

*Lenten Listening...*



*Hearing God During  
Lent*

*The Diocese of Algoma  
Deanery of Temiskaming*

*February 13 - March 30, 2013*

**Wednesday February 13, 2013**

**(Bishop Stephen Andrews)**

**Readings for the Day**

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Isaiah 58:1-12

Psalms 103:8-18

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

**Matthew 6:21**

‘For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also’

***Help us,***

***O Lord, to observe this season with wholesome sacrifice and cheerful self-denial, that the time of need may find us willing and ready to fight against all the forces of evil and, by thy grace, thy visitations prove blessings to us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (K.B. Ritter, Gebete für das Jahr der Kirche, 2nd ed. (Kassel : Bärenreiter Verlag, 1933), p. 249)***

**S** In the basic training that is required to acquire one's pilot's license, a critical procedure is registering the altimeter. If the altimeter is not adjusted to the correct atmospheric pressure, it can give an erroneous reading, deceiving the pilot into thinking that the airplane is higher or lower than it actually is. This, needless to say, can lead to disastrous consequences when flying over mountainous terrain or landing.

Lent is an opportunity for us to register the altimeter of our spiritual lives. It is a period of time (lasting forty days) where we take stock of the things that govern us by comparing them to the essential and eternal values of God's kingdom. In our Gospel, Jesus commends the exercises of generosity, prayer and fasting as means of exposing just how selfish, independent and gluttonous we really are.

But these disciplines are not meritorious in themselves. Indeed, they become instruments in shaping our character for good only when they have God as their goal. When we see them as means to make ourselves better or to give an impression to others that we are devout, then our treasure is our own ego and sense of self-worth. On the other hand, when they work to deepen our need for and love of God, in all of his justice and compassion, they are the agents of transforming us into Christ-likeness.

**February 14, 2013**

**(Fawna Andrews)**

**Readings for the Day**

Psalm 1

Luke 9: 18-25

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

**Psalm 1:3**

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

**Luke 9:23**

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me

***Lord Jesus,***

***Grant me a heart that longs to know you more, and with that knowing make my only response a longing to follow you. Amen***

It seems in our world today that there is no right or wrong but only “grey areas”. To be tolerant we have to accept that there is a “what is right for you” and a “what is right for me”. What is certainly true is that each of us has the God given right to chose our path, but Psalm 1 tells us that in fact there are only two paths to chose from: the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. Those who walk in the way of the righteous are those who delight in the word of God and meditate on it day and night. The wicked are like chaff, the useless part of the grain that is discarded.

In our reading today from Luke we find Jesus calling his disciples into the way of the righteous. Deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow me, he says. A path that involves self-denial and a cross seems a frightening and difficult prospect. But the One who calls us is the One who has taken up his cross before us on this way of righteousness. In so doing he has made our yoke easy and our burden light, and it is on this path that we will become who we are truly meant to be.

**Friday February 15, 2013**

**(Bernice Cleator)**

**Readings for Today**

Isaiah 58: 1-9a

Psalm 51: 1-4, 17-18

Matthew 9: 14-17

**Psalm 51: 1**

Be merciful to me, O God, because of your constant love. Because of your great mercy wipe away my sins.

**Psalm 51: 17**

My sacrifice is a humble spirit O God; you will not reject a humble and repentant heart.

Lord, of thy great goodness I beseech Thee give me true repentance, and forgive me all my sins, negligences, and ignorances, and endue me with the grace of thy holy Spirit, that I may amend my life according to thy holy Word.

William Laud

**From the Lord's Prayer**

*...forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...*

Psalm 51 is a psalm of lament. David is lamenting his past adultery with Bathsheba, and is expressing his deep regret regarding his sinful behaviour. He pleads for God's mercy and forgiveness, and moreover he seems to feel certain that God will not reject his truly repentant heart.

Forgiveness has two sides. It is one thing to repent and seek forgiveness, and quite something else to be able to forgive as God forgives.

In high school I knew a boy – we'll call him Tom though that was not his name – who could never forgive the least slight or misunderstanding. He constantly seemed to have a chip on his shoulder. One day the Latin teacher accused Tom of something he did not do and punished him with a week of detentions. On the second detention day the teacher explained to Tom that she had discovered that she had been mistaken in blaming him, and she said she was truly sorry. But did Tom find it in his heart to forgive her? No, he rebelled, refusing for the rest of the term to do any Latin or to cooperate in any way. Of course he failed his Latin course and remained bitter and resentful. What a burden would have been lifted from his young shoulders if he had forgiven his teacher and moved on!

