spirit; make us instruments of thy peace; where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. O divine Master, grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.—FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Every other kind of iniquity prompts the doing of evil deeds, but pride lurks even in good deeds to their undoing.—AUGUSTINE

Beneath the cross of Jesus I fain would take  
my stand,  
The shadow of a mighty rock within a weary  
land;

A home within the wilderness, a rest upon the  
way,

From the burning of the noontide heat, and  
the burden of the day.

I take, O cross, thy shadow for my abiding  
place;

I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of  
his face. Amen.

—ELIZABETH C. CLEPHANE

Give me, gracious God, whatever is needful  
for me, and grace not to abuse my favors.  
Give me a contented mind, and help me to  
regard with compassion the wants and sorrows  
of others. Amen.—HENRY HARBAUGH

## Doing Good

*"You know . . . how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." Acts 10:36-38. Read verses 34-43.*

In ordinary conversation it is no compliment to call a person a "do-gooder." The do-gooder, we are inclined to think, likes to poke his nose into other people's business. We know enough about hypocrisy that, when a person acknowledges selfish motives, we credit him with honesty; but when he claims generous motives, we are suspicious.

In the face of this common skepticism, a social scientist reports, people are afraid to say that they want to do good. Even when they enter careers of service, they do not give service as their reason. "Only with many apologies do they now admit to a simple desire to help human beings." (Margaret Mead.)

Perhaps that reticence is desirable. It is better not to boast about virtuous motives. But let us not become so sophisticated that we scorn deeds of kindness. When Peter wanted to tell the Christian message to a group of Romans, he described how Jesus of Nazareth "went about doing good." That was an evidence that "God was with him."

PRAYER: O God, who has shown us thy desire for justice and mercy rather than ceremonies and burnt offerings, awaken in us a deep discontent with the wrongs of our world. Accept our deeds of good will as the expression of our love and gratitude to thee. Amen.

True and living devotion is nothing else than the true love of God; but not any kind of love; for inasmuch as the divine love adorns our souls it is called grace, because it renders us pleasing to the divine Majesty; inasmuch as it gives us strength to do good, it is called charity; but when it has arrived at such a degree of perfection that it not only makes us do good, but makes us do it earnestly, frequently, with alacrity, then it is called devotion. In short, devotion is a certain spiritual lightness and vivacity, by means of which charity operates in us, or we by it, with alacrity and affection.—FRANCIS DE SALES

Before the cross of Jesus our lives are judged today;

The meaning of our eager strife is tested by his Way.

Across our restless living the light streams from his cross,

And by its clear, revealing beams we measure gain and loss.

Yet humbly, in our striving, O God, we face its test.

We crave the power to do thy will with him who did it best.

On us let now the healing of his great Spirit fall,

And make us brave and full of joy to answer to his call. Amen.

—FERDINAND Q. BLANCHARD

Do good with what thou hast, or it will do thee no good.—WILLIAM PENN

Walk cheerfully and freely in God's service.  
—TERESA OF AVILA

## The Man of Prayer

*And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed. Mark 1:35. Read verses 35-39.*

Sometimes Jesus was in great demand. "Every one is searching for you," said his disciples one morning. The disciples themselves had been hunting him. Before daybreak he had gone out to a lonely place to pray.

This incident came early in Jesus' ministry. At the end of his career—in Gethsemane and on Golgotha—he was still praying. And during the days and months between he was often at prayer.

He prayed alone and he prayed with others. He prayed for friends and he prayed for enemies. He prayed for courage to do God's will. This servant of God and man, himself so close to God, knew that he needed God. So he turned often to the Father in prayer.

PRAYER: Our Father who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

And forgive us our debts,

As we also have forgiven our  
debtors;

And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the  
power and the glory, for ever.

Amen. (Matthew 6: 9-13.)

The reaper is . . . paid even for the time in which he sharpens his sickle.—THOMAS GOODWIN (quoted by Alexander Whyte)

Devotion is not a passing emotion—it is a fixed, enduring habit of mind, permeating the whole life, and shaping every action. It rests upon a conviction that God is the sole Source of holiness, and that our part is to lean upon him and be absolutely guided and governed by him; and it necessitates an abiding hold on him, a perpetual habit of listening for his voice within the heart, as of readiness to obey the dictates of that voice.—JEAN NICHOLAS GROU

Devotion signifies a life given or devoted to God. He therefore is the devout man who lives no longer to his own will, or the way and spirit of the world, but to the sole will of God, who considers God in everything, who serves God in everything, who makes all the parts of his common life parts of piety, by doing everything in the name of God and under such rules as are conformable to his glory.—WILLIAM LAW

Be, Lord,  
within me to strengthen me,  
without me to guard me,  
over me to shelter me,  
beneath me to establish me,  
before me to guide me,  
after me to forward me,  
round about me to secure me.—LANCELOT ANDREWES

Intercessory prayer might be defined as loving our neighbor on our knees.—CHARLES BRENT

## The Sharer in Suffering

*Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Isaiah 53:4. Read verses 4-9.*

Christians have always felt that the poems of the "suffering servant," imbedded in the book of Isaiah, are a prophetic description of Jesus. They tell of the righteous one who suffers with and for others.

Through the centuries men have asked, often in agony, why the innocent must bear the burdens of the guilty. In philosophy, poetry, and theology they have tried to penetrate the cosmic mysteries behind the facts of undeserved suffering. Today let us think of only the simplest side of the question, for the simplest is profound enough. *Jesus shared the sufferings of others because he chose to do so.*

The disciples closest to him never understood this until after his death and resurrection. They wanted him to assert regal power, and they argued with him when he said he must suffer. He sought out the poor and sick. In an unjust world he wanted none of the privileges of injustice. Among a people ruled by a foreign power, he befriended the lowliest. Wherever men were in need, he sought to help. Always he asks his followers to do the same.

PRAYER: Where cross the crowded ways of life,  
Where sound the cries of race and clan,  
Above the noise of selfish strife,  
We hear thy voice, O Son of Man.

Heavenly Father, may thy church accept her mission as suffering servant in obedience to Jesus Christ her Lord. Amen.

The swiftest animal that bears thee to thy good is suffering.—MEISTER ECKHART

Vulnerability . . . is a predominant trait of the Remnant. It is indeed the beginning of wisdom and of knowledge with grace. A member of the Remnant *listens*. He is ready to see with the innocent eye. He is open to new experience. If he is a man of action, he is ready for thought. If he is a man of thought, he is ready for action. All this means that he is willing to be wounded, or to be temporarily ineffective and insecure. He faces his own evil. He is willing to kill off an old portion of himself, the instant he notices his attachment to it. He accepts the pain of continual self-transcendence. He accepts his own skin, his own mind, his own place in a historic order. (This does not mean that his social position may not change; almost invariably, because of his talents, it does, bringing a greater need for self-conquest.) He hunts out obscure ancestral legacies of mind, as prime obstacles to consciousness. And he realizes that his vulnerability means estrangement from his group, a harder struggle for recognizable self-fulfillment, considerably delayed recognition, and, sometimes, no recognition at all. . . . Vulnerability must be its own reward.—GERALD SYKES

In the hour of trial, Jesus, plead for me,  
Lest by base denial I depart from thee;  
When thou seest me waver, with a look recall,  
Nor for fear or favor suffer me to fall.

—JAMES MONTGOMERY



## Brother of Many

*"Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother."* Mark 3: 34-35. Read verses 31-35.

It is in the family that most of us learn to love. But family love may be narrowing love. Some men, seeking to provide for their families, grasp greedily at wealth. Some parents, loving their children jealously, resent the achievements of other children. We may well ask ourselves whether our family love enlarges or restricts our love for others.

Jesus was not by common standards an ideal son and brother. Probably his family felt concern about the lonely, hazardous life he led. Once the news came to him that his mother and brother were asking for him. His answer sounds almost cruel: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother."

In that sentence he shows us the scope of of his love and he invites us to be his family. But dare we? He asks us to do the will of God.

