

The  
Fellowship  
of Prayer



lenten season

1964

## FOREWORD

It has been suggested that the soul is formed in relationships. These meditations are meant to be helpful in finding a proper relationship to ourselves, to others, and to the Father. The pattern may not be too obvious, but the purpose should be clear.

Their worth will depend, in part, upon how you use them. Find some time each day to slip silently into some secret place. Leave your cares, fears, and resentments outside the door. Take nothing with you except your need and a text upon which to hang your devotions. Let God's love flow about you, his power indwell you, and his purpose become your will. Then return to a world that can no longer hurt you, to a joy found in humble service, and to a peace the world did not give and hence cannot take away.

Roy L. Minich  
Washington, D. C.

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### *Weekly Topics*

February 12-25	The Purpose of Lent
February 16-22	Jesus' Relationship to Himself
February 23-29	Our Relationship to Ourselves
March 1-7	Our Relationship to Others
March 8-14	Our Relationship to the Father
March 15-21	Our Relationship to our Work
March 22-29	The Fulfillment of Lent

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# The Fellowship of Prayer

lenten season 1964



ROY L. MINICH

with supplementary readings compiled by

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## First Things First

*John bore witness to him, and cried, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.'" John 1: 15. Read verses 14-18.*

It is important to think about what Lent can mean to the church; it is much more helpful to think about what Lent means to God. After all, God planned Lent; it has more meaning for him than for us. Actually it has no meaning for us until we discover something of its meaning to him. I believe, that for God, Lent began in Advent. They may be two seasons, but they have a single purpose. That purpose is to do something for us. Both are demonstrations of God's outreach motivated by love. In the Bible we read the amazing record of his calling, girding, warning, and loving man. "In the beginning, God"; that is Advent. "In the fullness of time, Jesus Christ"; that is Lent. These contrasting texts sharpen our vision of the two seasons. With God, love always comes first. His love always precedes his requests. He came to share our life and hope to win our love. He knows our problems because he partook of our humanity. Paul sums it up in a sentence. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5: 19)

PRAYER: Our Father, help us to do what we know to be thy will. Silence the conflicting voices which would draw us from thy purposes. Amen.

If you are never alone with God, it is not because you are too busy; it is because you do not care for him, do not like him. And you had better face the fact.—AL. GHAZALI

O Almighty God,

From whom every good prayer cometh,  
And who pourest out on all who desire it  
The spirit of grace and supplication;  
Deliver us, when we draw nigh to thee,  
From coldness of heart and wanderings of mind,  
That with steadfast thoughts  
And kindled affections  
We may worship thee in spirit and in truth;  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.—WILLIAM BRIGHT

Thou hast given so much to us, O Lord,  
give one thing more, a grateful heart; for  
Christ's sake.—GEORGE HERBERT

Less and less, I think, grows the consciousness  
of seeking God. Greater and greater grows the  
certainty that he is seeking us and giving him-  
self to us to the completest measure of our  
present capacity.—PHILLIPS BROOKS

A world without prayer is fundamentally a  
world without meaning.—ANONYMOUS

O Lord Jesus Christ, be where my thoughts  
and deeds are born, take their hand, and  
guide them into thy kingdom.

Thursday, February 13

## Prepare the Way

He said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord. . .'"  
John 1: 23. Read verses 19-23.

"What are you going to give up for Lent?" You will hear that question many times this week. Some of the answers will reveal a serious concern about the best way to observe the season; some will suggest sacrifices so small as to belittle religion; some will be frivolous and shame our faith.

Historically, Lent is the spring period of fasting in preparation for Easter. If fasting aids penitence, I am all for it. If small sacrifices are a substitute for our effort to test our lives by Christian principles, then they are dangerous and deceptive.

Personally, I always think of Lent as the time to take up some worthwhile things, rather than a period to give up trivial things. It is a time to discover and repent of the good things we have neglected to do. One such thing is Bible reading. A minimum requirement for Lenten reading should be at least one of the Gospels and some good book on the life of Jesus. Another, and I think a more important discipline, is to devote at least fifteen minutes every day to meditation and prayer. This is a wonderful season of the church year. It begins in repentance. It ends in triumph.

PRAYER: O gracious and Holy Father, give us wisdom to perceive thee, intellect to understand thee, diligence to seek thee, patience to wait for thee, eyes to behold thee, a heart to meditate upon thee, and a life to proclaim thee. Amen.

—St. Benedict.

For Further Meditation

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 Christ our Lord.—BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

O God, in times of doubts and questionings, when our belief is perplexed by new learning, new teaching, new thought, when our faith is strained by creeds, by doctrines, by mysteries beyond our understanding, give us the faithfulness of learners and the courage of believers in thee; give us boldness to examine and faith to trust all truth; patience and insight to master difficulties; stability to hold fast our tradition with enlightened interpretation, to admit all fresh truth made known to us, and in times of trouble, to grasp new knowledge readily and to combine it loyally and honestly with the old; alike from stubborn rejection of new revelations, and from hasty assurance that we are wiser than our fathers. Save us and help us, we humbly beseech thee, O Lord.—BISHOP RIDDING

The church is the fellowship in which man becomes aware of his work in the world. God loves the church and saves the world.

—COLIN WILLIAMS



Friday, February 14

## Heroes of Renunciation

*"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*  
Matthew 16: 24. Read verses 24-28.

The message of Lent is cross centered; it should point to a cross that has meaning. The Christian cross is much more than the instrument of a good man's death; it is a revelation of God's purpose and passion. It is much more than a place where burdens are rolled away; it is a place where burdens are assumed. If Lent gets you near enough to reality, you will hear Jesus asking you to take up a cross.

We have seen, in these latter years, a strange emphasis in religion. It has become, increasingly, a technique of escape. To be sure, there are burdens we have no business carrying. The needless load is a burden; the necessary load, freely accepted, becomes a lift. Dr. McCracken has a good word here: "Christianity is in the world not to make life easier, but to make it nobler."

The first step on the road to Christian usefulness is self-denial. No one can take up a cross until he has laid down some things. The ability to do that makes heroic Christians. Albert Schweitzer once said, "There are no heroes of action—only heroes of renunciation and suffering." We are humble as we begin our Lenten journey, and that may be God's hope. He can do something through men of humble and contrite hearts.

PRAYER: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. . . . Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, . . . Then I will teach transgressors thy ways." Amen.

## For Further Meditation

To be a Christian does not mean to be religious in a particular way, to cultivate some particular form of asceticism (as a sinner, a penitent, or a saint), but to be a man.<sup>1</sup>

—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Lord, our God, the help of those that flee unto thee, the hope of those who cry unto thee, cleanse us from our sins and from every thought displeasing to thy goodness, that with a pure heart and a clear soul, with perfect love and calm hope, we may venture, confidently and fearlessly, to pray unto thee.—BASIL

What shall we do? Each person must find the answer to this question in the light of his own agony. If he has no agony let him seek the answer in a newspaper column of Advice to the Lovelorn. Not in the Christian ethic. For the Christian ethic flows from the agony of the cross, repeated continually in the life of man.—KENNETH E. BOULDING

A holy soul is but a soul freely submitted to the divine will with the help of grace. . . . The whole of spirituality can be expressed in abridged form in this maxim: we should abandon ourselves purely and entirely to the Order of God, and when we are in that Order we should, with a complete self-forgetfulness, be eternally busied with loving and obeying him, without all these fears, reflections, returns on ourselves, and disquietudes which sometimes result from the care of our own salvation and perfection.—J. P. DE CAUSSADE

## The Gate Is Narrow

*"For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few."* Matthew 7: 14. Read verses 7-14.

All gates are narrow that lead to anything worthwhile. The door to truth is so narrow that those who would enter it must cast aside all but a book and a lamp. The first payment on success is surrender of nonessentials.

When the message of religion is so wide as to be all-inclusive, it becomes too shallow to have much meaning. It is hard to be a Christian. It asks for a faith in what appears impossible, for a determination which does not count the cost, and for a creative love which sees, not what men are, but what they may become.

Discipleship is no pleasant pastime. No one can saunter after Christ with his hands in his pockets. If religion is comfortable, it has no abstinence, no self-denial, and no cross. Jesus turns on all casual ones to say, "The gate is narrow."

A few reject religion because they do not understand it; the majority turn aside because they understand it too well. They are unwilling to leave behind those things they cannot carry through the narrow gate. The gate is always a toll gate. We have to surrender some things to get through. Our hands must be free to carry "a naked intent directed unto God." The gate is the test.

PRAYER: Our Father, give us the courage to surrender all things that keep us from thee. Amen.

The function of worship is to make us more sensitive to these depths; to focus, sharpen and deepen our response to the world and to other people beyond the point of proximate concern (of liking, self-interest, limited commitment, etc.) to that of ultimate concern; to purify and correct our loves in the light of Christ's love; and in him to find the grace and power to be the reconciled and reconciling community. Anything that achieves this or assists toward it is Christian worship. Anything that fails to do this is not Christian worship, be it ever so "religious."<sup>2</sup>—JOHN A. T. ROBINSON

(Reality is spirit, which is) an eternal solution and an eternal problem.—BENEDETTO CROCE

Prayer is rooted in the reality of God. But this sense of God fades out of the life of the man or woman who does not pray. Christ is the Way into the Holy Place, but a "Way" must be used. So much of the feebleness, ineffectiveness, and unreality of the life and worship of the Christian Church is due to this one fact: ignorance of God through neglect of prayer. The soul cannot live without prayer any more than the body can live without food and drink.<sup>3</sup>—OLIVE WYON

If we believe in prayer, we pray. If we do not believe in it, we do not pray.

—STANLEY PLUNKETT

He who does what he does for me alone—who is given over to me, who is devoted to me, void of attachment, without hatred to any born being—comes to me.—SUM OF THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

## The Child Grew

*And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him*  
Luke 2: 4. Read verses 39-52.

The growth of Jesus both pleased and saddened Joseph and Mary. Before long his mother asked, "Son, why have you treated us so?" And Jesus replied, "How is it that you sought me?" That will sound quite familiar to parents of growing children. It is hard to know when the external authority of the parent can safely be supplanted by the internal discipline of the child. Mary did not deal too wisely with this situation; she never fully understood her son.

We share in the resentment at the growth of the Child. The world stands on tiptoe to hear the first faint cry from the manger, but it finds it hard to listen to the invitation of the Man to be a disciple. The Child is adorable; the Man is demanding. The church gets excited about the two births of Jesus; Christmas, when he was born into life, and Easter, when he was born into life eternal. But there are some long hard stretches of the road between those two events. During Lent we shall try to follow in that way, and perhaps share in the growth of one who grew from being man's servant until he came to the full realization that he was God's Son.

PRAYER: Our Father, give us wisdom to understand each other, patience to overlook some imperfections, and love enough to help each other because we are aware of thy presence in our homes. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen.—EMERSON

Every cubic inch of space is a miracle.

—WALT WHITMAN

There is one who can keep you clear of fault and enable you to stand in the presence of his glory, triumphant and unreprieved; to him, who alone is God, to him who gives us salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord, glory and majesty and power and dominion are due, before time was, and now, and for all ages.<sup>4</sup>—Jude 24-25 (A. HAMMAN)

It was manifest that the Maker had power,  
Virtue and strength when he established  
the world!

Himself, he created the sun and moon,  
Stones and earth and the streams of ocean.  
Water and clouds by his wondrous might;  
In his sway the Measurer wide encircles  
The deep expanse and mid-earth's space.  
He himself, God's own son,  
May search out the sea the depths of ocean,  
And fully reckon the showers of rain,  
Every drop. The number of days  
Himself he ordained by his single might.  
In six days the Shaper in heaven on high  
In the glory of majesty made and estab-  
lished

The dales of earth and the deep sea.  
Who hath perception to fully discern  
His great design save Eternal God?

Joys he appointed.—ANGLO-SAXON POEM

Monday, February 17

## Choices

*"How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"* Luke 2: 49. Read Isaiah 6: 1-8.

Jesus is asking for enough freedom to find himself and his work. He believed the temple was the most likely place of revelation. He must have known what happened to another young man when he entered that holy place.

If you make right choices, you need not make many of them. Jesus made just one. He decided to do the Father's will. That one choice determined all life's decisions. His only moments of uncertainty were when he had to wait for God's will to be made plain.