Heavenly Father, teach us not only to repent and seek forgiveness for our sins, but also to forgive those who have sinned against us and asked our forgiveness.

***“Pray you now: forget and forgive.”***

William Shakespeare

**Saturday February 16, 2013**

**(Karrie Emms)**

## **Readings for the Day**

Psalm 86:1-6

Luke 5:27-32

Isaiah 58:9b-14

### **Psalm 86:5-6**

You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you. Hear my prayer, LORD; listen to my cry for mercy.

### **Luke 5:30-31**

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

***Dear Lord, please help us see your desire to heal in all aspects of our lives. You lovingly created us to be your instruments. Use our lives and our walk with you to offer healing and faith to others. Use the lives you orchestrated to create a symphony of peace, grace and kind wonderful gestures that glorify you. Use us as your beautifully sounding notes to spread your message to the hurting. Amen***



We all need healing. **Really?** Yup, really! We've all had those nagging little thoughts about what is right or wrong. It is quite likely we have all left a restaurant knowing the bill was totalled wrong but thinking, "What a deal." And at some point we've likely all driven over the speed limit just to get home a little bit faster. We all need healing just like the tax collectors and the sinners of Jesus' time.

This morning as I drove my son to his art lesson at a studio, down a country road, by a lake, I was reminded of this clear and honest truth. **We are all sinners.** We were going to be early for class but I thought it was easy to fix, we'd just take the long way around the country road. In my haste I had forgotten that taking the long route would put me face-to-face with my greatest fear.

Now, the speed limit on the road was 60km/hr, **BUT** taking the back way was now threatening to make us late, so I surpassed the speed limit. I knew it was wrong. My son knew it was wrong. But, most of all God knew it was wrong. The roads were a little slippery so, I prayed, silently for protection. Looking back it seems funny now, I was asking God to protect me even though I knew what I was doing was wrong.

Well, in the end God did look out for us, it just wasn't quite the way I thought he would. Instead as we rounded a corner the glassy lake with very thin ice came hastily towards us. Any of my friends will confirm my severe phobia of going through the ice **with** the kids in the car. But, God knew what I needed and the sight of the lake slowed me down very quickly. I thanked God under my breath and steadied my shaking hands. He had used my fear to remind me that we are all like the tax collector sometimes. We too need healing and forgiveness.

And yet, isn't it amazing how well our Father knows our hearts, minds and souls? So well, that he often provides what we need before we even know to ask!

**Sunday February 17, 2013**

**(The Ven. Linda White)**

**Readings for the Day**

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

Romans 10:8b-13

Luke 4:1-13

**Luke 4:5-7**

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours."

***Dear Lord,***

***You know the desires of my heart, and the temptations of my mortal being unlike any other can. Please, help me become more like you. Curb the desires of my flesh and bring me to an astout awareness of the temptations I face while guiding me in your loving ways. Provide me with the opportunity to know you, your will and strength and to turn my attention from human things in order to grow closer to you and your everlasting love. Amen***

Temptation is different for each one of us. What tempts one offers no allure to another. Whether it's accumulating 'stuff' or watching pornography, engaging in gossip or succumbing to self-pity, loving money or holding on to bitterness or refusing to say "I'm sorry" when we've hurt someone, the devil tempts us to put something, anything, before our love for and obedience to God.

The devil knows our weaknesses. Look at how he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. First, he tempted Him in His humanity. After 40 days of fasting Jesus was hungry... now there's an understatement! The devil tempted Him to take the power of God and use it to serve self, His needs and wants, rather than to serve the plan and purpose of God. When that didn't work the devil said he would give the world to Jesus if He would only worship him. If there was ever an 'end justifies the means' scenario, this is it! But Jesus chose to reject idolatry, the worship of something other than God, as the way to reach his goal. He 'set His face' toward God, even though it would end at the cross, choosing not to allow anything to come between Him and His service to God's purpose and plan. Lastly, the devil took Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple, and suggested an easy way to prove to the Jews who he was. It's an appeal to pride. Can you imagine their astonishment to see even the devil planned! They would acknowledge Jesus in a moment as their hero and King. Again, Jesus declined, choosing humility and servanthood instead of power and prestige.