A newspaper columnist once printed a letter saying: "I don't smoke or drink or eat candy. What can I give up for Lent?" The only answer to that question is to ask why anyone should raise it. To "give up" something during Lent may be a useful token of the deeper discipline Christ asks of us, but it is no more than a token. For Christ's question is not, "What are you giving up?" but "What of God's will are you doing?"

PRAYER: O God, who judgest our sin, yet lovest us all, grant us the grace that translates good intentions into resolute acts. Amen.

Where I find myself in most assured contact with reality is in the relation with God that is mediated to me through my relation with my fellows, and in the relation with my fellows that is mediated to me through my relation with God.—JOHN BAILLIE

Lord Christ, when first thou cam'st to men,

Upon a cross they bound thee,  
And mocked thy saving kingship then

By thorns with which they crowned thee;  
And still our wrongs may weave thee now

New thorns to pierce that steady brow,  
And robe of sorrow round thee.

New advent of the love of Christ,

Shall we again refuse thee,

Till in the night of hate and war

We perish as we lose thee?

From old unfaith our souls release

To seek the kingdom of thy peace,

By which alone we choose thee.

O wounded hands of Jesus, build

In us thy new creation;

Our pride is dust; our vaunt is stilled;

We wait thy revelation.

O love that triumphs over loss,

We bring our hearts before thy cross,

To finish thy salvation. Amen.

—W. RUSSELL BOWIE

## You Did It to Me

*"Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."*  
Matthew 25:40. Read verses 31-46.

Grushenka, one of Dostoevsky's characters, tells a fanciful story of a wicked woman who, at her death, was plunged into the lake of fire. Her guardian angel reported to God her only good deed. She once gave an onion from her garden to a beggar woman. The story continues: "And God answered: 'You take that onion then, hold it out to her in the lake, and let her take hold and be pulled out. . . . But if the onion breaks, then the woman must stay where she is.' The angel ran to the woman and held out the onion to her. 'Come,' said he, 'catch hold and I'll pull you out.'

"And he began cautiously pulling her out. He had just pulled her right out, when the other sinners in the lake, seeing how she was being drawn out, began catching hold of her so as to be pulled out with her. But she . . . began kicking them. 'I'm to be pulled out, not you. It's my onion, not yours.'

"As soon as she said that, the onion broke. And the woman fell into the lake, and she is burning there to this day. So the angel wept and went away."

We may be glad that Jesus' parable of the last judgment is not the whole gospel, but we may not evade Christ's clear words that our deeds to others are our deeds to him.

PRAYER: O God, to whom no act of love is trivial, may we, serving the brethren, serve Christ our Lord. Amen.

O God, who hast bound us together in this bundle of life; give us grace to understand how our lives depend upon the courage, the industry, the honesty, and the integrity of our fellow men, that we may be mindful of their needs, grateful for their fidelity, and faithful in our responsibilities to them; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. —REINHOLD NIEBUHR

Perfect love is a kind of self-dereliction, a wandering out of ourselves; it is a kind of voluntary death, wherein the lover dies to himself and all his own interest, not thinking of them nor caring for them any more, and minding nothing but how he may please and gratify the party whom he loves.

—HENRY SCUGAL ✓

Where cross the crowded ways of life,

Where sound the cries of race and clan,  
Above the noise of selfish strife,  
We hear thy voice, O Son of man.

In haunts of wretchedness and need,  
On shadowed thresholds dark with fears,  
From paths where hide the lures of greed,  
We catch the vision of thy tears.

From tender childhood's helplessness,  
From woman's grief, man's burdened toil,  
From famished souls, from sorrows' stress  
Thy heart has never known recoil.

The cup of water given for thee  
Still holds the freshness of thy grace;  
Yet long these multitudes to see

The sweet compassion of thy face. Amen.

—FRANK MASON NORTH



## The Servant's Blessing

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* Matthew 5:3. Read verses 3-10.

Everybody knows that Jesus challenged immoral acts and attitudes. What is more important is that he challenged even the highest moral standards of Greek and Roman culture. The great philosophers—Plato, Aristotle, and the rest—taught that "the good life" was an achievement of the intelligent, the men of affairs, the leisure class. Jesus undercut this whole belief with his life and his teaching. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," he said.

Cato, the stern Roman patriot and moralist, had advised farmers "to sell worn-out iron implements, old slaves, sick slaves, and other odds and ends that have no further use on the farm." Two centuries after Christ the pagan Celsus jeered at Jesus because he had attracted the lower classes, the people of no prestige, the odds and ends. Origen, the Christian, answered Celsus not by refuting his charges but by glorying in them. Yes, he said, Christ in his love reached out to just such people.

Jesus himself appreciated education, beauty, the achievements of men. He knew how to talk with the elite. But he felt a special mission to the poor in spirit. These, so seldom appreciated, drew the particular blessing of Christ, the humble servant of God and man.

PRAYER: God of love, teach us to value all opportunities of life and mind, yet to seek thy blessing upon the poor in spirit who know their need. Amen.

The duties of each moment are the shadows beneath which hides the divine operation. What treasures of grace lie concealed in these moments filled, apparently, by the most ordinary events! That which is visible might happen to anyone, but the invisible, discerned by faith, is no less than God operating very great things. O bread of angels! heavenly manna! pearl of the gospel! sacrament of the present moment! thou givest God under as lowly a form as the manger, the hay, or the straw. God reveals himself to the humble under the most lowly forms, but the proud, attaching themselves entirely to that which is extrinsic, do not discover him hidden beneath, and are sent empty away.

—J. P. DECAUSSADE ✓

O Lord,  
I would be great—  
But not in some spectacular way for world acclaim.  
Beyond my talents lie outstanding deeds, perhaps:  
But, Lord, I would be great  
In faithfulness to each small task thou givest me,  
To do the best I can with what I have  
For thy name's sake.  
And if some day thou sendest me  
Some task that seems too big  
For hands that only little deeds have done,  
I know that what I cannot do,  
Thou canst, through me, if I but will,  
And in thy strength  
I'll do the thing that is too big for me.

—HATTIE B. MCCracken

## Revealer of God

*"Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone."* Mark 10: 18. Read verses 17-18.

We have looked at Christ as inviter, questioner, pioneer of faith, and suffering servant. As Christians we acknowledge him because he is all these—and more. In and through his various activities he is the revealer of God. We know the man of Nazareth not simply as another man, not only as an exceptionally wise and powerful man, but as the man in whom God the Father has sought us and revealed himself to us.

This faith is the more surprising when we see how little Jesus claimed for himself. There is no bluffing, no boasting, no pretense about him. He speaks and acts with authority—but with the authority of one who instead of claiming men's praises points men to another, the Father.

Thus when someone addresses him as "Good Teacher," his answer is almost brusque: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone." When the disciples ask him about the timing of future events, he tells them, "No one knows, . . . but only the Father" (Mark 13: 32). These statements are not false modesty. They are simple testimonies to God.

Precisely because Jesus is so candidly dependent upon God he is able to reveal God to us.

**PRAYER:** Eternal God, without whom nothing would be, may we in the midst of all the joys and struggles of life rely upon thee, as did Christ our Lord. Amen.

We praise, we worship thee, we trust  
And give thee thanks forever,  
O Father, that thy rule is just  
And wise, and changes never;  
Thy boundless power o'er all things reigns,  
Thou dost whate'er thy will ordains;  
'Tis well thou art our ruler!  
O Jesus Christ, our God and Lord,  
Begotten of the Father,  
O thou who hast our peace restored,  
And the lost sheep dost gather,  
Thou Lamb of God, enthroned on high,  
Behold our need and hear our cry;  
Have mercy on us, Jesus!  
O Holy Spirit, precious Gift,  
Thou Comforter unfailing,  
Do thou our troubled souls uplift,  
Against the foe prevailing;  
Avert our woes and calm our dread:  
For us the Savior's blood was shed;  
Do thou in faith sustain us! Amen.