Life can be made much easier by making full commitments. Half commitments tear apart our lives. To want to serve both good and evil results in tensions. When the partial good must carry the load of the undedicated remainder, we never travel very far and usually break under the load. Success in any area means going forward with the consent of the whole personality.

Jesus could begin every day without wondering what he was going to do, how he was going to act, or how he should treat people. He had made that decision long ago. His life was not a patchwork of accidents or unrelated events. He did not have to hesitate at the crossroads of life. His face had been set toward Jerusalem from the beginning.

PRAYER: Send us, our Father, into some quiet place where we may be still and learn thy purpose for our lives. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

In dreams begin responsibilities.

—DELMORE SCHWARTZ

I am aware

As I go commonly sweeping the stair

I am aware of the splendor that ties

All the things of the earth with the things of the skies.—ANGELA MORGAN

The heart of personal religion is prayer, and the heart of prayer is the spirit of obedience.

—OLIVE WYON

William Penn said, "I owe allegiance to no mortal man." It is this firmness in an established man that enables him to stand alone when he sees what is required of him.

—DOUGLAS V. STEERE

There was nothing wrong with John except the level on which he had chosen to live his life.—LAWRENCE DURRELL

To practice love is hard;

For it is not enough

To love; we must ourselves

like to himself, be love.—ANGELUS SILESIOUS

Day by day,

Dear Lord, of thee these things, I pray:

To see thee more clearly,

Love thee more dearly,

Follow thee more nearly,

Day by day.—RICHARD OF CHICHESTER



## At Long Last

*Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, . . . Luke 3:23. Read verses 15-23.*

Thirty years is a long time to wait when you are eager to begin your life's work. He knew what he wanted to do and could see the desperate need for his ministry. The family was grown and he could be spared from the shop. I suppose that many times, when he slipped away to some quiet place, the burden of his prayer was to ask the Father if the time had arrived for him to begin his public ministry. Always the answer was, "Not yet." Why? He was not yet ready. He knew many things but he did not yet fully know himself. Finally, at long last, God said, "Go, my Son."

The period of preparation is the most important part of any venture. To rush off unprepared to meet some need is not to resolve it but to complicate it. It takes more than burning zeal to serve either God or man.

Paul had an extraordinary vision on the Damascus road, but he was wise enough to spend some quiet meditation in a desert place. Perhaps the explanation of most failures rests in premature starts. The greatness of Jesus is suggested by the extent of his patience. He did not rush at life; therefore he never needed to run away from it.

PRAYER: Teach me thy patience; still with thee  
In closer, dearer company,  
In work that keeps faith sweet and  
strong,  
In trust that triumphs over wrong.  
Amen.

Thought! Surely thoughts are true;  
They please as much as things can do;  
Nay, things are dead,  
And in themselves are severed  
From souls; nor can they fill the head  
Without our thoughts. Thoughts are the real  
things  
From whence all joy, from whence all sorrow  
springs.—THOMAS TRAHERNE

Through our feelings we are linked to each other's joys, sufferings, and dreams; and through our creativeness we are linked to the Creator of all, to our Lord himself.

—JACQUES LIPSCHITZ

If faith is not to be a mere play with words concerning God, it must pass into the form of prayer, and if prayer is not to be a play of fancy or an unmeaning travail, then it must . . . (apply) faith to the definite circumstances of the moment.—WILHELM HERRMANN

Each day I was so stretched (by tales of woe) that my hide seemed to cover the whole world.—HENRY MILLER

We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father. . . . He creates man . . . and sets before him the ways of life and death.

—STATEMENT OF FAITH, United Church of Christ



## Why?

*Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. Matthew 3:13. Read verses 11-17.*

The stage is set by a river with a background of Judean hills. A young man walks from a carpenter shop on his way to meet a hermit who had been preaching about repentance and baptism. Jesus came asking to be baptized. Why? He never acknowledged any sin. He had even dared one day to ask, "Which of you convicts me of sin?" Why should one free of sin ask for the baptism of repentance?

Perhaps it was because he wanted to align himself with the best he knew. The synagogue was not perfect, but he worshipped there.

Perhaps he wanted to identify himself with all the needy ones who had been baptized by John. They were sinners. To save them he had to be identified with their sin. He may have felt he had to be baptized into their need—and yours and mine.

We might be wiser if we thought of Jesus' baptism, not as an act of repentance, but of consecration. He did not need to repent, but he did need to be made ready. When we identify ourselves with all human need, and commit ourselves fully to be God's agents, I am sure he always is "well pleased."

PRAYER: Make us ready for the great adventure of living. We do not pray for immunity from risks: we pray for courage to face them. We do not ask to be saved out of the world; we ask for wisdom to ally ourselves with the saviors of mankind. Amen.

The Christian saint (and the saint is a Christian individual in full degree and nothing more) is not in the first instance concerned with society or society's redemption. . . . The saint is a man or a woman who has become clear as to exactly what he wants of all there is in the world, and whom a love at the heart of things has so satisfied that he gaily reduces his cargo to make for that port. . . . O, God, my Lord, do as thou wilt; I will be still. He is one who is doing what he wants to do, not what he wants to do this minute, and the next minute, and the next minute, but what beneath the minutes and the days and the years he would want to do if all of them should vanish and leave him forever at it. He is responding, answering back to the love of God in whatever setting he may be placed. He is a radical in the true sense of the word, for he has gone to the root of things and found the root good. He is holy in the sense of the totality of his abandonment to that Loving One.<sup>5</sup>—DOUGLAS V. STEERE

Almighty God, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, and who pourest out upon all who desire it the spirit of grace and supplication: deliver us, when we draw nigh unto thee, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind; that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship thee in spirit and in truth.—WILLIAM BRIGHT

My experience of God may be said to contain God as a kite contains the wind—not much of it, only dynamically, in need of continuous replenishment and only if you hold on and stay in tension with it.

## Self-Discipline

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Matthew 4: 1.*

Jesus had just humbled himself to the point of consecration. He was conscious of the influx of divine power. He was strong in the knowledge that God was pleased. Then he was tempted. They were not the gross temptations of the body; they were the usual temptations of the strong. The temptations of strength are always greater than those of weakness. The temptation of Jesus exceeded ours to the same degree that his power was greater. Weak men escape much—and miss much. Jesus had to decide between self-indulgence and self-denial, self-aggrandizement and humility.

How we use power depends upon our self-discipline. Control directs the life of the strong as circumstances shape the destiny of the weak. When loyalties are set, they gather the fragments of experience as a magnet draws the splinters of steel. Once Jesus fully realized that he was God's Son, he knew he had to act like God's Son. He was led into the wilderness, not so much to fight evil, as to come to terms with himself. As the historian Toynbee has so well said, "The future belongs to disciplined people."

**PRAYER:** Father, help us to know ourselves and thee. Thou art the help of all those who put their trust in thee. Protect us by the inspiration of thy spirit and lead us daily into a more abundant life, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street.

—JOHN WESLEY (*describing his greatest day*)

O God of patience and consolation,  
Give us such good-will, we beseech thee,  
That with free hearts we may love and serve  
thee and our brethren.

And, having thus the mind of Christ,  
May begin heaven on earth,  
And exercise ourselves therein  
Till that day when heaven, where love abideth,  
Shall seem no strange habitation to us.  
For Jesus Christ's sake.—CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

We are here, O Lord, Spirit of holiness, weighted with the burden of sin, but assembled specifically in thy name. Come to us and remain with us. Deign to purify our hearts. Teach us what to do, how to walk, and show us what we ought to accomplish to please thee, by thy help, in all things. Do thou alone suggest and effect our decision.

—THE OPENING PRAYER OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

Never be the center of your own or anyone else's life.—DOROTHY PAYNE

I have only one gift to give. My attention. Myself. God has only one gift to give. Himself—in, with, and under his creation—through his Son—by his Spirit.

## Search for a Purpose

*"If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."* Matthew 4:3. Read verses 1-4.

Jesus was not the first young man tempted to seek a short cut to the good things of life. What is wrong with that ambition? Everyone must have bread. Perhaps it is wrong to expect it without the price of constructive effort. Maybe in fairness we should trade a part of our energy to match that of the worker who produced the bread—to feed without personal cost is to be a parasite.

If Jesus possessed the power to change stones into bread, he would have been accepting a short cut to the good things of life not open to everyone. His power would have placed him above, or beneath, the necessity of struggle. No man can be a savior of others who does not share in their struggle. How could the father of starving children pray in the name of One who felt neither the pain of hunger nor the weariness of toil? I am very glad that Jesus began life without asking for gifts or short cuts.

He did give humanity the bread by which life was possible—it was the bread of his own broken body. He would not feed the world through any miracle except that of sacrifice. He knew that men must live; he knew that bread alone could not sustain all of life.

PRAYER: Our Father, grant that we may feed our bodies in a way that does not starve our souls. We seek no blessings save those we can share, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Reality is not discovered, it is revealed.

—SAMUEL MILLER

The decisive question for man is: Is he related to something infinite or not? That is the telling question of his life. Only if we know that the thing which truly matters is the infinite can we avoid fixing our interests on futilities, and upon all kinds of goals which are not of real importance.<sup>6</sup>—C. J. JUNG

We shall go on asking the same questions, not because the former answers are uniformly worthless, but because no answer is complete, or, indeed, can be, and also because our deepest needs do not change . . . it is always an open universe.<sup>7</sup>—ELTON TRUEBLOOD

God knows what we want. All Christian prayer, however expressed, includes the honest attempt to find out what God wants. Our personalities and possibilities are moulded by the act of asking.<sup>8</sup>—DAVID HEAD

I give you the end of a golden string,  
Only wind it into a ball;  
It will lead you in at heaven's gate,  
Built in Jerusalem's wall.—WILLIAM BLAKE

Without belief in something eternal, man gives himself over to annihilation.

—GREGOR MALANTSHUK

## Fall Down to Worship

"All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Matthew 4: 9. Read verses 8-11.

Would you accept the world with these strings attached? I think not. Moses could have had a kingdom if he had been willing to keep silent about his enslaved people. Daniel could have had security by keeping the window toward Jerusalem closed. Jesus was offered an easy, spectacular life with great possessions if he would worship Satan. There is a long line of unknown men and women who suffered scourging, were stoned, sawn in two, killed with the sword, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, wandering over deserts and mountains, in dens and caves. (Hebrews 11: 36-40). These were they who would not bow to evil nor accept a creed not dictated by their own hearts.

There were times when Jesus did bow down. He stooped to put his hand on the head of a little child, to wash the feet of his quarreling disciples, and to find strength in the crisis of Gethsemane. There are times when a man dare not kneel. There are other times when a man dare not neglect kneeling. The tragedy is that we kneel at the wrong time. Perhaps a greater tragedy is that we so often fail to kneel when we should.

PRAYER: Father of all mankind, we are ashamed of our selfishness. It has kept us from thy service and has made us the slaves of our own desires. Show us how to dedicate our lives, without reserve, to the doing of thy will. Amen.

May God deny you peace but give you glory.  
—MIGUEL UNAMUNO

It is proper and right that we praise with  
our lips  
And love with our hearts the Warden of  
heaven,  
The Lord of hosts. He is Source of all  
strength,  
Of all high creatures Almighty King!  
—ANGLO-SAXON POEM

The objection my corruptions make against doing whatever my hand finds to do with my might is, that it is a constant mortification. Let this objection by no means ever prevail.

—JONATHAN EDWARDS in his *Teenage Diary*

Our generation is realistic, for we have come to know man as he really is. After all, man is that being who has invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he is also that being who has entered those gas chambers upright, with the Lord's Prayer or the *Shema Yisrael* on his lips.<sup>9</sup>—VIKTOR FRANKL

Gold and your own blood will not buy back lost time.—ALEXANDER WHYTE

If the Christian faith is written not merely in the Scripture but also into the nature of things, then that is not only important—it is decisive.—E. STANLEY JONES



## Finding Ourselves

*For he himself knew what was in man.* John 2: 25. Read verses 23-25.

We have been thinking about the ways in which Jesus came to terms with himself. He had to establish a right relationship with himself. Through him we may discover something of what is in us. Our text says that he knows. The tragedy of Willy Loman in "The Death of a Salesman" was that he never knew who he was. That is true of any man who lives by physical impulses or responds pliantly to external circumstances.