Where am I tempted? Inappropriate attention to human things? Idolatry? Pride? JQ Adams wrote: "Every temptation is an opportunity for our getting nearer God." Pray now that the Holy Spirit will make you more aware of moments of temptation, and that you will use those moments to draw closer to God.

**Monday February 18, 2013**

**(Pam Handley)**

**Readings for the Day**

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18

Psalm 19:7-14

Matthew 25:31-46

**Psalm 19:14**

Let the words of my mouth and the  
Meditation of my heart  
Be acceptable to you,  
O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer

***Gracious creator of heaven and earth,  
your Word has come among us as the true Sun  
of righteousness, and the good news of his  
birth has gone out tho the ends of the world.  
Open our eyes to the light of your law, that we  
may be purified from sin and serve you without  
repreach for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Light  
and our Life.***

(BAS, pg 726)

In The New Oxford Annotated Bible we read Psalm 19 is a “Hymn to God the creator and lawgiver. A hymn, combining the two themes of the creation of heaven and sun (vv. 1-6) and the giving of the law (vv. 7-14). Verses 11-14 A prayer for forgiveness for disobedience to the divine law, and the divine acceptance of the psalmist’s words in this psalm”. (pp 170-791)

One immediately recognizes verse 14 as the prayer many priests recite before offering a sermon and as we settle down into our pews, we just may not give it our full attention.

Maybe we need to think of the heartfelt time the priest has spent meditating on the theme for the sermon and then putting it into the right words. Think of how the priest wants to not only make the sermon meaningful to the congregation but also meaningful to God. Let us remember both the psalmist and the priest are praying to their Lord who is their rock, their foundation of being; they are also praying to their redeemer and ours.

The psalmist and priest, thousands of years apart, but both praying for divine acceptance of their words. One cannot help but pray this prayer will still be offered a thousand of years hence.

Let us pray we will not take verse 14 so lightly from now on as we settle down to listen.

**Tuesday February 19, 2013**

**(Jim Bull)**

**Readings for the Day**

Isaiah 55:10–11

Psalm 34:1–22

Matthew 6:7–15

**Psalm 34:8-9**

Taste and sere that the Lord is good; happy are they who trust in him! Fear the Lord, you that are his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing.

***Hear us,***

***Lord, when we cry to you. Calm our bodies and minds with the peace which passes understanding and make us radiant with the knowledge of your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Saviour.***

(BAS pg. 745)

## Living Bread

Upon the table the loaf sits  
The Bread of life awaits  
A slice lies at the loaf's end  
Awaiting me to pass it on  
To someone starving for God.

I pass that slice to a hungry one  
As that one eats  
Another slice takes its place,  
Waiting to be passed to another soul.  
The first eater sees that slice  
And passes it on to another soul

As he passes it on another slice takes its place  
I spot another hungry soul  
And pass the slice to him  
This develops into a chain reaction  
Until the hungry are fed  
Yet still there is another slice

This Bread of life was purchased  
By the Son of God, become the Son of Man  
Dying in deep agony, bearing our sin  
That the hungry may be fed.

We are His hands to pass on  
That slice lying on the table  
We are His mouth to tell the beggar  
Where to find this living Bread  
We are His feet to carry this bread to hungry ones  
We are His lips to cry out,  
"Oh taste and see that  
The Lord is good and  
His mercy endures forever!"

Oh fellow beggar will you  
Pass on this Living Bread?  
Will you shout  
The invitation to  
Each and every one  
Whom you shall meet  
And kneel with them  
At our Savior's feet  
And kneel with them At Jesus' feet?

**Wednesday February 20, 2013**

**(Anne Germond)**

**Readings For The Day**

John 3:1–10

Psalm 51:1–13

Luke 11:29–32

**Psalm 51:1-2**

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”

**Ps. 51: 11-13**

“Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.”

***Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hidden. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord.***

(BAS pg. 771)



“Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return+”; “Remember that you are dust...+”; “Remember+”; “Remember+”. The words are repeated over and over again and can be heard throughout the church on Ash Wednesday as people line up to receive a smudged ash cross on their forehead. Then it is my turn to hear the same words spoken to me as a cross is made on mine. “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return+”. What are we to remember as we carry that smudge with us through the day, and though faded, through the season of Lent? They are a powerful reminder of our mortality, but also that we are sinners in need of repentance.