—NICOLAUS DECIUS

You can take away a man's gods, but only to give him others in return. —C. J. JUNG

Should I worship him from fear of hell, may I be cast into it. Should I serve him from desire of gaining heaven, may he keep me out. But should I worship him from love alone, may he reveal himself to me, that my whole heart may be filled with his love and presence.

—SUNDAR SINGH

## Recognition

*"What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?" Mark 1:24. Read verses 21-28.*

To recognize signs of God in our midst is not always easy. Certainly there were many who saw nothing admirable or holy about Jesus. Strangely it was the evil spirits who seemed most alert to him. In Mark's record of the ministry of Jesus the evil spirits were the first, except for John the Baptist, to recognize the wonder of this man. They sensed a threat and asked, "Have you come to destroy us?" Repeatedly the evil and unclean spirits were most aware of Jesus' unusual mission (see Mark 3: 11 and 5: 7).

A remark that has been going the rounds in England says this: "If the Archbishop of Canterbury comes out for belief in God, that's what he's there to do; but if he says the opposite, we can assume he means what he says." We might reverse the saying: if evil spirits ignore God, that is to be expected; if they acknowledge him, we may guess they mean what they say.

Evil forces recognize a threat. Sometimes evil interests are quicker to react against good than other interests are to appreciate good. In our own century tyrants have attacked the church when most people were paying little attention to it. Even in the United States the churches have suffered some vicious criticism.

PRAYER: God of all righteousness, grant that we, seeking the good, may be as alert to recognize thee as are the powers that oppose thee. Amen.

The man who refuses to face facts doesn't believe in God.—MARCUS DODS

Whoso has felt the Spirit of the Highest  
Cannot confound nor doubt him or deny:  
Yea with one voice, O world, tho' thou deniest,  
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.

—F. W. H. MYERS ✓

Ah, holy Jesus, how hast thou offended,  
That man to judge thee hath in hate pre-  
tended?

By foes derided, by thine own rejected,  
O most afflicted!

Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon  
thee?

Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone thee!  
'Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee;  
I crucified thee.

For me, kind Jesus, was thy incarnation,  
Thy mortal sorrow, and thy life's oblation;  
Thy death of anguish and thy bitter passion,  
For my salvation.

Therefore, kind Jesus, since I cannot pay thee,  
I do adore thee, and will ever pray thee,  
Think on thy pity and thy love unswerving,  
Not my deserving. Amen.

—JOHANN HEERMANN

Yes, Father! Yes, and always, Yes!

—FRANCIS DE SALES

## God in the Commonplace

*"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?"* Mark 6:3. Read verses 1-6.

It is easy to get excited about the spectacular. "Colossal! Stupendous! Gigantic!" say the movie ads. Biblical films are likely to be especially colossal, stupendous, and gigantic.

But many of the people in the New Testament could not recognize God's revelation in Christ because Jesus was so commonplace. They could not see the extraordinary in the ordinary.

"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" asked Nathaniel when he first heard about Jesus (John 1:46). Nazareth was too dull a town to furnish anybody notable. And in Nazareth, where there may have been some local pride, Jesus was only a carpenter and everybody knew his family. Later his opponents challenged his followers: "Have any of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him?" (John 7:48). Obviously he did not have impressive credentials.

But God does not need our kind of prestige. In "The Kingdom of God" Francis Thompson wrote:

No where the wheeling systems darken,  
And our benumbed conceiving soars!—  
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,  
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

PRAYER: Almighty God, friend of the humble and contrite, save us from seeking thee so intently in the distance that we miss thee in our midst. Amen.

The greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion, all in one.

—JOHN RUSKIN

Console thyself; thou wouldst not seek me, if thou hadst not found me.

—BLAISE PASCAL ✓

God is everywhere, and everywhere totally present.—AUGUSTINE ✓

(William Law) discovered that though the spirit of devotion is the gift of God, and not attainable by any mere power of our own, yet it is mostly given to, and never withheld from, those who by a wise and diligent use of the proper means, prepare themselves for the reception of it.—ALEXANDER WHYTE ✓

Wonderful the dignity you bestowed, O God, on human nature when you created it; more wonderful still its condition when you recreated it. Grant, we pray, that as Jesus Christ your Son stooped to share our human nature, so we may share the lot of his divine nature.—A LEONINE SACRAMENTARY COLLECT

No pain, no palm,  
No thorn, no throne;  
No gall, no glory;  
No cross, no crown.

—WILLIAM PENN

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, . . . (God) has come to us and shared our common lot.—A STATEMENT OF FAITH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



## Moments of Truth

*He was transfigured before them.* Mark 9:2. Read verses 2-8.

One of life's greatest problems is distinguishing reality from deceptive appearance. Mark Twain wasted thousands of dollars in bad investments, yet refused to stake a cent on a young inventor named Alexander Graham Bell. All of us have misunderstood people directly before us.

So it is with God's truth. All too often our cluttered lives miss it. But in moments of insight perhaps we see ourselves honestly and repent, or we see the beauty of life and give thanks.

So it was, too, with God's revelation in Christ. Most people missed it most of the time. But in moments of truth they saw past the obvious. On the mount of transfiguration the glory of God shined through normal appearances, and three disciples saw in Jesus what they usually missed. On occasion, too, the crowds "were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority" (Mark 1: 22 and elsewhere).

High moments do not last forever. Peter wanted to build booths for a stay on the mountain. But the God who was revealing himself in Jesus Christ had work to be done at the foot of the mountain. Revelation would continue in ordinary moments.

PRAYER: Grant, O God, that we may never flee life's responsibilities, but that the moments when we see thee most clearly may illumine all our tasks. Amen.

The arts always select, underscore and even purposefully distort for the sake of uttering the one thing that has to be said. . . . We should be very foolish if we refused, on so-called Christian or other grounds, to be initiated by the playwrights and storytellers of our time into the furies and stagnations, . . . the fear and evasion of the world we live in, and that lives in us. . . . Most people go to plays or read novels for entertainment, escape or excitement. That is hardly to be wondered at or condemned in view of the alternating current of tension and boredom that defines so much of our existence.—ROGER HAZELTON

As we sat loose, things opened.—DOUGLAS V. STEERE

If we with earnest effort could succeed  
To make our life one long connected prayer,  
As lives of some perhaps have been and are:  
If, never leaving thee, we had no need  
Our wandering spirits back again to lead  
Into thy Presence, but continued there,  
Like angels standing on the highest stair  
Of the sapphire throne—this were to pray indeed.

But if distractions manifold prevail,  
And if in this we must confess we fail,  
Grant us to keep at least a prompt desire,  
Continual readiness for prayer and praise,  
An altar heap'd and waiting to take fire  
With the least spark, and leap into a blaze.

*"But one thing is needful"*

Lord, what a change, within us one brief hour,  
Spent in thy Presence, doth avail to make. . . .

—RICHARD TRENCH

## Revelation in Silence

*And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate wondered. Mark 15: 4-5. Read verses 1-6.*

As the Negro spiritual puts it, "He never said a mumblin' word." Jesus stood before Pilate, the Roman provincial ruler, who could kill him or free him. In the gigantic empire Pilate was a small-time ruler. Yet his name has been repeated more often than the names of the Caesars. For centuries thousands of people have weekly spoken the phrase, "suffered under Pontius Pilate" in the Apostles' Creed. Pilate has his indelible place in fame and infamy because he was the unfortunate man who went through the motions of trying Jesus without ever guessing what was happening.

A modern novel describes Pilate as a broken old man recalling events in Jerusalem, complaining that Jesus had been unfair in not answering his questions. Why, we may ask, did Jesus, who often spoke so boldly, not answer Pilate clearly.

Because some things must be left unsaid. Because those who cannot discern God at work in their midst will not understand by being told. Because when all the words of Scripture and doctrine have been spoken, each man must make his own response to the silent revelation of God.

PRAYER: Father of all, whose power we have seen and heard in Christ, awaken us by thy Spirit that we may know thee in thy silence as in thy speaking. Amen.