It is so difficult for us to know ourselves in this age of morbid preoccupation with the worst part of ourselves. Instead of seeking cleansing, we try to find ways to prevent our vices from destroying us. If some things are to be cancelled out, and some others comprehended, we must be consciously related to God through Christ who knows what is in us. We are the captives of the demons of pride, hatred, anger, and uncleanness. We do not help ourselves by dissecting our weaknesses. Our liberation comes from submitting to a higher captivity. We surrender freedom to gain freedom; we lose ourselves to find ourselves.

Sometimes we slip into self-pity because we feel no one understands us. It was love which compelled Christ to enter into society. He knows what is in you. He can help you.

PRAYER: Grant, O God, that we may have a long view of life. May no present wish blind us to some larger future good. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

Truth unveils itself to him who lives well, prays well, and studies well.—AUGUSTINE

Self-perfection is not to copy an ideal. It is to let Divine Love who calls each being by his own name . . . make of you a person, a true original, not a copy.—JACQUES MARITAIN

Silence is not nothingness or the absence of sound. It is a prime condition for human serenity and the natural environment of contemplation.—NORMAN COUSINS

Truth, after all, is simple enough if you do not confuse it by letting in either information or reflection.—JOHN CIARDI

Everyone must have two pockets, so that he can reach into the one or the other according to his need. In his right pocket are the words, "For my sake the world was created," and in the other, "I am earth and ashes."—RABBINIC SAYING

The line of God and the line of man come together; the career of God and the career of man merge; and in the life of one person, and him the God-man, our Lord Jesus Christ, we can read both the story of God and the story of man.—C. G. RUTENBER

No pain, no gain—for God, for man, for me.  
No cost, all lost—for God, for man, for me.



## Some Cannot Be Disciples

"He cannot be my disciple." Luke 14: 26. Read verses 25-33.

"Cannot"—that startles us, but Jesus said it. Who are the people who cannot be disciples? Certainly not the great sinners. Levi was called; the Magdalene became a friend; even the thief on the cross was not beyond the pale.

It appears that present attitudes rather than past acts are what bar the way. No one can be a disciple unless he is willing to put discipleship first. People of divided allegiance cannot follow. The unforgiving never really become disciples. The Elder Brother would not, perhaps could not, share in the fellowship. The critical, looking for motes in the eyes of everyone they meet, miss their chance. The selfish can have no place with one who even on the cross would not save himself. Think of the multitude of indifferent ones who claim kinship with the foolish virgins who had no oil for their lamps, or the wedding guest who would not be bothered to put on a wedding garment. Is there a single one of us who has not missed some part of his discipleship for one or all of the above reasons?

PRAYER: O Lord our God, grant us grace to desire thee with our whole heart, that so desiring we may seek and find thee, and so finding thee may love thee, and loving thee, may hate those sins from which thou hast redeemed us. Amen.

—Anselm.

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

Anybody who lives beneath the Cross and who has discerned in the Cross of Jesus the utter wickedness of all men and of his own heart will find there is no sin that can ever be alien to him. Anybody who has once been horrified by the dreadfulness of his own sin that nailed Jesus to the Cross will no longer be horrified by even the rankest sins of a brother.

In daily, earnest living with the Cross of Christ, the Christian loses the spirit of human censoriousness on the one hand and weak indulgence on the other, and he receives the spirit of divine severity and divine love.

—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

There is no such thing as a disciple at second hand. Every disciple of Jesus inevitably becomes his contemporary; not every contemporary of Jesus inevitably became his disciple.

—SOREN KIERKEGAARD

Were the disciples (in front of the empty tomb) in terror because of death, or life?

—HOWARD MOODY

Jesus the Lord does not call us to do better what we are already doing well. He calls us to stop doing much of what we are doing, to do the rest for higher reasons, and to do some things we never otherwise would do.

## Born Anew

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* John 3: 3. Read verses 1-2.

We all ask the same question, "How can this be?" We know it is difficult. It means to admit our need of rebirth. That means we must admit our sin. Self-righteousness makes that difficult.

Spiritual renewal is retarded as long as we blame other people for the ills of the world. Why are we so severe on others and so lenient with ourselves? Perhaps it is because we judge ourselves by our ideals and judge others by their acts.

We do not feel the need of rebirth because we miss seeing our greatest sin which is to put self rather than God at the center of the universe. We must understand that a man need not commit sins to be a sinner. A great sinner may be morally respectable. His sin is in turning his face away from God. The sin of the Prodigal Son was not so much harlots as leaving the Father's house.

To be born anew is to take self from the center of life and put Christ there. It means letting some things die. It means new attitudes toward people and property. It means living a life of creative good will. The best years of a man's life are those that follow some rebirth.

PRAYER: Our Father, we bring our lives to thee that we may be made new by the power of thy presence, through Christ. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

Man must be arched and buttressed from within, else the temple crumbles into dust.

—MARCUS AURELIUS

(Nathan Soederblom's) conviction of the forgiveness of sins and of the essential givenness of life made him a great giver, and gave a deep inner meaning to that overpowering, victorious generosity, that sun-like radiancy which remains to those who loved him as the dominant impression.—YNGVE BRILLIOTH

God—let me be aware.  
Let me not stumble blindly down the ways,  
Just getting somehow safely through the days,  
Not even groping for another hand,  
Not even wondering why it all was planned,  
Eyes to the ground, unseeking for the light,  
Soul never aching for a wild-winged flight,  
God—let me be aware.

God—let me be aware.  
Stab my soul fiercely with others' pain,  
Let me walk seeing horror and stain.  
Let my hands, groping, find other hands.  
Give me the heart that divines, understands.  
Give me the courage, wounded, to fight.  
Flood me with knowledge, drench me in light.  
Please—keep me eager just to do my share.  
God—let me be aware. —MIRIAM TEICHNER

Wednesday, February 26

## Let Your Light Shine

"You are the light of the world." Matthew 5: 14.  
Read verses 14-16.

These are twilight days. The world is walking in the shadow away from the light. There is a library wall with this inscription: "The shadows will be behind you if you walk toward the light."

Light is needed most in a changing world. We can walk a familiar way in darkness, but not an unknown way. The same revolutionary wave engulfed France and created the United States. In France the church lost its influence; liberty descended into license and the Reign of Terror followed lack of discipline. In the United States the same urge for change resulted in a Constitution, an enduring republic and leaders of integrity. Why? One nation abandoned religion; the other was guided by it.

We should be humbled by the responsibility of being light bearers. Knowledge is never enough. Without devotion it is a light we never use in our pilgrimage. Actually we become the light when we are agleam with a certain spirit. So man is the Candle of the Lord when he is incandescent with his spirit. "If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"

PRAYER: Merciful Father, who willest not thy children to wander in darkness; pour the light of thy spirit into our minds and hearts that we may discover what is thy holy will. Amen.

—Book of Common Worship

## For Further Meditation

May it be

Not my word aimed at my glory,

Nor thy word aimed at my glory,

Nor my word aimed at thy glory,

But thy word, through me,

To thy glory, through us all.—DAVID HEAD

We say these words about Christ, not about ourselves. We are not the world's Savior. We are called to witness to him as the Savior and Lord of all. We cannot bear his name without coming under the searching light of his judgment on all men, beginning with us. This means asking some practical questions in our churches: whether we love men enough to be able to witness to them; whether we are sensitive to the ceaseless work of the Holy Spirit among men; whether we think and act as though Christ died for all men and not just for us.—WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, at New Delhi

We want to reach the stage where we naturally and spontaneously act by trust in God. But we have not reached it. . . . And that being so, it is mere humbug to say that we will serve God by our conduct but cannot find time for prayer and worship. If that is all we do, we shall serve him just as much as we have been doing—which is what has brought the world to the mess it is now in.—WILLIAM TEMPLE

## Love Your Enemies

*"But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Matthew 5:44. Read verses 43-48.*

Love all men? That is impossible! But Jesus commands us to do so. That reminds us that it is God's way. That is a part of the moral order of the universe. If God's will is your attitude, then you are on God's side and working with him. If you persist in hate, you are opposing God and face ultimate defeat.

It is hardly necessary to point out that the word Jesus used for love means creative good will. You cannot love everyone in an emotional way, but you can have enough interest in anyone to want to help him. Enemies often are transformed in an amazing way when we begin praying for them. Perhaps to love our enemies means that we are never to turn our backs upon them but to persist in creative good will.

What is hate? It is any force which pulls us away from or incites us against another. Love is a unifying force. It integrates the inner life of the individual. It means the enlargement of our life by identifying us with the needs of others. Hate makes life small. It digs a pit for the soul.

PRAYER: Our Father, we pray that the spirit of Jesus may so dwell in us that the things wherein we are different may result in beauty and not in division. We bring thee our wills that our other gifts may not be lost. Amen.

Our Father, who in heaven art,  
All-hallowed be thy name,  
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done,  
On earth and heaven the same.

Give us each day our daily bread,  
And our misdeeds forgive  
As we our debtors' faults forbear  
And in thy love do live.

Protect us from the tempter's snare  
And sin keep from our door.  
Thy Kingdom, power and glory shall  
Abide forever more.

—J. J. STROUD (sing to Serenity, Crimon, or other C. M. tune)

*All through this day,*

O Lord,

Let me touch as many lives as possible  
For thee.

And every life I touch, do thou *by thy*

*Holy Spirit quicken,*

Whether through the *word* I speak, the

*Prayer* I breathe, the

*Letters* I write, or the

*Life* I live,

*In the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

—FELLOWSHIP OF ST. LUKE



## Anxious About the Wrong Things

*"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on."*  
Matthew 6: 25. Read verses 25-33.

People are always anxious about something. That may be a good thing. Without concern, life would be lost in aimlessness. The text is simply a protest against being anxious about the wrong things. Food, drink, and clothing are not the most important things in life. They are the details of living and yet we all have thought of them very often this week.

We miss so much of life over concern about small things. The small rattle in the car makes us miss the view. Martha was troubled about pots and pans and missed Jesus. The priests were anxious about Sabbath observance and missed helping a man. The woman at the well almost missed the water of life over a point of theology.

The purpose of Lent is to pull our minds away from trivial things. Not that they are bad things, but because they blind us to the real values in life. During these days Jesus is trying to get our attention. It is well to be still long enough to hear him say, "But seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well." This is a commandment with a promise.

PRAYER: Free us, O God, from needless concerns that we may become increasingly aware of the things of the spirit which are pleasing in thy sight. Amen.

Man's inner mastery must become his primary concern.—ROY BURKHART

Only in the fellowship do we learn to be rightly alone and only in aloneness do we learn to live rightly in the fellowship. It is not as though the one preceded the other; both begin at the same time, namely, with the call of Jesus Christ. Each by itself has profound pitfalls and perils. One who wants fellowship without solitude plunges into the void of words and feelings, and one who seeks solitude without fellowship perishes in the abyss of vanity, self-infatuation, and despair. Let him who cannot be alone beware of community. Let him who is not in community beware of being alone.

—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

It matters little whether the thread that holds a bird is a strong one or a weak one, so long as it actually prevents it from flying. Similarly, it is all the same whether an imperfection is large or small, if it prevents the soul from flying up into perfection and union with God.

—JOHN OF THE CROSS

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



## Release for Captives

*"He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives."* Luke 4: 18. Read verses 16-19.

If we are ever to have a right relationship with ourselves, we must somehow become free. Jesus promises us release from whatever binds us. I do not recall that he ever preached in a prison; he did preach many times to people with imprisoned minds and spirits. He wanted to bring release to those in the solitary confinement of loneliness, the slavery of uncontrolled instincts, and the blindness of small horizons.

We know he was able to do that in Galilee, but can he do it for us here and now? Can he free us from bad habits, low desires, and slavery to untrained instincts? I know he can. He can speak to our minds and he can change our whole emotional pattern. Much of modern psychological practice is like trying to divert water a long way from its source. Jesus goes back to the source of life. A life which finds a new orbit around the personality of Jesus begins to act differently. Our mental and emotional response to his person determines our way of life. When we are rooted in Christian fellowship, new fruits are inevitable.

PRAYER: 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 Christ our Lord. Amen.