Lent is an opportunity for us to be honest about the power and the hold that sin can have over our lives when we refuse to acknowledge them or turn away from them. We live with the guilt, the shame, and the disgrace of what we have done, of who we have hurt, or of what we have neglected to do as followers of Jesus. David’s sin was so great that he likely wailed when he sang of his transgressions and pleaded to God for forgiveness. “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from me sin.”(vs.2)

Yet, even as we confront our failures this Lent our ashes are also there as reminder that our brokenness is no match for God’s grace. “Remember, remember, remember.” Remember that at Baptism we were made children of God and with a cross of oil on our foreheads anointed as Christ’s forever.

It is in the very moment that we acknowledge our helplessness before God that the way back to God is opened for us again. David also sings of this – “Restore to me the joy of your salvation.” (vs. 11) Our sin is not the end. The promise of forgiveness and life in union with Jesus Christ, a life of meaning, purpose and ministry is.

As you carry the ashes with you throughout Lent, may they remind you that they are a sign of renewal and recreation, and that our God will not rest until we are all transformed to His likeness.

**February 21, 2013**

**(Emma Marsh)**

**Readings for the Day**

Psalm 138

Mt. 7:7-12

Esther 14:1, 3-5, 12-14

**Psalm 138:3a**

When I called,  
You answered me.

**Matthew 7:7**

Ask and it will be given to you.  
Seek and you will find.  
Knock and the door will be opened for you

***Lord Jesus,***

***We ask you to remain close to us always.  
We pray that you will be our rock in times of  
trouble and a very present help in all times of  
distress. We praise you, we bless you and we  
thank you. Amen***

**D**uring this past year my brother-in-law was stricken with cancer. Though countless prayers were offered for his healing, David died in early December. At first glance it was as if all these prayers were in vain.

Yet when we reflect on these months of illness we can only marvel at the quiet endurance and calm submission to painful treatments. We saw real thankfulness for seventy five good years, where we might have seen resentment and anger. We witnessed such abiding, quiet grace as my sister, her five children and their families filled several pews at the funeral. Great and small exhibitions of love and care, one for the other, abounded.

We did ask, seek, knock and doors were opened so that David could pass peacefully from his wife's loving arms into the arms of his waiting heavenly Father.

***Reflect on a time when your prayers were answered differently than you expected?***

***Recall times when you called and God answered you?***

**Friday February 22**

**(Steve Kitzul)**

**Readings for the Day**

Ezek 18:21-28

Ps 130

Mt 5:20-26

**Psalm 130:1**

Out of the depths I cry to you,  
O LORD.

***Almighty and eternal YAHWEH,***

***You who have so cherished your servant David, hear now my prayer, I beg you, and guide my being out of despair and into the light of your People so that we may share in your Kingdom, and always to your glory and the welfare of your family throughout time and eternity. Amen.***

“Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.” The pain and heartache reflected in this Psalm is deep and wrenching. Out of the depths! Can we be so far down in our life and so deep in our sin that we can feel so alienated from our loving Father? Or, can we be so arrogant as to cry out to God from that low lonely place! Ah, no, the arrogance is not the calling out to Yahweh; in fact, it would be arrogance NOT to call out to him for help, for that would declare that we do not need God. Indeed, this calling out is the cry of a penitent soul begging God, as in verse 2, “LORD, hear my voice!”.

It is thought that this Psalm was used in the liturgy to prepare the people to enter into worship in the Temple. As well, it was not despair the petitioner felt, but distance. The image of this verse is to put the petitioner into the depths, the depths of a valley. The geography of the land with its deep below-sea-level valleys served to place a distance between them, and the high mountains wherein it was believed Yahweh dwelt, particularly the Temple Mount, overlooking the depths. Yet even on a mountain top, Yahweh could hear the voice of a sinner so far away calling to him. The power of forgiveness, stated in verse 4, invokes awe.

This powerful Psalm of individual and communal penitence reminds us also of other places in Scripture, such as ‘what can separate us from the love of God? Not heights nor depths. No matter where I flee, you are there, O LORD’ (my paraphrasing)

Yes, we indeed can cry out to our loving Father at all times and in all places, and yes, we must wait for the LORD ... and hope in his word, and wait for the LORD even more than those who watch for the morning.