In prayer it is better to have a heart without words than words without a heart.

—JOHN BUNYAN

The words of a prayer depend for their meaning on the silences of prayer, and if there are no silences we can well be sure that there is no meaning to the words. What is a conversation but the peculiar balance between keeping quiet and speaking?

—SAMUEL H. MILLER

The Christian community is a thinking, planning, agonizing community. The Christian community must depend upon the leading of the Holy Spirit in decision-making and upon the empowering of the Holy Spirit for the carrying out of the decisions.

When Christians truly confront one another in dialogue, truly become listeners to one another, witnesses to one another, searchers with each other, then Another will also be a part of the conversation on the way.

—M. O. R. E.

Oh! Sir, would you know the blessing of all blessings, it is this God of love dwelling in your soul, and killing every root of bitterness, which is the pain and torment of every selfish love. For all wants are satisfied, no life is any longer a burden, every day is a day of peace, everything you meet becomes a help to you, because everything you see or do is all done in the sweet gentle element of love.

—WILLIAM LAW ✓

There is no rest for the heart of man save in God. . . . If you give yourself by halves, you cannot find full rest.—JEAN NICHOLAS GROU

## Son of God

"Truly this man was the Son of God!" Mark 15: 39. Read verses 33-39.

This bit of Scripture, usually saved for Good Friday, is so central to Christian faith that it must not be saved for any single day. Here the mystery and meaning of God's revelation in Christ are shown most piercingly of all.

In his agony Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Those are the intense words of a man whom God has not protected from the worst pain human life can know. Yet they are words of faith, addressed to God—words taken from Psalm 22, a song of suffering and of faith.

Before that prayer the priests had jeered at Jesus, challenging him to come down from the cross to prove that he was Christ. That would have convinced them, they claimed. But Jesus stayed and died. Then the centurion, a stranger to Jesus' people and faith, said: "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

The words present problems. They can be translated either *the* Son or *a* son of God. We can ask, if we want, whether when the disciples had fled, anybody kept a strict record of the centurion's talk. But these questions are unimportant. The centurion's words are the words of generations of men who have confessed that this Son reveals the eternal God, who seeks his people in love and shares their most painful burdens.

**PRAYER:** God of heaven and earth, we would join the faithful spirits who through the centuries have known thy presence in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

I bless his high and glorious name, that the terrors of great men have not affrighted me from openly avowing the Son of God. Nay, his cross is the sweetest burden that ever I bare; it is such a burden as wings are to a bird, or sails to a ship, to carry me forward to my harbor. I have not much cause to fall in love with the world; but rather wish that he who sitteth upon the floods would bring my broken ship to land.—SAMUEL RUTHERFORD V

When my love to God grows weak,  
When for deeper faith I seek,  
Then in thought I go to thee,  
Garden of Gethsemane.  
There I walk amid the shades,  
While the lingering twilight fades;  
See that suffering, friendless one  
Weeping, praying there alone.  
Then to life I turn again,  
Learning all the worth of pain,  
Learning all the might that lies  
In a full self-sacrifice. Amen.

—JOHN R. WRE福德

I have shown thee my love by what I have suffered. For thee I was spit upon, I was scourged, I emptied myself of glory; I left my Father and came to thee, who dost hate me, and turn from me, and art loth to hear my name. I pursued thee, I ran after thee, that I might overtake thee. I united and joined thee to myself; eat me, drink me, I said. Doth this not satisfy thy affection? I am not only mingled with thee, I am entwined with thee. I would have no more division between us, I will that we be both one.

—JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

## The Word Made Flesh

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. John 1:14. Read verses 1-5, 9-14.*

For years after the events in Jerusalem and on Golgotha apostles told the story to people near and far. One of these apostles described what happened by saying, "The Word became flesh."

"Words are cheap," we sometimes say. But when this writer told of the *Word*, he meant more than a sound in the air or ink on a page.

His readers, if they knew the Old Testament, remembered Genesis 1: "And God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light." They remembered the Word of God that came to the prophets, the Word that goes forth from God and shall not return empty (Isaiah 55: 11). Greek readers recognized in the word (*Logos* in their language) the idea of reason and thought as well as spoken language.

Both groups of readers understood John to say that the Word—that is, the nature, the power, the purpose of God—had become flesh and entered into history in the human life of Jesus of Nazareth. That is why men cannot ignore him or pass him by as just one more interesting character. In his judgment and mercy, in his commands and promises we meet the living purpose of our Creator, the Lord of the universe.

PRAYER: God of all glory, whose radiance has illumined our darkness, may we rejoice to walk in the light of thy love, which we have seen in Christ. Amen.

When witnessing is first by being and then by doing, our saying also becomes genuine. . . . The world has stopped listening because most speech is self-protective and self-promoting.—NELS F. S. FERRE

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

### —THE APOSTLES' CREED

Christ, whose glory fills the skies,

Christ, the true, the only Light,  
Sun of righteousness, arise,

Triumph o'er the shades of night;  
Dayspring from on high, be near;

Day-star, in my heart appear.

Dark and cheerless is the morn

Unaccompanied by thee;

Joyless is the day's return,

Till thy mercy's beams I see,

Till they inward light impart,

Glad my eyes, and warm my heart. Amen.

### —CHARLES WESLEY



## The Savior

*"Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk'? . . . I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home."* Mark 2:9, 11. Read verses 1-12.

This week we shall look at Jesus Christ the Savior. Christians have always confessed that in him God did a healing, reconciling, saving work for man.

The many accounts of healing in the gospels make trouble for the modern mind. We may immediately say three things about them. (1) God does not want us ever to pretend to believe, and he does not condemn us for honest doubt. (2) We are mortal, subject to illness and death. Jesus did not stop all sickness. He himself bled and died. (3) Nevertheless there is good reason to believe in a healing activity of God that works in both normal and unusual ways. The biblical accounts of healing testify to that divine power.

In the case of the paralytic, as in some other cases reported in the New Testament, the healing of body is linked with the forgiveness of sin. This is not to say that all illness has moral causes. But modern medical discoveries reaffirm the biblical belief that spiritual and physical health are often closely related. A healed spirit may lead to a healed body. Because Christ can say, "Your sins are forgiven," he sometimes goes on to say, "Rise and walk."

PRAYER: O God, giver of life, we thank thee for all powers of healing; for the arts of men and for the restoration of body and spirit that come by faith. Amen.

Thou art coming to a King,  
Rich petitions with thee bring;  
For his grace and power are such  
None can ever ask too much.

—JOHN NEWTON ✓

God acts with means, without means,  
against means; and where the ordinary means  
are desired and cannot be had, he supplies  
that defect by extraordinary grace.

—BRAMHALL ✓

Even the darkness is subject to a law, whose  
ruler, in the last instance, is God. And God  
does not want man to come under this law  
of darkness. . . . God will abolish sickness . . .  
and death (Isaiah 35). . . . In the person of  
Jesus Christ. . . , and in him alone, sin, sick-  
ness and death are already overcome.

—DOROTHEE HOCH

Our yearning to meet a personal life that  
shall resolve every element of separation be-  
tween us and it into pure trust, and thus give  
our spirits a home, is the longing for the living  
God. We find it satisfied in Jesus.

—WILHELM HERRMANN ✓

The light which shows us our sins is the  
light that heals us.—GEORGE FOX

O our Lord, to whom the sick and distressed  
were brought at eventide to receive from thee  
the healing gift of thy loving ministry; we be-  
seach thee, watch thou with those who wake,  
or watch, or weep this night; and give thine  
angels charge over those who sleep. Tend thy  
sick ones, O Christ; rest thy weary ones; sooth  
and pity thine afflicted ones; shield thy joyous  
ones; and all this for thy love's sake. Amen.

—AUGUSTINE

Monday, April 1

## Friend of Sinners

*"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."* Mark 2:17. Read verses 15-17.

Jesus' message is addressed to sinners. That means it is addressed to all of us. Jesus began his ministry by preaching, "The kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel." In the Lord's Prayer he taught his disciples to pray for forgiveness.