Though the body is shut in, all doors are open to the spirit.—TERTULLIAN, to prisoners for Jesus

O Master, free us from all entanglements that have hushed our voice and bound our action. Grant us grace to look upon the veiled sins of the rich and the coarse vices of the poor through thine eyes. Give us thine inflexible sternness against sin, and thine inexhaustible compassion for the frailty and tragedy of those who do the sin.—WALTER RAUSCHENBUSCH

O God, who art Love, grant to thy children to bear one another's burdens in perfect good will, that thy peace which passeth understanding may keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.—BOOK OF HOURS

If you think he talks too fast, listen slower.

—A New York State Roadsign

Said the Robin to the Sparrow:

"I should really like to know

Why these anxious human beings

Rush about and worry so."

Said the Sparrow to the Robin:

"Friend, I think that it must be

That they have no Heavenly Father

Such as cares for you and me."

—ELIZABETH CHENEY

## Seek First the Kingdom

*"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well." Matthew 6:33. Read verses 25-33.*

The kingdom to which Jesus referred is neither a geographic location nor a utopian society. It is not privilege, popularity, or power. Jesus had just turned his back on those things in the wilderness. It is something within us. It is a state of mind and spirit. It is the acceptance of God's will as our purpose.

The kingdom is the community which grows out of our inner spirits. It is the fellowship of right relationships. The kingdom is both within and among us. It is a way of life. It is conduct growing out of certain beliefs and loyalties. We all believe in the law of love. The practice of love is hurt most often by pride. When homes break up over minor differences, it is not because there is too little love, but because there is too much pride. If we are willing to let love rule, our relationship with others will always be helpful. To put the kingdom first means that some things must be put second. That may mean turning our lives upside down. To seek his kingdom is to love our neighbors as ourselves.

PRAYER: Almighty God, look upon us in pity because we are so unloving. We have prayed many times for the coming of thy kingdom and then have barred the way because of bitterness within our own souls. Forgive our bitter thoughts and hateful feelings. Renew right spirits within us. Amen.

Since you could not come to me, I have come to you.—POPE JOHN XXXIII, to prisoners

The petitioner likes attention to his words better than the fulfilling of that for which he came. . . . It is not necessary that everything about which he has petitioned should come to pass, but a good hearing is soothing to the heart.—PATH-HOTEP, to his son (c. 2600 B.C.)

To make intercession means to grant our brother the same right that we have received, namely to stand before Christ and share in his mercy. . . . This makes clear that intercession is also a daily service we owe to God and our brother. He who denies his neighbor the services of praying for him denies him the service of a Christian.—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

No man is an island, intire of it self;  
Every man is a peece of the Continent,  
a part of the maine . . .  
Any man's death diminishes me,  
because I am involved in Mankinde.  
And never send to know for whom  
the bell tolls.

It tolls for thee.—JOHN DONNE

(History is a vision) of God revealing himself in actions to persons who are sincerely seeking him.—ARNOLD TOYNBEE

## Neighbors

*"Judge not, that you be not judged."* Matthew 7: 1. Read verses 1-5.

One of our great industrial leaders was accustomed to saying, "Learn to live with people." That is a condition of enjoyment and an extension of usefulness.

The man who lived next to the small farm on which I grew up was not a very thoughtful neighbor. Our two farms ran parallel. He had no roadway through his land, so he was accustomed to driving his cattle to his upper fields over our roadway. That was all right except for one small detail: He never closed the gate behind him. That meant that our cattle would stray unless we remembered to close the gate. How we boys did splutter over having to do that. "Wouldn't you think," we would say, "that sometime Dave would close the gate?" Father never said anything. We lived side by side in peace for many years. I think he thought that an occasional chore was a small price to pay for peaceful living. From that I learned that it is not good fences or closed gates, but kindly forbearance which makes good neighbors.

PRAYER: O God of love, have mercy upon us and teach us how to love and how to forgive. May we put away all bitterness and all malice. Help us to be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as thou for Christ's sake hast forgiven us. Amen.

Life in Christ Jesus, in the new being, in the Spirit, means having no absolutes but his love, being totally uncommitted in every other respect but totally committed in this. And this utter openness in love to the "other" for his own sake is equally the only absolute for the non-Christian, as the parable of the Sheep and the Goats shows. He may not recognize Christ in the "other" but in so far as he has responded to him Christ is there—for he is the "depth" of love.—JOHN A. T. ROBINSON

Go with each of us to rest; if any awake, temper to them the dark hours of watching; and when the day returns, return to us, our Sun and Comforter, and call us up with morning faces and with morning hearts—eager to labor—eager to be happy, if happiness shall be our portion—and if the day be marked for sorrow, strong to endure it.—ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names: it is, however, pure, and proceeds from God. It is deep, and inward, confined to no forms of religion, nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren, in the best sense of the expression.

—JOHN WOOLMAN

## Helpful Living

*"But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion."*  
Luke 10: 33. Read verses 28-37.

The priest and the Levite had just passed by on the other side of the road. The other side of the road is a well-traveled path. That is not always because we do not want to help people; sometimes we do not know how. The priest and the Levite had no donkey, you remember. Sometimes the best we can do is to treat a symptom or offer material aid. The real needs are usually emotional and spiritual. What people need most is a happy spirit, a sense of nobility, an assurance of capacity, and a belief in their own importance. We help most when we minister to these needs.

If we want to help people, we must be deeply concerned about them. Our concern must be unselfish. We must have faith in them, believe in their capacity and their trustworthiness. Finally, whatever we do must be done with humility. One purpose of the fellowship of the church is to strengthen one another. Is our love deep enough to feel concern, and broad enough to step outside our group and make need the cause and measure of our devotion?

PRAYER: Our Father, make us aware of the world in which we live. Grant us sensitive spirits that we may feel the hurts of life. Give us enough love and understanding that we may want to help, and the wisdom to know what to do. Amen.

To open oneself to another *unconditionally* in love is to be with him in the presence of God, and that is the heart of intercession. To pray for another is to expose both oneself and him to the common ground of our being; it is to see one's concern for him in terms of *ultimate* concern, to let God into the relationship.

—JOHN A. T. ROBINSON

O God, Author of the world's joy, bearer of the world's pain, make us glad that we are men and that we have inherited the world's burden; deliver us from the luxury of cheap melancholy, and, at the heart of all our trouble and sorrow, let unconquerable gladness dwell; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.—HENRY S. NASH

It is unbelievable how quick these people (the Christians) are to act whenever it is a question of their community; they immediately spare neither exertion nor expense.

—LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA

If the Lord has lit our candle, should we not hold it out to the other children in the great house until we all go up to bed?—HENRY VAN DYKE

Let me win through to the clear light; that done, I shall be a man. Let me suffer as my God suffered. If you have God in you, try to understand what I want, and when you see what straits I am in, give me your sympathy.

—IGNATIUS



## Love or Hate?

*For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.*  
John 4: 9. Read verses 7-15.

Jesus suggests that they had better have some "dealings" if they are to live. He felt that so deeply that he gave a new commandment about it. "A new commandment I give to you that you love one another." (John 13: 34) That is not just good advice; it is a condition of survival.

Father Trevor Huddleston, in his book *Naught for Your Comfort*, told of the explosive situation in the Union of South Africa. There is one sentence we should remember. "Let us hope that we can learn to love, before they have learned to hate." This speaks of the urgency for social justice. Today a contest is taking place in one of our minority groups. Some leaders are trying to lead their people in the way of love and understanding. There are others, and they are a growing number, who are preaching the doctrine of hate and exclusiveness. This is the great contest of our day. Can we learn to love more quickly than we learn to hate? This is not an academic question. The future is tied up in how we answer it.

PRAYER: O God, widen our interests to include all thy children. Make us ashamed of any exclusiveness which narrows our concern. Discipline our spirits until we know that none can come until all are welcomed. Give us the wisdom to help and enough humility not to hurt those in need. Through Christ the Savior of all mankind. Amen.

Love must be the fundamental attitude of those who want to convert the world. This is the genius of the apostolate: knowing how to love.—PAUL VI

I do not know of grounds apart from Christ upon which it is possible to build a strong and enduring faith that self-sacrificing love is really the sovereign power that rules the world. I have not yet met anyone who could show them.<sup>10</sup>—LESSLIE NEWBIGIN

You ought all to behave as God does and respect one another; none of you should look at his neighbor in a merely natural light: no, you must love one another in Jesus Christ whatever happens. Do not tolerate anything that may divide you, but stay united.—IGNATIUS

While we are still self-centered, we love nothing except for our own sake. And the man shut up in himself can only have a friendship limited by his own measure . . . . As for outgoing souls, who truly forget themselves in God, their friendship is as large as the one in whom they love . . . . This is because the soul which is not preoccupied with itself, and which counts itself as nothing in all things, finds in this nothing the immensity of God himself. It loves without measure, without end, without human motive. It loves because God, measureless love, loves in it.<sup>11</sup>—FENELON



## Men as Things

*And he looked up and said, "I see men; but they look like trees, walking." Mark 8:24. Read verses 22-26.*

The first time Jesus touched him this man gained some vision, but not much; he saw men as things. The Master had to touch him a second time before the man saw men clearly.

One of my friends who had recently been fitted with new eyeglasses said to me, "I like the surprise of my new glasses." What she meant, of course, was that everything looked different. So life takes on a new reality when seen through the eyes of Jesus. We may still see the things that are wrong with them, but now we see also the things that are fine and beautiful. We see the woman who may be a poor housekeeper, but also the splendid homemaker. We discover that the man who is a poor provider is sometimes a wonderful father. The teacher sees the pupil not just as an indifferent scholar, but as a frightened youth fumbling for the key to the door of life. The Christian employer can look into his shop and know which are machines and which are men. The good politician has no trouble distinguishing between ballots and voters.

PRAYER: O Thou Blessed Lord of all the sons of men, give us a new and truer vision of those among whom we live. Make us unselfish enough to serve, forgiving enough to restore, and sufficiently helpful to be followers of thy Son, in whose name we offer our prayer. Amen.

Father of men, who regardest thy children with compassion! This earth, which thou hast given to our care, hath many griefs, and is sad with a weight of shameful sins. Keep us pure from evil, and make us strong to contend against it. Let us not shut our hearts against pity, O thou All-merciful, but seek to heal the wounds with which our fellowmen lie stricken on the way. May we make no peace with oppression; but amid the negligence of the world and the seduction of guilty custom, put into us the spirit of the holy prophets and martyrs of old, that we may cry aloud and spare not. Yet, O Lord, may it be that we sin not in our anger. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.—JAMES MARTINEAU

O Thou who art love, and who seest all the suffering, injustice, and misery which reign in this world; have pity, we implore thee, on the work of thy hands. Look mercifully upon the poor, the oppressed, and all who are heavy laden with error, labor, and sorrow. Fill our hearts with deep compassion for those who suffer, and hasten the coming of thy kingdom of justice and truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord.—EUGENE BERSIER

Every particular thou is a glimpse through to the eternal Thou.—MARTIN BUBER

## The Unchosen Way

*He had to pass through Samaria.* John 4:4.  
Read verses 1-15.

The unchosen way is probably the road you are traveling. Few people are able to follow the planned route. Health, war, changed circumstances get us on the detours.

It is not the road, but the manner of our travel, which is important. We can whine, be angry and resentful. It is well to remember how Jesus went through Samaria. It was a strange and dangerous road. He could have rushed through and avoided people. Instead, he used the opportunity to talk with a woman of that land. Thus he saved a woman, gained many believers, and further trained his disciples.

The unchosen way frequently turns out to be the King's Highway. Everyone can recall many people who moved on to greatness after God got them on the road of his choice. Sometimes we have to miss our own mark in order to hit God's target. Poor health has resulted in some great living. Unpleasant work has produced many great careers. Many childless women have become the greatest servants of humanity. Don't complain too much about having to go through Samaria. It may be God's short-cut to lead you to greatness in his service.

**PRAYER:** Eternal Father, thou hast placed us in a strange world. Sometimes we lose our way in the darkness and are afraid. Help us to know that thou art ever near and that thy presence is our guide and safety. Amen.