**Saturday February 21, 2012**

**(Ramona Furst)**

## **Readings for the Day**

Deuteronomy 26:16-19

Psalm 119:1-8

Matthew 5:43-48

Often, I enjoy the comic relief of the hummingbirds at the bird feeder, outside my living room window. Their pronounced chatter and whirring wings alert me to the birds' arrival.

I've wondered sometimes, with free food available, why they spend more time fighting, squawking and squabbling with their family and friends than eating. There's plenty to go around.

It's a picture, unfortunately, of how we, as a body of Christ here on earth, treat each other sometimes. Are we like our feathered friends, unable to trust God?

In the book of Proverbs there are suggestions about godly etiquette. One says "gracious words are like honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body". (Proverbs 16:24 E.S.V.)

Do I watch what words I use in my conversation with people and speak only when God prompts me with words that will build up, not tear down, someone's heart? Do I do that all the time? Even in emails and when I'm speaking on the phone? Am I really listening to people's conversations or thinking of what I need to say next? Help me Holy Spirit to hear words of wisdom for myself when I'm prompted to speak.

Most of all, I want to strive for a faith that will reflect godly characteristics. The only way I can do this is to keep my eyes fixed on you. As I do, may my lips speak words of praise which will bring glory and honour to You Lord.



*“gracious words are like honeycomb,  
sweetness to the soul and health to  
the body”.*

*(Proverbs 16:24 E.S.V.)*

**Sunday February 24, 2013**

**(Reverend Michelle Ferguson)**

**Readings for the Day**

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Psalms 27

Philippians 3:27– 4.1

Luke 9:28-36

**Luke 9:28-29**

About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.

***Draw us up towards you Lord;***

***Help us stay alert to your wonders and listen to your words. Then walk back down with us, out to a lowly world in need. For the road ahead leads to Jerusalem and there are crosses to be carried and, eventually, death to be faced.***



This isn't the only occasion where Jesus goes up a mountainside to pray accompanied by a few, if not all, of his disciples. Following their last supper it will be to the Mount of Olives (Luke 22.39) and there, like here, drowsiness is a problem; but more about that later.

Let's start by considering the attraction of high places, remote from worldly commotion. It appears that Jesus regarded them as propitious to spiritual activity. Whether by their altitude, their isolation or the determination required to ascend them, they seem to have the property of reducing the gap between heaven and earth. "Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord... that he may teach us his ways." (Micah 4:2) And during one such mountainous session, the veil is lifted and the gap is bridged: Jesus' mortal flesh radiates an otherworldly light while patriarch and prophet converse by his side.

Meanwhile, what are Peter and his companions doing? They are struggling to stay awake. When they do sense something of the holy mystery unfolding before them, Peter spurts out a hair-brained housing development plan. But let's not judge his words too harshly: by all accounts, the Transfiguration was a fearsome sight and fear can knock the sturdiest mind senseless. Fear is a survival mechanism... and so is shelter!

Though perhaps not at that precise moment in time, later, the mysterious words from the cloud would relinquish something of their encouraging meaning. "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to Him!" All of Our Lord's sayings are weighted by this one divine commendation. It remains valid for us today.

In our own life stories, Jesus may not draw us to those lofty heights (not all the disciples were chosen to witness the Transfiguration) but the rolling hillsides are certainly accessible. After all, that is where he fed the five thousand! The important thing is to follow Him, stay alert and listen. It is in these prayerful and holy places that his words take root and nourish our souls for the next stage of the journey. For we all must return to worldly commotion sooner or later!

I like to think that our Churches serve the purpose of hillsides and mountains in our communities. They draw us upwards towards Him, through Word and Sacrament, and help us catch glimpses of his Glory. Oh, and yes, they can sometimes seem so disconnected from our reality that human nature gets the best of us and we fall asleep. But they symbolize the effort required to leave the world and follow upwards, and the mission to carry his Truth back out with us when we leave.