Some of the especially religious people wondered why Jesus ate with sinners. In the light of his entire teaching he might have answered, "Because there is nobody else to eat with; all men are sinners." Instead, however, he called attention to his mission. He came to heal the sick and to call the sinners.

Sometimes we are tempted to think that education or science or economic progress will overcome our human troubles. But sinful men can misuse all these gains. As Robert Frost has put it, "Education elevates trouble to a higher level." Education is good, but still we need healing.

St. Augustine once wrote, "He who thinks he lives without sin puts aside not sin, but pardon." For those who acknowledge their sin, however, Christ promises God's healing. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

PRAYER: Gracious Father, whom we know in Jesus Christ the friend of sinners, open our hearts that we may confess our sins and welcome thee as our Savior. Amen.

Monday, April 1

God is wherever man lets him in.—MARTIN BUBER, from THE RABBI OF KOTSK

God creates out of *nothing*. Wonderful, you say. Yes, to be sure, but he does what is still more wonderful: he makes saints out of sinners.

—SOREN KIERKEGAARD

Lay me to sleep in sheltering flame,  
O Master of the Hidden Fire!  
Wash pure my heart, and cleanse for me  
My soul's desire.

In flame of sunrise bathe my mind,  
O Master of the Hidden Fire,  
That, when I wake, clear-eyed may be  
My soul's desire. —FIONA MACLEOD ✓

Failure to repent is much worse than sin. A man may have sinned for but a moment, but he may fail to repent of it moments without number.—RABBI BUNAM OF PZHYSHA

He seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.—A STATEMENT OF FAITH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Jesus, in thy dying woes,  
Even while thy life-blood flows,  
Craving pardon for thy foes:  
Hear us, holy Jesus.

O may we, who mercy need,  
Be like thee in heart and deed,  
When with wrong our spirits bleed:  
Hear us, holy Jesus. Amen.

—THOMAS B. POLLOCK

## He Who Justifies

*"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."* Luke 18:13-14. Read verses 9-14.

Most people like the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (the publican). It expresses the glowing warmth of forgiveness. Yet it has its disturbing quality. Jesus told it "to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others." To whom, then, does the parable speak today? To Christians, who are proud of their goodness? To Americans, who boast of national virtue and despise communists? Jesus has harsh words for all who boast of their conduct.

Forgiveness, in the parable, is for the tax collector. In those days, as now, tax collectors were not popular. In those days, more than now, tax collectors were often rascals. This one knew he was not a good man. He prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

This parable is the basis of the Christian belief, so strongly emphasized by St. Paul and the Protestant Reformation, in "justification by faith." We cannot be justified—that is, put into a right relation with God—by our goodness. Rather God, as we know him in Christ, justifies those who know their need and put their trust in him.

PRAYER: Merciful God, whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting, forgive us and save us from weakness and sin, we pray. Amen.

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee and worthily magnify thy holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.—BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

Almighty and merciful God, the fountain of all goodness, who knowest the thoughts of our hearts; we confess unto thee that we have sinned against thee and done evil in thy sight. Wash us, we beseech thee, from the stains of our past sins and give us grace and power to put away all hurtful things, so that, being delivered from the bondage of sin, we may bring forth worthy fruits of repentance. O eternal Light, shine into our hearts. O eternal Goodness, deliver us from evil. O eternal Power, be thou our support. Grant unto us that with all our hearts and minds and strength we may evermore seek thy face, and finally bring us in thine infinite mercy to thy holy presence. Amen.—ALCUIN

O most merciful Father, we confess before thee our gross disobedience and failure. We have forgotten our vocation as thy servants, and have served our own wills and not thine. Take not, O Lord, thy Holy Spirit from us; do not surrender us up to faithless fears. Give us hearty repentance, forgive us all our sins, release us from our chains, and fortify us, with an unwavering trust in thy goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.—DAILY OFFICE, CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE COMMUNITY, AUSTIN, TEXAS

## Invincible Love

"*This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.*" Luke 15: 24. Read verses 11-32.

In the story of the father and the two sons, one obedient and one usually called prodigal, Jesus tells of the invincible love of God. We easily romanticize the story. We smile indulgently at the son who sowed his wild oats and miss the agony of the story.

Actually the younger son was a defiant and unpleasant character. Certainly we do not think well of a son who, before his father's death, demands his share of the inheritance, then squanders it, and finally comes home demoralized and penniless. He must have caused his father great pain. As for his own suffering, he brought it on himself.

Yet the father kept loving. When the son returned in penitence, the father ran to welcome him and celebrated the homecoming. The son received the food and clothing he had no right to expect. More important, he received the father's love.

From Jesus we hear about the forgiving, saving love of God. More than that, in Jesus we meet the unconquerable love of God, seeking us out and welcoming us home to his family.

PRAYER (from Augustine): O Lord, give me thine own self, without which, though thou shouldst give me all that ever thou hast made, yet could not my desires be satisfied. Amen.

O God, who art faithful and just to forgive us our sins; mercifully grant that we may be delivered from the bondage of our sins and may one day rejoice in perfect liberty in our fatherland, which is in heaven. Amen.

—ROMAN BREVIARY

There is above this warped and weakened will of yours and mine, above this absurd and senseless will of the world, another which is straight and pure, and which, when once it prevails, must have other, wholly other, issues than these we see today. Out of this will, when it is recognized, another life must grow. . . . We have wandered away, but we can return.

—KARL BARTH

Heaven is as near to our souls as this world is to our bodies; and we are created, we are redeemed, to have our conversation in it. God, the only good of all intelligent natures, is not an absent or distant God.—WILLIAM LAW

Let not conscience make you linger,  
Nor of fitness fondly dream;  
All the fitness Christ requireth  
Is to feel your need of him:

This he gives you;  
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam.

—JOSEPH HART

Are you in distress over a ruptured relationship? As you exercise your freedom by seeking to be reconciled, you grow. But perhaps he exercises his freedom by resisting and rejecting you! For God, nothing is impossible. But for us there are vast untowardnesses that cause pain and humiliation and provide opportunities to learn compassion and patience—in a word, to grow.



## Friend of Children

*"Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God."*  
Mark 10: 14. Read verses 13-16.

Almost everybody, at least in some of his moods, likes little children. They bring out our love and protectiveness. Hence Jesus is attractive in this incident. Unlike the disciples, who appear as grouchy busy-bodies, Jesus welcomes the children. Immediately we take sides with him.

Modern life is often different. Many parents in their search for wealth and social enjoyment resent their children's demands. Our society usually offers poor schools and few opportunities to children living in slums. We neglect or abuse children of some races and those in families of migrant workers. These are situations where we need to grasp the meaning of Jesus' love for children.

After welcoming the children Jesus says, "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." Before God all of us are children. Our maturity, knowledge, and skills are small and feeble there. But our need is God's opportunity. He loves us.

The great painter Vincent van Gogh said that Christ "was more of an artist than all the others, disdaining marble and clay and color, working in the living flesh." If we come to him as children, he can bring new beauty into our lives.

PRAYER: Lord of all mercy, may we approach thee as children, knowing our need and seeking the joy of thy kingdom brought to us in Christ. Amen.

Lord, thou didst gather children to thy bosom  
And lay cool hands upon fevered limbs of boys  
and girls.

As thou raised the widow's daughter  
And spake peace to troubled minds,  
Draw near to little ones in illness  
To comfort worried nights and the anguished  
days.

Make those who watch in homes and hospitals  
The ministers of thy grace.

In ways beyond our knowing  
Restore the broken order of health to youthful  
bodies.

Bring patience to endure,  
Joy to lighten the darkened room,  
Quiet to the hurried pulse,  
Strength to combat pestilence  
... And maladies ...