This is the world Christ loved, and men must be saved where they are, not where they ought to be.—POPE JOHN XXIII

Great Spirit, help me never to judge another until I have walked in his moccasins for two moons.—SIOUX INDIAN

Our prayer will be immensely enriched and expanded by a persistent cultivation of this sense of God as our True Home. For thus the rivalry between God and creatures will become less and less a struggle between a mysterious obligation and a clear fascination, and more and more a competition between an ocean-wide, all-penetrating joy, when our souls come to their true deep selves, and pleasures feverish, fleeting, and shallow, when we allow ourselves heedlessly to be carried along by our superficial selves.—FRIEDRICH VON HUEGEL

O thou whose pow'r o'er moving worlds presides,  
Whose voice created, and whose wisdom guides;  
On darkling man in pure effulgence shine,  
And clear the clouded mind with light divine.  
'Tis thine alone to calm the pious breast  
With silent confidence and holy rest;  
From thee, great God, we spring, to thee we tend,  
Path, motive, guide, original, and end.—BOETHIUS

## Unexpected Demands

*"Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves?'"* Luke 11:5. Read verses 1-13.

We do not like unexpected demands. The knock at midnight is frightening. We are afraid we do not have the necessary resources. The Bible tells of many such people. There were some girls who did not have oil for their lamps, a guest without a wedding garment, and disciples who had no bread to share.

We need to look at our own resources. Are they sufficient to enable us to meet the demands which may be made upon us at a time when we are dependent upon what we have in the house of our own minds and spirits? Have we any traditions, any religious convictions or established Christian practices which are treasures laid up against the day of adversity?

The knock today is on the door of the church. This is today's midnight. In the darkness we hear voices but cannot see the speakers. The faces we do see are bitter with frustration and cynicism. If the church is to answer the knock, it must thrust its candle outside the door. To lose our concern is to cease to hear God's voice, because God never speaks to the church except about the world. Unless we live with the poorest, the loneliest, and the lost, we cannot live with the Father.

PRAYER: O God, give us glad hearts and willing hands to do thy will. We cannot know thy plans, but we can and do trust thy guidance. Amen.

To look away from the world, or to stare at it, does not help a man to reach God, but he who sees the world in him stands in his presence . . . to eliminate or leave behind nothing at all, to include the whole world in the Thou, to give the world its due and its truth, to include nothing beside God but everything in him—this is full and complete relation.

—MARTIN BUBER

In the light of eternity . . . (the individual Christian) must see the dead church in the terrible radiance of the living Christ, the church historic defending its privileges, clutching its property, proclaiming that false comfort that is short of repentance, hating peace, fanning the cold war, supporting privilege, blocking the road to education and to development, and at the same time feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the poor, binding up the wounds of the world, and proclaiming in how-ever faltering a voice the Lord whom she betrays. . . . In the light of eternity we must see our own church, our own state, our own friends as our deadly enemies whom we must love and for whom we must suffer.—KENNETH E. BOULDING

O my God, enable me to make an act so full and yet so simple that I give you all that I am and am united to all that you are. Enable me, O God, to lose myself utterly in you.—BOSSERT

God can't count. We say one, two, three.  
He says one, one, one.

## Spiritual Food

*But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." John 4:32. Read verses 31-38.*

Jesus found his mission and his strength in his perfect relationship with the Father. He told his disciples, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me." He was strengthened by doing his Father's will. He was fed during his hours of quietness. He waited upon the Lord, not in self-pity or to cross-examine himself, but to renew his strength.

He also found strength in his accomplishments. The bread comes in the doing. There is an old parable about a king who moved his people to a new location. He insisted on taking with him a young fruit tree which was much too heavy for any one man to carry. Everyone avoided it, except one young man not yet wise in the ways of the world. For the first few days he always reached camp completely exhausted long after everyone was settled for the night. But he seemed to grow stronger each day of the long journey. Finally they set someone to spy upon him to discover the source of his strength. What the spy saw was an amazing thing. Early in the morning the tree would blossom; by noon it would bear fruit, so that the youth carrying it could refresh himself during the journey. His burden thus became his bread.

When Jesus discovered a proper relationship to himself, he knew what his work had to be; when he practiced a right relationship with God, he had the strength to do it.

PRAYER: O Master, let me walk with thee. Amen.

Christ is the Head of this house, the unseen Host at every meal, the silent Listener to every conversation.—ANONYMOUS

Thou before whom all imagining staggers and is felled, at whose dark boundaries comprehension can only bow in helplessness and surrender; help us to remember that we can never know thee until we love thee above all else.—GERALD HEARD

How cometh it to pass  
that into such as me  
Floweth Almighty God,  
into one drop the sea?

—ANGELUS SILESIUS

Christians are blissful people, who can rejoice at heart and sing praises, stamp and dance and leap for joy. That is well pleasing to God and doth our heart good, when we trust in God and find in him our pride and our joyfulness. Such a gift should only kindle a fire and a light in our heart, so that we should never cease dancing and leaping for joy.—MARTIN LUTHER

O gift of gifts, O grace of grace,  
That God should condescend  
To make my heart his dwelling-place  
And be my daily friend.—ANONYMOUS



## Our Sense of Values

*"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth."*  
Matthew 6: 19. Read verses 19-21.

Difficult circumstances reveal our sense of values. A traveler lost on the mountain will discard valuable equipment, but carefully guard a little food and a few swallows of water.

What do you value most in your life? Many would say, "security." Some might put good health first. A few perhaps regard reputation as the highest good. But these are not life's irreducible minima. They are important, but we would surrender any or all of them for certain other values.

For myself, I think I would select self-respect and decent memories. We must live with ourselves both day and night. Then next to the top I would put the affection of my family and friends. To know that we are loved is better than to know that we are safe, even in our world of uncertainty. The greatest value, of course, is a God who cares. That we must have, if life is to have meaning. Without him life would be as dull and stupid as an endless party trying to escape boredom. Many of the saints have died, but none of them of being bored with life. Many of them have lost every treasure of earth and still have died "more than conquerors through him who loved us."

PRAYER: Forgive us, Lord of Life, that we waste the treasure of our loyalties, the magic of our dreams, and the passion of our lives upon what has so little meaning for life. Amen.

—Atkins.

My sole happiness, my only fulfillment—as a poet—has been in trying to rouse the young ones to the delight of the Eternal Player, to set their lives in tune with the dance of life itself. It is not in me to be more serious than that. . . .  
I am a poet.—RABINDRANATH TAGORE

As rivers have their source in some far off fountain, so the human spirit has its source. To find this fountain of spirit is to learn the secret of heaven and earth.—LAOTZU

Good men use the world in order to enjoy  
God,  
whereas  
bad men want to use God in order to enjoy  
the world.—AUGUSTINE

When you are *really sure* that every bush is "afire with God" you will no longer feel contempt for the triviality of the bush.

—EVELYN UNDERHILL

When yeast is added to dough, or insulin to a diabetic body, or industriousness to a job, or God to anything that needs to be better, it all follows the same basic principle of life and the universe: when something is added to something else there is a change, there is a new result.\*—EDGAR L. SANFORD

There is nothing more important in any day than developing our friendship with God.

—ROBERT STACKEL

\*God's Healing Power, Edgar L. Sanford. © 1959 by Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. Used by permission.

Tuesday, March 10

## The Need of Prayer

"Lord, teach us to pray." Luke 11:1. Read verses 1-4.

The public ministry of Jesus occupied less than fifty days. The rest of his time was spent in meditation and prayer. That impressed the disciples, not that he spent so much time at it, but because he received so much power through it. They had seen Jesus perform miracles. They had observed his power to heal. They had listened to his great preaching. But their first request was not to be able to do these things, but to learn how to pray.

Prayer is more than a set of words said or sung in some holy place. It is not an effort to slip out from under burdens. True prayer may bring more burdens than it removes. It means bringing God into our situation. It means opening the soul to him and giving him the key to every room of our lives. At the end you may want to use these words: "Show me the way, O Lord. I have thought it out the best I can. Now let me see what you would have me do." Prayer is to surrender your will, accept the light, and to discover the strength which comes from God.

PRAYER: Into thy hands, O Lord, we commit ourselves this day. Give to us a watchful, humble, and a diligent spirit, that we may seek in all things to know thy will, and when we know it may perform it gladly, to the honor and glory of thy Name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

See! they stand at thy door and knock!  
Be it opened to them!  
May they enter with a free step,  
And be refreshed!  
For thou art the Well-Spring of Life.

—AUGUSTINE

How rare it is to find a soul quiet enough to hear God speak!—FENELON

Prayer is not an easy way of getting what we want, but the only way of becoming what God wants us to be.—G. A. STUDDERT-KENNEDY

Speak to him thou, for he hears, and spirit with spirit can meet—

Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.—ALFRED TENNYSON

God is more jealous of his most excellent gifts than of his most ordinary ones. He wants us to be attached only to himself, and not to his gifts, however pure they may be, following his purpose to unite us more easily and more closely to himself alone. Whoever regards one of his blessings complacently as if it were one of his own, turns it at once into poison. . . . Live as a borrower.—FENELON

O thou, by whom we come to God,  
The Life, the Truth, the Way,  
The path of prayer thyself hast trod;  
Lord, teach us how to pray!—A BOOK OF PRAYERS

## The Way to Pray

*"But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret." Matthew 6:6. Read verses 5-8.*

Prayer is not a technique, it is an art—perhaps more difficult than music. The method Jesus used, and has suggested to us, is to go into some quiet place and offer our minds to God. He prayed wherever he happened to be, but preferred quiet places. Personally, I prefer the church, when I can be alone there. Just to sit quietly alone, until you know you are not alone, does restore the soul. Many people find more help when they pray in their homes at some place arranged as a private altar. There are those who use for private devotions the time they are driving a car, riding a bus, or waiting for an appointment. Many mothers spend the first fifteen minutes after the children start for school in quiet meditation.

Not only in time and place, but also in the content of our prayers, Jesus may well be our guide. He told his disciples that asking was not the most important thing; with Jesus communion came first. His prayers were not so much speech as fellowship with the Father. Prayer may well begin in adoration and move to gratitude and commitment. It begins in words; it must end in attitudes. The greatest prayer is not spoken; it is lived.

PRAYER: Turn us again, Lord God of Hosts, to those things that make us rich toward thee. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

What God asks is a will which will no longer be divided between him and any creature, a will pliant in his hands, which neither desires anything nor refuses anything, which wants without reservation everything which he wants, and which never, under any pretext, wants anything which he does not want.—FENELON

You seek the Lord, and he is in every place; everything proclaims him to you; everything gives him to you. . . . You are seeking the idea of God, and you have his substance; you seek perfection, and it is in all that meets you. Your sufferings, your actions, your attractions, are the species within which God gives you himself.

—J. P. DE CAUSSADE

Adoration is the highest form of prayer. Haltingly we may approach it, as with stumbling tongue we pass from thanksgiving into adoration, hardly knowing which is remembrance of past blessings and which is awareness of the wonder and awe and majesty of the living God. But haltingly or not, adoration is the beginning of all true prayer—and its culmination. For adoration is nothing more, nothing less, than loving God for Himself.<sup>12</sup>

—HAROLD FREER

Be open to God as the earth lies open to the four seasons of the year.—ANONYMOUS

## The Difficulties of Prayer

*"So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." Matthew 5:23-24.*

If we did that, the church would be empty at the hour of worship. Wrong relationships with our neighbors, which we have not tried to correct, are one of the difficulties of prayer. We cannot get close to the Father when we stand far off from our neighbor. The elder brother would not, or could not, come into the Father's house while he was at odds with his brother.

The principal difficulties, however, result from wrong relationships with ourselves. We are critical of others. We sit too often in the seat of the scornful. We allow wrong thoughts to crowd into our minds. The "wicked whisper" drives out our emotion of reverence. When we want to pray, our minds run into far countries where we would waste our substance.

Our greatest difficulty is the unforgiving spirit. To forgive means more than to refrain from retaliation; it means to restore to trust and to be freed from resentment. The unforgiving spirit cancels out our forgiveness. Hate and love do not mix. Before we can invite love in, we must cast out the other.

PRAYER: O God, we are thankful that the strength of thy hands is greater than the hardness of our hearts; that thou art patient and gentle beyond our deserving. Amen.

Nobody could rob me of the conviction that it was enjoined upon me to do what God wanted and not what I wanted. That gave me the strength to go my own way. Often I had the feeling that in all decisive matters I was no longer among men, but was alone with God. . . . These talks with the "Other" were my profoundest experiences; on the one hand a bloody struggle, on the other supreme ecstasy.