**Monday February 25, 2013**

**(Kayla Krasnor)**

**Readings for the Day**

Daniel 9:3-10

Psalm 79

Luke 6:36-38

**Luke 6:36**

“Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful”

***O GOD, whose nature and property is ever to have mercy and to forgive: Receive our humble petitions; and though we be tied and bound with the chain of our sins, yet let the pitifulness of thy great mercy loose us; for the honour of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Advocate. Amen.***

(Book of Common Prayer, p. 58)

The “Old Testament” or the “Hebrew Scriptures” don’t have a very good reputation. Especially passages like today’s Psalm. People are tempted to pit the Angry and Jealous God of the Hebrew Scriptures against the loving and gentle God of the New Testament. How can we reconcile the plea of the Psalmist for God to “pour out [His] anger” (Ps 79:6) on Israel’s enemies with Christ’s command in today’s Gospel to “be merciful, even as your Father is merciful”?

If it is indeed true that the New Covenant doesn’t cancel out the Law (Mat 5:17), then both the Gospel and the Psalm are true of who we are, who we ought to be, and who God is. The Psalmist is hurt and angry. His hurt and anger are righteous; God’s people are suffering at the hands of Godless nations. We can identify with the Psalmist’s anger - we all know what it feels like to be angry, especially when we are victims and therefore the heartfelt yearning for God’s Justice is understandable, and a turning to God in our hurt is commendable. However, we are not left without an answer, for God responds to our rage in Jesus, who shows us how to calm the storms of our hearts by converting our desires, but we don’t always heed Jesus’ command.

We so easily forget who we are and whose we are. Jesus asks us that even in our anger, when we desire God to show our enemies what they deserve, we often forget to say with Daniel “To us, O LORD, belongs open shame...because we have sinned against you.” (Dan 9:8) That is what I believe Jesus means for us to do. When we recognize how merciful God has been to us and how much he has spared us (which is the essence of our relationship with Him), then and only then, can we properly relate with mercy to our enemies. We leave judgment in the hands of our righteous God, and say to God at the end of the day, regardless of the outcome, “but we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise.” (Psalm 79:13)

**Tuesday February 26, 2013**

**(Rev. Dr Jay Koyle)**

**Readings For The Day**

Isaiah 1:10–20

Psalm 50:7–15

Matthew 23:1–12

**Matthew 23:5-7**

“Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries[a] wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others.

***Blessed are you, God of glory; you call us to give up all our vain attempts to reach you, and to come before you in thanksgiving for your great salvation, shown to us in Jesus Christ our Lord.***

Sociologists have a theory of the looking-glass self: you become what the most important person in your life thinks you are. How would your life change, then, if you truly believed the Bible's astounding words about God's love for you, if you looked in the mirror and saw what God sees?

Some people fancy Lent as a sombre sojourn meant to remind us what good-for-nothing's we are. We give up chocolate or some such other pleasure so we can feel as miserable as we really are. Well, if that's your conception of why we observe this season, you're suffering from a gross misconception.

Whenever the number forty pops up in the Bible (which is often), there may be a time of trial, challenge or conflict. But, at the end of it all, there is a clarification of identity. After his baptism, for example, when a voice from heaven had declared, "You are my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life," Jesus was led into the wilderness for forty days and nights to face temptation and discover what it truly meant to be God's anointed One.

The forty days of Lent set about clarifying our true identity, too. We mark these days so that when we come out at the other side to the celebration of the Christian Passover, we may discover in new and more profound ways who we are in Jesus Christ.

Today's passage from Matthew recognizes how we humans tend to define ourselves by status, titles, qualifications, or wealth. Often, we acquire our sense of worth by comparing ourselves to others. Yet, as shown in his baptism and forty days in the wilderness, Jesus took his sense of identity and worth simply by knowing what his Father declared. Those of us in Christ can do the same.

Lent is an opportunity to take your sense of identity and worth by who God declared you to be in baptism. You become what the most important person in your life thinks you are. God names you as God's own beloved.

## Wednesday February 27, 2013

(Kate Scott - Written, Candy Keith - Image)

### Readings for the Day

Matthew 20: 17-28

Jeremiah 18:18-20

Psalm 31:1-5, 13-16

#### Recommended Reading:

Can You Drink The Cup by Henri Nouwen

### **Matthew 20:23-24**

Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.