Keep all children who suffer in special watch  
As we commit them and all their promise to  
thy loving care.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

—GEORGE STEWART

We cannot fall below the arms of God, how  
low soever it be we fall.—WILLIAM PENN

Lift up our hearts, we beseech thee, O  
Christ, above the false show of things, above  
fear, above laziness, above selfishness and  
covetousness, above custom and fashion, up to  
the everlasting truth and order that thou art,  
that so we may live joyfully and freely, in  
faithful trust that thou art our Saviour, our  
example, and our friend in this world and in  
the world to come. Amen.

—CHARLES KINGSLEY

## "He Saved Others"

*The rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" Luke 23: 35. Read verses 32-43.*

When we think of Christ as Savior, we usually think immediately of the cross. Today we look at Luke's account of the crucifixion, as a week ago we looked at Mark's.

Three times in this record Jesus is challenged. The rulers scoffed, "He saved others; let him save himself." The soldiers said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself!" A thief railed at him, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

The challenges are bitterly sarcastic. The rulers did not really believe that he had saved others, and they did not expect him to save himself. The curious truth in the sarcasm is that he saved others *because* he did not save himself. Instead of saving himself he gave himself. Instead of striking back he prayed, as he had lived, in the spirit of forgiveness. When men were at their worst, Christ asked God to forgive them. We who believe in Christ see in his forgiveness the forgiveness of the Father.

That is why Paul could write that God "through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5: 18). Now it is our privilege and responsibility to continue his work.

**PRAYER:** Eternal God, mighty to save, awaken in us the faith to respond to thy power in Jesus Christ, who gave himself to save us. Amen.

If Christ saves thee, it must be done in this life by changing and altering all that is within thee, by helping thee to a new heart. For to have salvation from Christ is nothing else but to be made like unto him. It is to have his humility and meekness, his mortification and self-denial, his renunciation of the spirit, wisdom, and honours of this world, his love of God, his desire of doing God's will, and seeking only his honour. But if thou wilt not to have these tempers brought forth in thee, then thou must be said to be unwilling to have Christ to be thy Saviour. —WILLIAM LAW ✓

Let me no more my comfort draw  
From my frail hold on thee;  
In this alone rejoice with awe—  
Thy mighty grasp on me.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN ✓

I am Father, I am Brother, I am Bridegroom, I am dwelling-place, I am food, I am raiment, I am root, I am foundation; all whatsoever thou wilt I am.

Be thou in need of nothing; I will be even a Servant, for I came to minister, not to be ministered unto.

I am Friend, and Member, and Head, and Brother, and Sister, and Mother; I am all; only cling thou closely to me.

I was poor for thee, and a wanderer for thee, and on the cross for thee, and in the tomb for thee.

And thou art all things to me: my brother and joint-heir, my friend and member.

What wouldst thou have more?

—JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

## The Community of Faith

"I . . . pray . . . that they may all be one."  
John 17:20-21. Read verses 20-23.

This prayer of Jesus, as reported in the Gospel of John, shows one way—only one of the ways but an important one—in which his saving work continues in the world. He asks that his followers be united in the same kind of close union that joins Jesus with the Father.

Our common talk about the brotherhood of man, good as it is, yet is not enough. Clemenceau, asked whether he agreed that brotherhood is the basis of all human relations, answered: "Yes, certainly. Brotherhood, brotherhood; Cain and Abel, Cain and Abel." Jesus asks for a unique kind of brotherhood.

Sometimes we find real signs of that brotherhood in the Christian church. Martin Niemöller once said: "I will never forget how my old father visited me for the last time in the office of the Gestapo at the concentration camp in Oranienberg and said to me in farewell, 'My dear boy, the Eskimos in north Canada and the Batak tribe in Sumatra have sent you greetings. They are praying for you.'"

Jesus asked that the unity of his followers be so evident that the world would believe in him and in God's love. When we turn in hostility against other Christians because of their differing race or nation or denomination, we deny our Lord's prayer.

PRAYER: Almighty God, like our Savior Christ we pray that all who trust thee may love each other in the community of Christian faith. Amen.

Remember, O Lord, thy Church, to deliver her from all evil and to make her perfect in thy love; and gather her together from the four winds, the sanctified Church, into thy kingdom, which thou hast prepared for her. For thine is the power and the glory forevermore! Amen.—THE DIDACHE

He bestows upon us his Holy Spirit,  
creating and renewing the Church of Jesus Christ,  
binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races  
He calls us into his Church . . .  
to join him in his passion and victory.

—A STATEMENT OF FAITH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

The other gives me myself.—J. P. SARTRE  
Draw nigh to thy Jerusalem, O Lord,  
Thy faithful people cry with one accord;  
Ride on in triumph; Lord, behold we lay  
Our passions, lusts, and proud wills in thy way!

Hosanna! welcome to our hearts! for here  
Thou hast a temple, too, as Zion dear;  
O enter in, dear Lord, unbar the door;  
And in that temple dwell forevermore.  
Amen.—JEREMY TAYLOR

The spiritual unity of Christ's Church depends upon our common amazement before him and a common humility about our apprehensions of him. An open window on God in devotion and on the world in witness and service will mean an open window on each other in the Body of Christ.

## Christus Victor

*"Hosanna! Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord!"* Mark 11:9. Read verses 1-10.

*Christus Victor* is a phrase that Christians have used through the centuries. As victor, Christ has conquered sin and death, and we are privileged to share in his conquest.

Not until after the death and resurrection of Christ did men proclaim his victory with assurance. Occasionally during his earthly life some glimmer of insight broke through to those around him. So it was during the triumphal entry to Jerusalem. Archbishop William Temple described this day: "The world is groping after its true leader; He offers Himself; and the world, after yielding for a moment to the impact of His divinity, arrests Him and crucifies him."

It was a day of contradictions. People shouted "Hosanna"; yet he rode humbly, not on a prancing horse but on a colt, the foal of an ass. Spectators hailed "the kingdom of our father David that is coming"; yet Jesus brought no such kingdom. An old hymn expresses the strange situation:

Ride on! Ride on in majesty!

In lowly pomp ride on to die.

The crowds, who misunderstood Jesus, were not entirely wrong. Although he was not the conqueror they sought, he was king and victor in a deeper sense than they knew.

PRAYER: God of glory, may our hosannas of today be no momentary shouts of joy, but continue and deepen as we this week relive the passion of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Where pain ends, gain ends. —ALEXANDER WHYTE ✓

The people of the Hebrews with palms before thee went;

Our praise and prayer and anthems before thee we present.

—THEODULPH OF ORLEANS

Thou that art the Father's Word,  
Thou that art the Lamb of God,  
Thou that art the Virgin's Son,  
Thou that savest souls undone,  
Sacred Sacrifice for sin,  
Fount of piety within;

Hail, Lord Jesus!

Thou that art the Door of heaven,  
Living Bread in mercy given,  
Brightness of the Father's face,  
Everlasting Prince of Peace,  
Precious Pearl beyond all price,  
Brightest Star in all the skies;

Hail, Lord Jesus!

King and Spouse of holy hearts,  
Fount of Love that ne'er departs,  
Sweetest Life and brightest Day,  
Truest Faith, and surest Way  
That leads onward to the blest  
Sabbath of eternal rest;

Hail, Lord Jesus!

—HENRY ALFORD ✓

Turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness. Turn unto the Lord your God.



Monday, April 8

## In the Midst of You

*"Behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."* Luke 17:21. Read verses 20-21.

Some of the people around Jesus hoped that he would be a king like David. They longed for a leader who would overthrow the Romans, win independence for his people, and establish peace. We can easily understand these hopes; they are in large part good hopes.

But Jesus was the representative of God's kingdom. That kingdom is not an area on a map with a capital city. God, simply because he is God, is king of the universe. We cannot call him president, because he owes his power to no political party and to no election. He is Creator and Lord. "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom," said a Hebrew hymn (Psalm 145: 13).

In Jesus' day the emperors tried to rival God. People addressed them as "Your Eternity." Inscriptions on coins called them eternal. That is ridiculous, but it shows what men will do in their lust for glory.