—C. J. JUNG

He who has learned to pray has learned the greatest secret of a holy and happy life. Which way soever else we let loose our hearts, they will return to us empty and weary. Time will convince the vainest and blindest minds that happiness is no more to be found in the things of this world than it is to be dug out of the earth. But when the motions of our hearts are motions of piety, tending to God in constant acts of devotion, love and desire, then is it that we have found out a good suited to our natures that is equal to all our wants. . . . For he that lives in the spirit and temper of devotion, whose heart is always full of God, lives at the top of human happiness, and is the farthest removed from all the vanities and vexations which disturb and weary the minds of men that are devoted to the world. —WILLIAM LAW

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;  
Wean it from earth, through all its pulses move;  
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as thou art,  
And make me love thee as I ought to love.

—GEORGE CROLY



## Under Clouds

*And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" Luke 9:35. Read verses 28-36.*

Some people lose God under a cloud; others find him there. Faith helps us keep the proper relationship. We should not be surprised that a voice came out of the cloud. There are more voices come from clouds than from sunlight. Out of this one came the assurance of a Savior.

I listened one day as a friend told what it meant to him to lose his hearing. First he was aware of the absence of all the softer sounds. Music became distorted because so much of it was lost. The songs of the birds faded out. All the gentler voices of nature remained only in memory. The growing circle of soundlessness kept creeping nearer. It became a cloud over all his living. His spirit slipped ever deeper into despair. As we talked, there were tears in his eyes. I shall always remember his closing words, "When depression became deep enough, it became dependence. I have paid a great price for that lesson, but I do not think that I have paid too much."

The highest faith frequently comes from the deepest despair. The cloud is full of God's mercy and blessing. If we can stand beneath it without whining, we may yet hear a saving voice. A man's faith is worth what it costs.

**PRAYER:** Grant us wisdom to wring some blessing from the hard experiences of life. If we faint, may we not fall backward into despair, but forward into thy love as revealed in Christ our Lord. Amen.

O Thou the same today and yesterday and for evermore, on those that walk with thee an everlasting day shines. Thou bright and morning Star springing on high, illuminate me, who am now sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. O Light of light, the Brightest of thy Father's glory, enlighten all inward obscurities in me, that after this life I many never be cast into the outward darkness. O most blessed, most merciful, and Almighty Jesus, abide, I beseech thee, with me; for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent. As long as thou art present with me, I am in the light; but when thou art gone, I am in the shadows of death and amongst the stones of emptiness. When thou art present, all is brightness, all is sweetness; I am in my God's bosom; I discourse with him, watch with him, live with him, and lie down with him. Abide, then, with me, O thou whom my soul loveth! Thou Son of righteousness with healing under thy wings, arise in my heart; refine, quicken, and cherish it; make thy light there to shine in darkness, and a perfect day in the dead of night.

—HENRY VAUGHN

Everybody and everything is a part of life, but when they have all been added together, still somehow it is not life. When is it life, I ask myself, and why not now? . . . I belong and I don't belong.<sup>13</sup> —HENRY MILLER

The little he will let me do, I will do it all.  
—POPE JOHN XXIII on deathbed

## Prodigals Who Do Not Return

*"I will arise and go to my father."* Luke 15: 18.  
Read verses 11-24.

A prodigal is one whose relationship to the Father is wrong. He is too far from home. The message of Lent is to help us see where we are and to encourage us to believe that we need not remain there.

Why do so few prodigals return? Partly because not all are in some far country of riotous living. They are not feeding swine; they simply are sleeping in indifference—or they are so caught up in competing interests that they do not know how far from home they have wandered.

Some prodigals are loath to return because they are reluctant to face the Father and give an account of their stewardship. We begin life with the heritage of opportunity. Who is there who has not wasted something of time and talent? We are afraid to face condemnation. Lent reminds us that God is prepared to meet us on the way with mercy.

The self-righteous, like the elder brother, stay outside the door. They were the most difficult group with whom Jesus dealt. Their sins were not obvious and their needs were unfelt. Some of us stand among the self-righteous. Your thought, when you read that sentence, may be just one more proof of its truth. It is self-righteousness which makes worship unreal, fellowship difficult, and brotherhood impossible.

PRAYER: O thou God of mercy, inspire us by thy spirit, that we may begin our journey home. Amen.

It is essential to shun, as the most pernicious of vices, the reflex action of the mind, the tendency to turn back on ourselves. This evil is very frequent among moderns, who are born with a taste for analysis and psychological curiosity. If we look at ourselves instead of looking at God, if we tighten our heart in order to scrutinize the state of our soul, and take stock of our petty progress, if we leave our prayer in order to find out if it is good, we wander disquieted instead of entering into peace.—JACQUES MARITAIN

Almighty God, since our minds have so many hidden recesses that nothing is more difficult than thoroughly to purge them from all pretense and lying, grant that we may honestly examine ourselves. Do thou also shine upon us with the light of thy Holy Spirit. May we truly acknowledge our hidden faults and put them far away from us, that thou mayest be our only God.—JOHN CALVIN

Nobody in this life is nearer to God than those who hate and deny him, and he has no more pleasing, no more dear children than these.—MARTIN LUTHER

Thou hast created us unto thyself, and our heart finds no rest until it rests in thee.

—AUGUSTINE

## "And Try His Works to Do"

*"If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me."* John 10:37. Read verses 31-39.

Now is the time for your life to become the message of Jesus. It is your turn to let the Word become flesh in your life. Can we do the work of Christ? Certainly not all of it. But any man can pick up a towel. Jesus had just refused a crown before he washed the disciples' feet. He put kindly service above special privilege. That we can do.

On another occasion he took up a whip of twisted cords. He was angry. That surprises us. But anger is not sinful except when it is put to a sinful use. No Christian dare be complacent about wrongs committed against others.

Then of course he took bread and said, "This is my body which is broken for you." How often we ask someone to break their body for our profit, our ambitions, or our physical desires. But this is a case of your body being broken for someone. Often we break them for ourselves, sometimes for our families, but seldom willingly for others.

At the end he took up a cross. Its meaning is largely beyond our understanding, but we see it as the supreme act of unselfishness. It is much more than that, but we can start there. Do you still want to "try his work to do"?

**PRAYER:** Our Father, we stand amazed at thy love, humbled by our indifference, and ashamed of our sin. Give us humble and contrite hearts. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Father of life, awake in me  
the joy of living in this day,  
all new in challenge and in hope.

O Lord of Love, lift up my heart  
amid the fathomless beauty of creation  
above all malice or apathy.

O Living Christ who died for me,  
fill up these precious hours  
with thy redeeming radiance.

O God Most High, may courage master me  
and banish fear.

Let gratitude repay thy grace  
in glory unto thee.<sup>14</sup>—WILLIAM R. MILLER

Behold us, Lord, a little space  
From daily tasks set free,  
And met within thy holy place  
To rest awhile with thee.

Yet these are not the only walls  
Wherein thou mayst be sought;  
On homeliest work thy blessing falls,  
In truth and patience wrought.

Work shall be prayer, if all be wrought  
As thou wouldst have it done;  
And prayer, by thee inspired and taught,  
Itself with work be one.—JOHN ELLERTON

(God) promises to all who trust him . . . his  
presence in trial and rejoicing.

—STATEMENT OF FAITH, United Church of Christ

Monday, March 16

## Work with a Purpose

But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working still, and I am working." John 5:17. Read verses 14-18.

God keeps busy. It is a comfort to know that he has no slack seasons, and that he does not sleep when night comes. He has no lost weekends. Already he has started your flower garden for next summer. He is not an elderly partner, retired from the active management of the business.

Isaiah describes God as one "who works for those who wait for him." Sometimes he waits for man to do his own work. He provides the divine blueprint, but he waits for our human hands to work out the details.

Too much of the world's work is done by the wrong people. The Book says, *Cain built a city*, and, *Enoch walked with God*. Cain would have built better if he had walked with God, and Enoch would have walked nearer God if he had helped build a city. A part of the tragedy of life is that so much of our secular work is done by ungodly men, and that so many good men stand mute and idle.

PRAYER: Father of all mercies, we beseech thy forgiveness for all things wherein we have failed thee; for lamps of vision untended, for purposes forgotten, and for opportunities ignored. Grant us now willing hearts that thy spirit may do its perfect work in and through us, to the glory of thy holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

Would you know who is the greatest saint in the world? It is not he who prays most or fasts most; it is not he who gives most alms, or is most eminent for temperance, chastity, or justice; but it is he who is always thankful to God, who wills everything that God willeth, who receives everything as an instance of God's goodness, and has a heart always ready to praise God for it.—WILLIAM LAW

The Christian faith is a blending of memory and hope. But the memory is such as to provide incentive and daring for the needs of to-day. And the hope has no validity except as it is grounded in the brave and faithful performance of contemporary responsibilities.

—TRUMAN B. DOUGLASS

Fill us with the spirit of meekness and the grace of modesty, that we may become wise in the fear of thee. May we never forget that all we have and prize is but lent to us, a trust for which we must render account to thee. O heavenly Father, put into our hearts the love and fear of thee, that we may consecrate our lives to thy service and glorify thy name in the eyes of all men.

—UNION PRAYERBOOK FOR JEWISH WORSHIP

Work, for the night is coming,  
Work through the sunny noon;  
Fill brightest hours with labor,  
Rest comes sure and soon.  
Give every flying minute  
Something to keep in store.

—ANNA L. COGHILL



Tuesday, March 17

## Freedom from Fear

*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. . . . and he who fears is not perfected in love.* 1 John 4: 18. Read verses 13-21.

Who is there who does not listen sometimes for the footsteps of approaching disaster, or in the night feel some fear clutching at his heart? Fear can do strange things to us. It may make us slaves, cowards, boasters, or invalids. It bluffs us into unnecessary surrender and robs us of friends, achievements, and satisfactions.

Fear of public opinion has made many men traitors to their personal convictions. When spirits are confused, principles are easily lost. The fearful man becomes a weakling in meeting moral issues. There is always the grave danger that fear may so distort the mind that we will despair of the future, become suspicious of people, and lose our sense of values.

One of the original purposes of religion was to cast out fear. It does that for many. For a few it helps create fear, by making them conscious of their sins. It hurts those who do not go far enough to seek forgiveness.

A deep sense of loyalty to some person, belief, or purpose may be our salvation. When loyalty reaches the point where it becomes love, the triumph of the spirit over fear is assured.

PRAYER: Bring peace to our troubled lives, O Lord, and light to our darkened minds. In the midst of every storm come to us so simply and directly that we may hear the inner voice which proclaims peace and joy through Christ. Amen.

For Further Meditation

O eternal God, our God, and the God of our fathers, the rock of our life and the shield of our salvation; we render thanks unto thee and declare thy praise for our lives which are delivered into thy hand, for thy goodness which is displayed to us daily, for thy wonders and thy bounty which are at all times given unto us. Thou art the most gracious, for thy mercies never fail; and thou art the most compassionate, for thy kindnesses never cease. Evermore do we hope in thee, O Lord, our God.

—JEWISH BOOK OF SERVICE

The day returns and brings us  
The petty round  
Of irritating concerns and duties.  
Help us to play the man!  
Help us to perform them  
With laughter and kind faces.  
Let cheerfulness abound with industry.  
Give us to go blithely on our business  
All this day.  
Bring us to our resting beds  
Weary, and content, and undishonored.  
And grant us in the end  
The gift of sleep.—ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

O God, help me to know, here and now, how to act on love, and grant me the courage so to act in the strength of thy strong Son. Amen.

## Enlistment Without Service

*"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"* Luke 6: 46. Read verses 46-49.

Who are these people who enlist but never serve? They are those we register in school and who cut all the classes; those who marry and ignore the vows; those who bring children for baptism but neglect their training; those who join the church but retain old values. The test of our Christian religion is not whether it is creditable but livable; not do people believe in it, but do they live it? Christianity is a way of life.

How much does your enlistment mean to you in terms of service? Do you work for your church? Do you witness to its message? Do you support its needs? Or have you enlisted only for the dress parade?

Last year in Puerto Rico I talked with the organist of one of the evangelical churches. As far as I could learn, they had some sort of meeting every day except Saturday. Trying to be a little humorous I asked, "And what do you do Saturdays?" I was greatly impressed by her reply. "Saturdays we spend out on the streets inviting people to worship with us at our Sunday services." There are a few churches which require commitments of effort and tithes before accepting enlistment. Perhaps that is good. Unless service follows enlistment, it cannot have much meaning.

**PRAYER:** Help us, our Father, to face our world prayerfully, so that we may face it hopefully, and with enough courage to become more than conquerors through him who loved us. Amen.