*Helper of the helpless,*

*Comfort of the the addicted, may your servants who stand in the midst of evil find strength in the knowledge of your presence, and praise you for the wonders of your love, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.*

(BAS pg. 742)

Are we willing and able to drink from Jesus' cup? That is the question he asks us; how will we answer? Drinking from His cup requires us to not only acknowledge the sacrifice he made for us but to also remember that we are participating in a celebration – the celebration of our redemption and of the gifting of Life; Life to be embraced in all its fullness – all of its joys and pain, laughter and sorrows.

It means holding the cup and receiving His invitation to that celebration; looking deeply into the cup, seeing our reflection through Jesus' eyes and asking: 'Who is Jesus to me? What does He want of me?' It means lifting the cup to accept that invitation and asking, "Am I willing to surrender to the Lordship of the God of grace and His plan for my life – soaking in and accepting His deep unconditional love for me, and loving Him enough to find the courage and the willingness to move forward with His plan for me?" Drinking from the cup is to fully enter into and be a part of that celebration – it's showing up at the party! - steadfastly seeking and fully embracing who it is that God made me to be and what it is that He requires of me. When I next drink from the cup, when I touch it and it is raised to my lips, will I receive His invitation, accept it and show up at the party; show up at the celebration of Life as He means me to live it?

As Henri Nouwen writes, "We can drink our cup of life to the bottom, and as we drink it we will realize that the One who has called us 'the Beloved' even before we were born, is filling it with everlasting life."



**Thursday February 28, 2013**

**(Tom Chambers)**

**Readings for the Day**

Jeremiah 17:5-10

Psalm 1

Luke 16:19-31

**Luke 16:19-21**

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

***Holy God,***

***You reach out in love through Jesus Christ to save us so that we may live as a faithful servants of alone. Unchain us from our desire for wealth and power so that we may, in turn, release others from the prisons of poverty, hunger, and oppression. Amen.<sup>1</sup>***

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<sup>1</sup> Vanderbilt Divinity Library, [lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/prayers.php](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/prayers.php)



Lazarus lived in abject poverty while a rich man lived in great luxury. Both men died. Lazarus went to heaven to be with Abraham while the rich man went to hades where he lived in torment. The rich man pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus to put a drop of water on his tongue. Abraham said no and refused to warn the rich man's brothers of what awaited them if they continued to sin. Abraham told the rich man that his brothers should listen to Moses and the prophets in order to avoid his fate.

This passage from Luke should be read by all Canadians for there is much wealth in Canada but there is also much poverty. The wealth of Canadians is noticeable in the expensive homes and cars seen in every city across the vast land in which we live. It is very noticeable at Christmas time when a great number of Canadians shop to excess and buy too many things. We live in an age of consumerism where "shop till you drop" is not uncommon and only possible because people have too much money. But even those not considered wealthy catch the consumerism bug. This has created the need for Declutter Coaches who help people get rid of the stuff they don't need and shouldn't have bought in the first place. It has also created the need for self-storage facilities where possessions people don't need but can't part with are stored. Consumerism has resulted in many Canadians going into debt. They have houses they can't afford filled with stuff they don't need and in spite of being rich by international standards, face the very real prospect of going bankrupt.

Poverty is also very noticeable in Canada. Food banks to feed the needy exist in every community of any size. Originally expected to be a temporary phenomenon to help those hurt by recession they are now a permanent part of the urban landscape. Soup kitchens to feed the hungry also exist across the country and are also permanent fixtures. In addition, most Canadian cities have some form of shelter for those who can't afford to buy or rent. In spite of this some Canadians are homeless, living on the streets, sleeping under bridges or on top of subway grates to get a little warmth. To many this has become a national disgrace.

A literal interpretation of Luke's gospel might suggest that wealthy Canadians will suffer the same fate as the rich man in this popular story. This is perhaps a misinterpretation because many Canadians, the wealthy and not so wealthy are often kind and very generous to the needy. They give from the heart. Many charities would not exist without their support. While some Canadians can be considered cheapskates it is wrong to tarnish all the affluent with the same brush.

**Friday March 1, 2013**

**(John Irwin)**

**Readings for the Day**

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-28

Psalm 17:1-8

Matthew 21:33-26

**Psalm 17:6**

“I call upon you O God for you will answer me.”