Jesus teaches that the true victory is with no human kingdom but with God's kingdom. And where is God's kingdom when Caesar seems to have all the power? Where God is acknowledged, where God's will is done, there is the evidence of a glory and power greater than Caesar's. God's kingdom has come—in Jesus Christ—into our midst.

PRAYER: God, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, grant that we may be loyal citizens of that kingdom which Jesus Christ has brought into our midst. Amen.

Monday, April 8

Lord, through this holy week of our salvation  
Which thou hast won for us who went astray,  
In all the conflict of thy sore temptation  
We would continue with thee day by day.

Along that sacred way where thou art leading,  
Which thou didst take to save our souls from  
loss,

Let us go also, till we see thee pleading  
In all prevailing prayer upon thy cross.

Until thou see thy bitter travail's ending,  
The world redeemed, the will of God complete,  
And, to thy Father's hands thy soul com-  
mending,

Thou lay the work he gave thee at his feet.  
Amen.

—WILLIAM H. DRAPER

In nature we have our being; in mercy, in-  
creasing; in grace, fulfilling.

—JULIAN OF NORWICH

O thou who through this holy week  
Didst suffer for us all,  
The sick to cure, the lost to seek,  
To raise up them that fall.

We cannot understand the woe  
Thy love was pleased to bear;  
O Lamb of God, we only know  
That all our hopes are there.

Thy feet the path of suffering trod;  
Thy hand the victory won;  
What shall we render to our God  
For all that he hath done? Amen.

—JOHN M. NEALE

Tuesday, April 9

## Thine Is the Kingdom

*"For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."* Matthew 6: 13.

Where did those words of praise come from? Luke does not include them in the Lord's Prayer. The oldest manuscripts of Matthew do not report them. Evidently the early church added them to the words of the prayer of Jesus.

But why would any Christian try to add something to the prayer that came from Jesus himself? Because of what Jesus had done.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come." This was a prayer that God, who was already king, would assert his power by conquering evil. After the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christians were sure that God had struck the decisive blow against evil. Since evil still raged, they continued to pray, "Thy kingdom come." But remembering what God had done in Christ, they had to add, "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever."

But how, when evil still has bitter power, can Christians say that God has conquered it? In one human life God met and conquered death. Jesus Christ suffered the worst that evil could do, but defeated it by refusing to answer it with evil. He loved and forgave. Evil killed him, but he conquered death. By his victory he marked out the way of victory for those who follow him.

PRAYER: Lord God, King of the universe, give us the courage to struggle against the evils of our world in the confidence of thy mighty power. Amen.

Tuesday, April 9

He promises to all who trust him  
forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,  
courage in the struggle for justice and peace.

—A STATEMENT OF FAITH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

O come and mourn with me awhile!

O come ye to the Savior's side;

O come together let us mourn;

Jesus, our Lord, is crucified.

Have we no tears to shed for him,

While soldiers scoff and foes deride?

Ah! look how patiently he hangs;

Jesus, our Lord, is crucified.

Seven times he spake, seven words of love,

And all three hours his silence cried

For mercy on the souls of men;

Jesus, our Lord, is crucified.

O love of God! O sin of man!

In this dread act your strength is tried,

And victory remains with love,

For he, our Lord, is crucified.

—FREDERICK W. FABER

Thou didst accept their praises;

Accept the prayers we bring,

Who in all good delightest,

Thou good and gracious King.

All glory, laud, and honor

To thee, Redeemer, King,

To whom the lips of children

Made sweet hosanna ring! Amen.

—THEODULPH OF ORLEANS

## Thanks Be to God

*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Romans 7:24-25. Read Romans 7:21-8:2.*

Some human achievements, though we may admire them, give us no reason for confidence about ourselves. One might think: "Bach was a great musician. I am not. Einstein made grand scientific discoveries. I cannot even understand them. Several men have run a four-mile mile. That doesn't help me when I run for the bus."

Why, then, do Christians rejoice in what Christ has done? Because he won a victory for us and in us. St. Paul describes the bitter warfare between good and evil within himself. Then in the midst of what sounds like despair he bursts into his joyful exclamation: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Elsewhere Paul tells his experience in another way: "I have been crucified with Christ; 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" (Galatians 2:20). He did not mean that all his struggles with evil were over. He meant that by entering into Christ's life and letting Christ enter into his life, he shared in the victory that Christ won.

PRAYER: Glory be to thee, O God, who hast created us, sought us, shared our struggles, and offered us life in thee. Thanks be to thee through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thou that hast given so much to me,  
Give one thing more, a grateful heart.  
Not thankful when it pleaseth me,  
As if thy blessings had spare days;  
But such a heart, whose pulse may be  
Thy praise.—GEORGE HERBERT

The Christian religion is the profound humiliation of man, the boundless love of God, and the endless striving born of gratitude.

—SOREN KIERKEGAARD

If we find life unhappy and the world contemptible it is because we have not understood them. We are all very ungrateful. If we truly believed that we are surrounded both by God and man, with more blessings than we really need to keep up our spirits, we should be both happier and more in the Truth. We should be lighthearted like those who always think they have too much; even when it seems to us they have very little indeed.

—ABBE DE TOURVILLE

Blessing and honour, thanksgiving and praise, more than I can utter, more than I can conceive,

be unto thee, O most adorable Trinity,  
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, . . . for ever  
and ever.

To God the Father, who first loved us,  
and made us accepted in the Beloved:  
To God the Son, who loved us,  
and washed us from our sins in his own Blood:  
To God the Holy Ghost,  
Who sheds the love of God abroad in our  
hearts,

be all love and all glory, for time and for  
eternity.

—THOMAS KEN

## Struggle in Prayer

*And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt."* Mark 14:36. Read verses 32-42.

Herman Melville in *Billy Budd* uses a striking phrase, "the agony of the strong." There are struggles and pains that the weak cannot know. Only those strong enough to live life to the hilt will meet them.

Tonight the church marks the anniversary of Jesus' last supper with his disciples. Judas left the meal early to betray Jesus. Then Jesus and the disciples went to Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed.

The prayer was a struggle. Jesus was neither the brash hero, indifferent to all threats, nor the man with a martyr complex, wanting to die. Jesus is closer to us, a more genuine person, exactly because he sought no pain and wanted to live. Nevertheless he prayed, "Not what I will, but what thou wilt."

Out of the struggle and prayer came the decision. Returning to his disciples he said, "Rise, let us be going." In the lonely time with God he had met the issue. The agony of the strong was not over; the suffering of the cross was ahead. But Jesus, trusting in God, had chosen his direction. "Not what I will, but what thou wilt."

PRAYER: Be with us, heavenly Father, in life's pain and struggle as in life's joys, that we may live in faithfulness to thee as did Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

I thank thee, my heavenly Father, through thy beloved Son Jesus Christ my Lord, that thou hast kept me this night from all danger and harm. I pray thee to keep me also during this day from all evil and sin, so that my life and all that I do may be pleasing in thy sight; for I commit myself, body, soul, and all, into thy hands. May thy holy angel be with me, that the evil one may have no power over me. Amen.—MARTIN LUTHER

A saint is simply a human being whose soul has grown up to its full stature, by full and generous response to its environment, God.

—EVELYN UNDERHILL

Jesus, the true Savior of the world, who died for us and is seated in glory at the right hand of the Father, dwell in your hearts through his Holy Spirit, that you may be wholly alive in him, through living faith and perfect love.—JOHN CALVIN

The heart of religion lies in its personal pronouns.—MARTIN LUTHER

Go to dark Gethsemane,

Ye that feel the tempter's power;

Your Redeemer's conflict see;

Watch with him one bitter hour;

Turn not from his griefs away;

Learn of Jesus Christ to pray.

See him at the judgment hall,

Beaten, bound, reviled, arraigned;

See him meekly hearing all

Love to man his soul sustained.

Shun not suffering, shame, or loss;

Learn of Christ to bear the cross. Amen,

—JAMES MONTGOMERY.