I read once  
In a book  
That a man  
Called Christ  
Went about  
Doing good.  
It distresses me  
That I am  
So easily satisfied  
With just  
Going about.—KAGAWA

God our Lord, we rejoice in the fierce joy of living in a revolutionary time when victims of oppression and contempt are achieving the stature of manhood and human dignity. Amid the shaking, grant that our desire for the courage to do thy will will be greater than our creature-longing for security. Give us a proper loathing for the false security of looking down at others, and a proper pride to stand level-eyed with all who fight for truth and justice. May we trust thee enough to be glad when thou dost destroy the shoddy and corrupt things we have loved and replace them with the clean and true things thou wouldst have us learn to love. Give us the strength to be with thee where thou art, and bless us there.

—ADAPTED FROM TRUMAN B. DOUGLASS

## The Forgotten Essential

*Now they had forgotten to bring bread.* Mark 8: 14. Read verses 14-21.

The disciples had just shared in the feeding of the five thousand. Now only a few hours later they set out on a journey *and they had in the boat with them not more than one loaf.* How careless can disciples be!

Have we the bread to feed the hungry of our day? Have we some vital experience to share? We can discuss religion, but can we put anyone's hand in the hand of God? Have we the spirit of Jesus? That means to carry and share the bread of good will, helpfulness, and sacrifice. Everyone was different after meeting Jesus. They were stronger, more generous, and possessed a new purpose. It is our duty and privilege to nurture the life of those we meet even to the point of sharing all that we have.

Today the church has the obligation to carry and to share the bread of light and hope. This world is dark enough without the church blowing out any more candles. If the rest of the world must point to a cloud or hold up a question mark, we can and must hold up a light. If you have bread in your basket, share it. There are many people waiting to be fed.

PRAYER: Our Father, we rejoice that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. Give us the joy of knowing we are thy children, the satisfaction of those who follow thy purpose and the peace of those who do thy will. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thy peace be with me now, O Lord, steadying my hands for prayer and preparing my heart for praise of thee. For thee and thy world I now turn from the world, but not to disdain it; I shut it out, but not to forsake it; and I do not deny it in turning toward thee. But I turn toward thee for the strength to meet thy world and mine, for thy truth to understand it, thy grace to forgive it, thy love to redeem it. Here I seek what I and the world need and neither of us can find without thee. One longing aches through its perplexities and mine, and one holy light shines for us both in Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord. Amen.

"God dwells wherever man lets him in." This is the ultimate purpose: to let God in. But we can let him in only where we really stand, where we live, where we live a true life. If we maintain holy intercourse with the little world entrusted to us, if we help the holy spiritual substance to accomplish itself in that section of creation in which we are living, then we are establishing, in this our place, a dwelling for the divine presence. —MARTIN BUBER

A simple man, even if he were of all men the most limited, in case his life expresses the little he has understood, speaks more potently than the eloquence of all the orators.

—SOREN KIERKEGAARD

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto him. Amen.

—STATEMENT OF FAITH, *United Church of Christ*

## Power Through Faith

*But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.* John 1: 12. Read verses 1-13.

All who received and believed the message of Jesus became new people. Sometimes they changed their direction, like those who returned to Jerusalem after recognizing the traveler at Emmaus. Sometimes they mastered their fear and came out of hiding as the disciples did after the first Easter. Sometimes, like Paul, they ceased to be persecutors and became apostles. Sometimes, like the woman of Sychar, they became evangelists in their own village. Never expect to be the same after you meet Jesus. If you receive him, life is made new; if you reject him, you may find life intolerable. Great refusals may cause us to be gnawed with remorse.

The promise of this text is in one area only. The power received is to become "children of God." It may make you stronger in many areas; it may give you new mental alertness; it may improve your relationships with other people; it may give you better health. All these things, and many others, are the by-products of being God's children.

One person of faith can change a whole company of uncertain people into a purposeful group. Life begins when faith begins; life ends when faith dies.

PRAYER: Help us, O God, to live by faith and not by doubts. May we have that strength which comes from a firm conviction and that peace found in serving thee. Amen.

People who look for the glamor of sins of the flesh are likely to overlook the happiness of the disciplined life. The one threatens never to bring happiness; the other promises always to do so.<sup>15</sup>—MARTIN E. MARTY

Holy, holy, holy Light!  
Immaterial incandescence,  
Of God the effluence of the essence,  
Shekinah intolerably bright!

—HERMAN MELVILLE

Our worship is only real when we hand ourselves over to God for his use in the actual world in which we live. This means giving ourselves to him that he may rule our hearts, cast out our sins, and use us as his messengers and agents wherever sin and misery and distress call for our aid. For ourselves this may mean much discipline; the purifying action of God will search us when he takes us at our word and makes us instruments of his kingdom.

—OLIVE WYON

The spirit of prayer is a pressing forth of the soul . . . a stretching with all its desires after the life of God: it is a leaving, as far as it can, all its own spirit, to receive a spirit from above, to be one life, one love, one spirit with Christ in God. This prayer is an opening itself for the light and love of God to enter into it. . . . Nothing does or can keep God out of the soul, or hinder his holy union with it, but the desire of the heart turned from him.—WILLIAM LAW



## Faith for Living

*"And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, . . ." John 8:29. Read verses 25-30.*

We live too much by our fears. We have patterned life to keep from getting hurt rather than to believe something. We have lost the courage of faith and try to creep through life on our hands and knees looking for a cave in which to hide. To rely on no power but our own is not bravery; it is foolishness. Life begins when faith begins; life ends when faith dies. Men of power have one thing in common; they are always men of faith. The doers are always captives of some great conviction.

There are many sustaining forces in life but none can take the place of the inner resources of the spirit. "He who sent me is with me." We are "sent"; we are not alone. We are men with a mission, and we are blessed with a companioning mercy. The shepherd stays with the flock. We find our place when our minds are stayed on that remembrance. Regardless of where we make our beds, God is still there. Perhaps we too may come to the end of life to know that we are they "who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

PRAYER: O God, so dwell within us that we may go forth with the light of hope in our eyes, the fire of inspiration on our lips, thy word on our tongues, and thy love in our hearts. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

A good test of the reality of our prayer is the spirit in which we come from it and turn to our ordinary duties. If we feel little or no connection between the two sides of our life, there must be some mistake somewhere. A good prayer is not tested by our feelings or fervor at the time but by our behavior afterwards. —OLIVE WYON

God teaches holy obedience far more often by asking us questions than by giving us orders. He, then, who would be guided, will always be in a state of readiness to listen to such questions, and also in a state of humility to know that not till many years will he be able to answer each question as fully and as freely as God would have him answer. But every attempt to respond leads to a greater freedom of response, to a more constructive and creative answer next time. —GERALD HEARD

Almighty God, whose glory the heavens are telling, the earth his power, and the sea his might, and whose greatness all feeling and thinking creatures everywhere herald; to thee belongeth glory, honor, might, greatness, and magnificence now and for ever, to the ages of ages. —LITURGY OF ST. JAMES

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

## A Lowly King

"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" Matthew 21:9. (KJV.) Read verses 1-11.

The time of testing is near. It is not the trial of Jesus. It is a judgment upon the crowd of spectators—that is, ourselves. We would like to side-step this meeting, but we cannot send him to Herod and wash our hands of the whole matter.

Any age can side-step Jesus, the individual, or may even crucify him. But truth cannot be avoided or crucified. Truth, rejected, destroys men. It would be so simple if we could just stand and cheer, but he insists that we make a decision. If his friends stand still, his enemies fasten him to a cross.

Palm Sunday reveals both sin and the savior at work in the world. There are still some churchmen who resent change, some businessmen who want no upturned tables in the temple, some shrewd politicians like Caiaphas, and many small men with dirty hands and unused basins.

But facing that sin is saviorhood. Some say it is weak, but it is as strong as mothers training their children, as wronged people who are able to forgive, and as the love which is creative goodwill. Saviorhood assures us that God cares. Today we are admitting the sin of the world, but we are celebrating its saviorhood.

PRAYER: Our Father, as on this day we keep the special memory of our Redeemer's entry into the city, so grant, O Lord, that now and ever he may triumph in our hearts. Amen.

Our Father, as on this day we keep the special memory of our Redeemer's entry into the city, so grant, O Lord, that now and ever he may triumph in hearts. Let the King of grace and glory enter in, and let us lay ourselves and all we are in full and joyful homage before him; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.—HANDLEY C. G. MOULE

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?

—JOHN M. NEALE

Prayer is the song of the souls of men. Put enough inspiration into prose and it becomes poetry; put enough joy into poetry and it becomes song. Therefore, the best definition of radiant, inspired prayer is *the soul singing in the presence of God*.—GLENN CLARK

## The Cross and Our Salvation

*But they understood none of these things.* Luke 18: 34. Read verses 31-34.

Sometimes we wonder if the cross was God's first plan for our redemption. Jesus seemed to expect to draw men in a different way. He went about making friends, doing good, and preaching the good news. His early days were happy ones. The people loved him; the children loved him.

Then something happened. The crowds thinned out and even his friends began slipping away. A great change came over Jesus. Words like "yoke," "suffering," and "cross" began to appear. People no longer understood him and they were afraid to ask questions. He is moving into an awareness that the world will not be saved by words; deeds are required. Maybe the message of life must be supplanted by the fact of death. For every salvation there must be some sacrifice.

There were many ways in which Jesus might have escaped the fact of the cross. What he could not escape was the purpose of his living. Once you have selected a purpose, life itself may determine the way to its fulfillment.

The cross is the terrible revelation of what sin, yours and mine, does to the heart of God. The world's redemption meant enough to the Father that he was willing to suffer in the person of Jesus.

PRAYER: Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ, my God.  
Amen.

The secret of his perfectness was simply that he—even he—as Hebrews puts it, learned obedience by the things that he suffered (Heb. 5: 8). He took what came as from his Father's loving hand and loved him back with it, making it the material of his sacrifice. He loved God back with every fibre of his being, with every moment of his time, with all the circumstances of his life and death.

—COMMUNITY OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN

Though we had the holiness of all the saints, there would still be nothing good in what we think, speak, live and do without thy divine grace and power. This is our joy and comfort which thou dost gladly grant poor sinners, that all our sins are forgiven out of pure grace.

—MARTIN LUTHER

The only final test of our stewardship is the Cross itself. The call to discipleship is the call to die—the old self must die that the new self may live. It is a strange paradox that with the acceptance of the cost there comes the unmistakable experience of joy. It is the joy of those who no longer fear insecurity. It is the joy of those who no longer have to be perfect or have to succeed. It is the joy of those whose only purpose is to do the will of God.

—S. MACON COWLES

Christ teaches us to think dauntlessly about everything, including death. —SOREN KIERKEGAARD

Tuesday, March 24

## Self-Surrender Is Not Defeat

*"For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, . . . No one takes it from me."*  
John 10: 17-18. Read verses 7-18.

There is a vast difference between self-surrender and defeat. Defeat is enforced; it results in bitterness; its end is shame. Self-surrender is voluntary; it results in a calm spirit; its end is eternal glory.

Sacrifice, concurred in, loses its bitterness. When Jesus prayed for his executioners, he protected himself against anger and self-pity. We can never be robbed of that which we are willing to give. No one took the life of Jesus; he gave it. That makes the difference between being a victim and a redeemer. Those who give their lives do not go down in defeat; they go up in glory.

You see, Jesus could not save himself. That was not because he was caught in the grip of those who hated him, but because he was the servant of an inner spirit. Good men are never self-savers. The price is too high.

There is a joy to be found in self-surrender. Jesus, facing the end, could still say, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you."

PRAYER: Almighty God, grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil, and to make no peace with oppression, and that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice among men and nations, to the glory of thy holy name. Amen.

—Book of Common Worship

## For Further Meditation

I have done my duty; may Christ teach you yours. —FRANCIS OF ASSISI at his life's end

Impart upon our hearts such a dread of thy judgment, and such a grateful sense of thy goodness to us, as may make us both afraid and ashamed to offend thee.

—BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

If you would endure with patience the adversities and miseries of this life,

Be a man of prayer.

If you would acquire strength and courage to vanquish the temptations of the enemy,

Be a man of prayer.

If you would know the wiles of satan and defend yourself against his snares,

Be a man of prayer.

If you would live with a gay heart, and pass lightly along the road of penance and sacrifice,

Be a man of prayer.

If you would drive away vain thoughts and cares which worry the soul like flies,

Be a man of prayer.

If you would nourish the soul with the sap of devotion and have it always filled with good thoughts and desires,

Be a man of prayer. . . .

For herein does a man receive the unction and grace of the Holy Spirit, who teaches all things. —BONAVENTURA



## Lord, Is It I?

*"Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." And they . . . began to say to him . . . "Is it I, Lord?" Matthew 26: 21-22. Read verses 17-25.*

Their questioning began with themselves. That is always a good place to begin. They might have asked if it were James or John. They were status seekers. Or they might have asked if it were Peter. He was temperamental. Or Judas might have been suspect. We are always a little suspicious of people with money. But no, these men were humble enough to be searching their own souls. It is so easy to say, "I wonder whose fault this is." It is so hard to say, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me."

Christ can do something for such people. They knew they made mistakes sometimes. When Jesus said, "This is my body," they could receive what he was trying to give—because they were humble.

Put yourself into the Upper Room. Dare to ask yourself the question, "Have I been true to the highest I know?" When you answer that question, remember you are in the presence of the Master. Be both humble and honest. You may find yourself in the spirit where you can receive the bread of life.

PRAYER: Thou hast promised, Lord, a crown of life to him that overcometh. We come to claim thy blessing. Help us to lay aside the sins which beset us, to pick up the responsibilities which strengthen us, and to find new life in thee. Amen.

O most merciful Lord,  
Grant to me thy grace,  
That it may be with me,  
And labor with me,  
And persevere with me  
Even to the end.—THOMAS A KEMPIS

Man clutches at the temporal but can never quite free himself from the other element of the synthesis—the Eternal. If man could do it, he would become an animal.<sup>16</sup>—GREGOR MALANTSHUK

Ultimately, the individual can see himself only in the eyes of others and can see himself great or free only in the reflection of the eye of God. All past attempts to assert the worth of the individual without measuring him against a higher cause have failed, having in the end only diminished him.—TIME, May 10, 1963

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, . . . (God) has come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to himself.

—STATEMENT OF FAITH, United Church of Christ

Lord, is it I who am your betrayer? Never I as I would be! Sometimes I as I am. Always I when I will that not thy will but mine be done.

## Continuing Redemption

*"And now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made."* John 17:5. Read verses 1-5.

The greatest earthly sacrifice of Jesus was not to be crucified, but to be born. The death of his body meant a return to a preincarnate state; the acceptance of life meant a departure from glory. The Word did not become the flesh without pain. The crib and the cross have more in common than the fact that they were both made of wood. To be born was to enter an alien country.

As he neared the end, he had a growing consciousness of who he was and an increasing desire to return to a former estate. In the garden of Gethsemane "he began to be sorrowful and troubled." One version has it: "He began to be sorrowful and very homesick." Perhaps the explanation of his great agony there was the awareness that his redemptive ministry must be continued on the other side of death.

The conversion of Paul suggests that. To his question, "Who are you, Lord?" he received the answer, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." Note the "Jesus"—the old human name. And the "persecuting"—still suffering. Perhaps this can be interpreted to mean that Jesus cannot be freed from the redemptive process until the last redeemable soul has been redeemed.

PRAYER: O God, our souls are sick because of the suffering and sorrow of the world. Use us for thy purposes. Amen.

Brother and Lord, among thy children sitting,  
Lord of our toil, bestower of our rest,  
Lord of our feast, to thee as is most fitting,  
Praises and thanks we bring,  
Our whole hearts' best:  
Jesus, be thou our Guest.

—THE ADELYNROOD GRACE

Christianity's home is in the world; and to know what it is, we must seek it in the world, and hear the world's witness of it.

—JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

King of kings, yet born of Mary,  
As of old on earth he stood,  
Lord of lords, in human vesture,  
In the body and the blood,  
He will give to all the faithful  
His own self for heavenly food.

—LITURGY OF ST. JAMES

O Lord, by all thy dealings with us, whether of joy or pain, of light or darkness, let us be brought to thee. Let us value no treatment of thy grace simply because it makes us happy or because it makes us sad; but may all that thou sendest us bring us to thee, that we may be sure in every disappointment that thou art still loving us, and in every darkness that thou art still enlightening us, and in every enforced idleness that thou art still using us; yea, in every death that thou art giving us life, as in the death of thy Son our Savior. Amen.

—PHILLIPS BROOKS

## Commitment

*"Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!"*  
Luke 23: 46. Read verses 44-49.

Jesus could commit his life to the Father because it was in keeping with his thinking. You will recall the significant sentence hidden in the story of the washing of the disciples' feet. "Jesus, knowing . . . that he had come from God and was going to God, . . . girded himself with a towel." He had always known where he was going. I think he committed his life daily to the Father. It was the set pattern of his living. It was his prayer for direction and guidance.

These last words of Jesus expressed his faith that one safely can throw away the body in a gamble for the souls of men. There were other men gambling that day. They were throwing dice for some second-hand garments. But Jesus was throwing away his life for your soul and mine. When he did this, he was not taking a leap into the dark. He knew God was there. He had lost everything but a Presence—he had everything that mattered. After his baptism, Jesus heard a voice saying, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased." Perhaps at the end he heard that same voice say, "Son, I am well pleased." No one in the crowd heard such a voice, but they all knew they had seen something more than a good man die.

PRAYER: Forgive us, our Father, for our feverish search for the wrong things. May we some time learn that life, to be saved, must be sacrificed on some high altar. Amen.

Up Calvary's steep and painful slope,  
Pursued by jeers and laughter,  
He bears the Cross, the only hope  
of sinners following after.  
O God's dear Son, toil on, toil on!  
My heart is sore with mourning.  
The hot tears flow, See! on thy brow  
The thorns thy crown adorning.

How can I such a boon repay,  
A gift so freely given?  
My love, the love of earth-born clay.  
Thy love, the love of heaven.  
Beneath the Cross I mourn my loss  
And vow to leave thee never;  
To serve thee here, O Savior dear,  
and in thy heav'n forever. —BACH

My song is love unknown,  
My Savior's love to me,  
Love to the loveless shown,  
That they might lovingly be.  
O who am I that for my sake  
My Lord should take frail flesh and die?

This is my friend, in whose sweet praise  
I all my days could gladly spend.

—SAMUEL CROSSMAN

## Jesus—King

*And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Matthew 27:37. Read verses 32-37.*

The sign said the crucified man was a king. It said so in three languages. It said it in Greek, the language of culture; in Latin, the language of power; and in Hebrew, the language of religion. Pilate paid Jesus the compliment of saying he was the king of man's mind, will, and heart. All of man was his kingdom.

Jesus wants to be king of the whole man. The clever man, unredeemed, may be dangerous. The strong man, unrestrained, may wreck life. The kind man, undirected, may be only a sentimentalist. Partial commitment is always dangerous. The saints yielded all, and gained all. The calculating man yields a part and loses all. The life of total commitment is the only one which does not end in frustration.

We are not naturally good, bad, weak, or strong. We become what we love. Through communion with Christ we become the body in which we have shared. "Lead on, O King Eternal." We follow in faith. Thou art our King.

PRAYER: O Christ, our captain in the hard-fought fight, put new hope and courage into us. Brace us to play the man. Help us to endure, as seeing him who is invisible. Impel us to put on the whole armour of God that we may be able to withstand in the evil day and, having done all, to stand. Amen.

Every illusion comes from attachment to joyful sensations. Souls are dull at this point, in that they seek sensation to find surety. Quite the opposite. It is sensation which makes us changeable. It is a flattering enticement for self-love. We are not afraid of failing God, while the joy lasts. We say then in our abundance, "I shall never be shaken"; but we think all is lost when the ecstasy is past. Thus we put our joy and our imagination in place of God. It is only pure faith which saves from illusion.—FENELON

History is the systematic exploration of the riddle of death, with a view to overcome death.

—BORIS PASTERNAK

O King, this present life of men on earth, in comparison with the time that is unknown to us, seems to me as if you were sitting at a banquet with your ealdormen and thanes in the winter time with the fire burning and the hall warmed, and outside the storm of winter rain or snow were raging; and there should come a sparrow swiftly flying through the hall, coming in by one door and flying out through another. During the time it is inside it is not touched by the storm of winter; but, that little moment of quiet having passed, it soon returns from winter back to winter again, and is lost to sight. So this mortal life. . . . If this new teaching (Christianity) has brought any greater certainty, it seems fitting that it should be followed.

—A king's councillor, quoted in VENERABLE BEDE



## The Last Obstacle

*Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. John 20: 1. Read verses 1-18.*

Bishop G. Ashton Oldham once said that "the stone was moved not to let Jesus out but to let the disciples in." The open tomb let the disciples enter into the glory of a new faith. They came expecting to find a dead Jesus; they were met with the revelation of a risen Lord. They came in the depth of despair; they left radiant with joy. They came in fear; they left with courage.

What happened to Jesus is our hope. What happened to his followers is our great assurance. It is good to know that truth cannot be entombed; it is encouraging to realize that believers cannot be excluded from what lies beyond the stone. Evil may seal the hopes of mankind in some grave, but God never stands for that too long. When God enters life, stones are rolled away. The Book says, "the guards trembled." Of course they did. Man cannot defeat God. The moral order of the universe can be a frightening thing. But to all who believe, it is the ground for hope.

PRAYER: Our Father, bring the great faith of this day into our minds and hearts and upon our wills. Help us to enter a new form of existence, humble but triumphant, aware of the tragedy of time but lighted by the triumph of the Eternal. Amen.

O God, who hast called us to be children of the Resurrection; mercifully grant that whensoever in the dimness of this present life our eyes are holden that we see thee not, our hearts may burn within us and always be attentive and faithful to thy Holy Will, as it is revealed to us by thy Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

—JOHN HUNTER

Sing, men and angels, sing, for God, our life and king

Has given us light and spring, and morning breaking!—JOHN MASEFIELD

Joy to all creatures, honour, feasting, delight!  
Dark death is destroyed  
and life is restored everywhere.

The gates of heaven are open.

God has shown himself man,

man has gone up to him a God.

The gates of hell God has shattered,  
the bars of Adam's prison broken.

The people of the world below have risen from  
the dead

bringing good news:

what was promised is fulfilled.

From the earth has come singing and dancing.

—HIPPOLYTUS

The story of the Christian is the story of many resurrections.—JOHN CALVIN

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## FORMAT

The Foreword (cover page 2) describes the content of this Lenten booklet. It remains to explain the form.

As last year, the editor has added to the author's text a page of quotations for each day. Doubling the size of the guide with only a slight increase in cost, this was a venture of faith in response to the known desire of people for a deepening in Lenten literature and an extending of Lenten discipline. This faith was amply rewarded: almost a half million copies were in circulation, and correspondence was enthusiastic. Gratified, the literature committee unhesitatingly decided to continue this feature in 1964.

The author of the left-hand pages is Dr. Roy L. Minich of Westmoreland Congregational Church, Washington, D. C. These pages, without the supplementary pages of quotations, appear also in DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE, the regular United Church of Christ adult daily devotional periodical. (This publication is 15 cents singly or 10 cents each for 10 or more copies to one address, available from either of the sources listed on inside front cover.)

Besides providing chewy meditational material, the right-hand pages are correlated in spirit with the devotions on the left-hand pages. The quotations are chosen for spiritual and intellectual stimulus, with one eye on the historical grounding and the other on contemporary relevance, with the mind on tight logic and the heart on spiritual depth. The aim is to stir the inner wings into flight toward truth rather than to state truth in the form of intellectual propositions and doctrinal formulae. Our concern is primarily devotional, secondarily theological. May the spirit of the reader then be not to seize upon "error" nor even to be seized by truth, but rather to be lifted in spirit to fresh vistas of the kingdom and lowered into new depths of concern for man in his halting responses to the holy in the common.

May this guide be to you not just a comfort in reassuring you of God's suffering love, nor just a challenge to moral striving, no soporific and no anodyne, nor above all a temptation to withdraw into a privatized inner religion worthy of the Marxist epithet "opiate of the people." Rather, may you find here a summons to praise, the strength to pull with a joyous yoke the load assigned you, and a stimulant to responsible action. The Presence with us fails not of sufficient grace.

*- Allen Smith*