## Cruel and Wondrous Cross

*We preach Christ crucified, . . . to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 1 Cor. 1:23-24. Read verses 18-25.*

On the last two Fridays we have looked at records of the crucifixion in two of the gospels. Today we turn to Paul's testimony to the meaning of the cross.

By all obvious standards the cross meant defeat. Even to the disciples, at first, it was the failure of Jesus and the end of hopes. It was, says Paul, a stumbling block and folly. But faith sees in Christ crucified "the power and the wisdom of God."

We must not romanticize the cross. It was cruel. A nine-year-old girl, watching a motion picture of Jesus carrying the cross, broke into tears. A woman in the theater tried to comfort her by whispering, "There, there, it's not real, it's just a show." Afterwards the girl asked her father, "Why didn't she know it was real?"

The cruelty was real. But the wonder, too, is real. God was there in his "power and wisdom," conquering evil and showing the way of redemption even to evil-doers.

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

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, let no beauty hide from us the cruelty of the cross, and let no cruelty hide its wonder, we pray. Amen.

My God, I love thee, not because  
I hope for heav'n thereby,  
Nor yet because who love thee not  
Must die eternally.

Thou, O my Jesus, thou didst me  
Upon the cross embrace;  
For me didst bear the nails and spear,  
And manifold disgrace.

Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ,  
Should I not love thee well?  
Not for the hope of winning heaven,  
Nor of escaping hell.

Not with the hope of gaining aught,  
Not seeking a reward;  
But as thyself hast loved me,  
O ever-loving Lord.

So would I love thee, dearest Lord,  
And in thy praise will sing;  
Solely because thou art my God,  
And my eternal King.

—FRANCIS XAVIER

If we worry about the dangers that beset us, if we gaze at the road instead of at Jesus Christ who goes before, we are already straying from the path. For he is himself the way. He, and he alone, is our journey's end. When we know that, we are able to proceed along the narrow way through the strait gate of the cross, and on to eternal life.

—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

The faithful soldier does not feel his own wounds when he looks with love on those of his King.—BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

## The Lord of Glory

*God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are.* 1 Cor. 1:27-28. Read verses 26-31.

Governments have killed many men by gallows, guillotine, and electric chair. None of these instruments of death has become a symbol of hope and confidence. The cross alone is that. We lift it high on church towers, put it in churches and homes, sing of it.

Why should this be? Why does the cross mean victory and salvation? Christians through the ages have reasoned out many answers without ever agreeing on any one as final. There is, as Paul says, a "hidden wisdom" about the cross. "None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2: 8).

What is clear is that through generations of history the cross has meant the love, the forgiveness, the power of God. The sign of defeat has become the sign of victory. God chose the weak, the lowly, the despised to be the evidence of his power.

PRAYER: In the cross of Christ I glory,  
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;  
All the light of sacred story  
Gathers round its head sublime.

Thanks be to thee, O God, that thou hast not lived in distant majesty but hast sought us in Jesus Christ, the suffering and triumphant servant. Amen.

God minus the world equals God;  
The world minus God equals nothing.

—WILLIAM TEMPLE

We praise thee, O God: we acknowledge thee to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting. To thee all angels cry aloud: the heavens and all the powers therein. To thee cherubim and seraphim continually do cry: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory. The glorious company of the apostles praise thee: the noble army of martyrs praise thee: the holy Church throughout the world doth acknowledge thee, the Father, of an infinite majesty; thine adorable, true and only Son: also, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. Thou art the King of glory, O Christ: Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father. When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst humble thyself to be born of a virgin. When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father. We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge. We therefore pray thee, help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood. O Lord, save thy people, and bless thy heritage: govern them, and lift them up forever. Day by day we magnify thee: and we worship thy name ever, world without end. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin. O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, as our trust is in thee. Amen.—TE DEUM

## Risen Indeed

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* 1 Peter 1: 3. Read verses 3-9.

In the Easter liturgy of the Russian church there comes a time when the priest announces, "The Lord is risen!" The worshippers reply, "He is risen indeed!"

Once in recent Russian history the authorities in a southern village, troubled by continuing religious practices, renewed the periodic campaign for atheism. Gathering the people in the town park on the day after Easter, the officials made their speeches against God and religion, insisting above all that Jesus was dead. At the end they offered anyone present a chance to speak. One young man asked for the right to say a single sentence. He came to the platform and spoke: "Brothers and sisters, the Lord is risen!" The answer came from the crowd in chorus, "He is risen indeed!"

Can we say that too? The New Testament records show that the followers of Jesus were sometimes slow to recognize their risen Lord. On one occasion, we read, they recognized him "in the breaking of the bread" (Luke 24: 35). If we would know him today, it must be as it was then, in life's most common acts.

PRAYER: Lord, by the stripes which wounded thee,

From death's dread sting thy servants free,

That we may live and sing to thee.

Alleluia!

O thou that turnest the shadow of death into the morning, on this day of days our hearts exult with heavenly joy. A secret thrill runs through the air from far-off-days—Easter breaks! Christ rises! Mercy every way is infinite.—W. E. ORCHARD

Purity of heart is to will one thing.

—SOREN KIERKEGAARD

The Christian faith is that the Day of the Lord dawned in Jesus, and the validation of that faith is in the resurrection of the body of Jesus from the tomb. Here in this created world the rule of God has been vindicated to eyes of faith. It is in the light of that fact that we preach Jesus, not merely as part, even the highest part, of the created world, but also as him through whom all things were made, the cause and cornerstone of the universe.—LESSLIE NEWBIGIN

Every day is a festival for those who try to live unfettered by any will save God's.

—FRANCOIS FENELON

Nails were not enough to hold God-and-man nailed and fastened on the Cross, had not love held him there.—CATHERINE OF SIENA

A true Christian is a man who never for a moment forgets what God has done for him in Christ.—JOHN BAILLIE

Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no man evil for evil; strengthen the faint-hearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all men; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

—1928 BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

As an enriching departure from tradition, this edition of *The Fellowship of Prayer*, double in size, uses its right-hand pages for classic spiritual utterances. The material facing each devotion is intended to give historical grounding and spiritual depth for those who wish to undertake a further Lenten discipline of meditation and prayer.

No tight correlation of quotation with devotion has been attempted, but the two share in spirit and general content as through the days our Lord is viewed in seven aspects. The Spirit blows where he wills, and in meditation the spirit is often led far from the point of beginning.

The left-hand pages appear also in the current issue of DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE. This periodical is 15c singly or 10c each for ten or more copies to one address, available from either United Church of Christ publishing house.

The compiler gratefully acknowledges to the publishers below the privilege of making brief quotations from copyright material. Author and title are given only as required.

Willis E. Elliott

Abingdon Press  
W. R. Bowie, *Lift Up Your Hearts*  
J. Halsey, *Open Prayer*  
Association Press  
Beacon Press  
Bayly, Albert F.  
Blanchard, Ferdinand O.  
Christian Century  
Christian Education Press  
Christian Faith and Life Community  
Clarendon Press, Oxford, England  
Church Pension Fund, UCC  
Crowell, Thomas Y. Co.  
Abbé de Tourville, *Letters of Direction*  
Deitz, Purd E.  
Dutton, E. P. & Co.  
Eden Publishing House  
Forward Movement Publications  
Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.  
K. Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*  
N. S. F. Ferré, *God's New Age*

C. R. Joy, Albert Schweitzer  
—*an Anthology*  
S. H. Miller, *The Life of the Soul*  
L. Newbigin, *A Faith for This One World*  
D. V. Steere, *On Beginning from Within*  
G. Sykes, *The Hidden Remnant*  
Holmes, John Haynes  
Houghton Mifflin Company  
Hyde, Mrs. George P.  
Macalester Park Publishing Co.  
G. Clark, *The Song of the Souls of Men*  
Macmillan Co., *The*  
D. Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*  
Pendle Hill Pamphlets  
Pilgrim Press, *The*  
Scribner's Son's, Charles  
John Baillie, *The Sense of the Presence of God*  
SCM Press, London  
United Church Herald  
World Publishing Company, The

+ some loose leaf (unbound)