***Heavenly Father,***

***We thank you for the opportunities available in Lent, whereby we may seek a closer understanding of Your Grace. Let this time of fasting and repentance serve to strengthen our lives in Your service. We ask this in Jesus`Name. Amen.***

Lenten devotions at the outset require calling upon the Holy Spirit, Who is always waiting to be invited in. “If any man hear my voice I will come to him”, (rev 3:20). We pray that we indeed may be receptive to His guidance. Thomas Kempis 15<sup>th</sup> century monk urges in his imitation of Christ (Book 1, Ch 11)”.

“Look to our inner selves in those things that matter not to others but to us”; he asks, “How can he abide in peace who occupies himself in other matters and meanwhile payeth little or rare heed to the self within?” In other words, devotions as opposed to communal worship, imply individual contact with the Lord, and particularly in Lent, our personal appeal exclusive of the concerns of outsiders.

Kempis might have found it easier in his restrictive monastic cloisters to divorce himself from external distractions,...but can't we also find respite from the hectic demands of life, maybe a quiet forest glade, some peaceful moments in a beautiful cathedral, a secluded spot by a quiet stream?

Let us resolve to spend these Lenten weeks looking for and acknowledging our shortcomings; let us reach out for God's forgiving Grace, and strive for renewed purposes in our lives. Let us pray too for others around us that they also may experience His divine power revealed through the sacrifice on Calvary's Cross.

**Saturday March 2, 2013**

**(Karrie Emms)**

## **Readings for the Day**

Micah 7:14-20

Psalm 103:1-12

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

## **Psalm 103:12**

“...as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”

## **About the Image:**

When called to follow Christ we have a choice to make. There is a bridge that must be crossed from who we were to who we will become. Others may help us as we begin our journey taking those tentative first steps on what may be a long and difficult crossing. Yet, in the end no one can push us the entire distance. There comes a point when we are along on that bridge and we must make a choice, turn and go back the way we came or carry forward into a life with Christ, a life unlike any we have ever known and we will be changed. It has been said once we cross that bridge and accept our true Father, who we are with him and who we were without him shall never meet... just as the east never truly meets the west.



“... as far as  
the east is from  
the west, so far has he  
removed our  
TRANSGRESSIONS  
from us.”  
Psalm 103:12

**Sunday March 3, 2013**

**(Reverend Grahame Stap)**

**Readings for the Day**

Isaiah 55:1-9

Psalm 63:1-8

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Luke 13:1-9

**Isaiah 55:8-9**

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

***O God of mercy,  
in Jesus Christ you freed us from sin and death,  
and by your Holy Spirit  
you nourish our mortal bodies with life.  
Plant us now in good soil,  
that our lives may flower  
in righteousness and peace. Amen***

Think it something we often forget when in reality it is the most important part of our human life. The food that nourishes our soul. Nourishes without cost given freely directly from God. Just as we would starve without food for the body so we starve spiritually without the incredible food that God offers.

But how do we get this food? By coming to God even with hesitation. Even with a life burdened with brokenness, despair and lack of tolerance for others that differ from us. If we turn to the one who created us will find that God is not faraway but waiting with open arms to embrace us and feed us with a food so wonderful that we cannot even begin to imagine the affect it will have on our lives.

It is only our stubbornness that erects barriers and obstacles and stops us from turning and realizing the love God has to offer is for all people. We try to fit God in to a mold of what we believe God should be rather than accepting the wisdom and knowledge that comes from God is greater than any humans can ever be.

To partake of the food God offers we need to understand we cannot fit God into our mold but must fit into the mold God offers **to accept the plans God has and finally to come to the realization** that by loving God first we come to love others more that we ever though possible. Then even, with the problems of life, our hearts can be full of Joy and our spiritual life will be complete.

**Monday March 4, 2013**

**(Pam Handley)**

**Readings for the Day**

2 Kings 5:1-15a

Psalm 42:1-2, 11-15

Luke 4:24-30

**Genesis 1:11**

Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seeds, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with seed in it." And it was so.

**O God,**

***You spoke your word and revealed your good news in Jesus, the christ. Fill all creation with that word again, so that by proclaiming your joyful promises to all nations and singing of your glorious hope to all peoples, we may become one living body, your incarnate presence on the earth. Amen***



Jesus and the fig tree are recorded in Matthew and Mark where Jesus cursed the trees for not bearing fruit but in Luke 13:6-9 Jesus is using a parable to make his point which The Oxford Bible Commentary explains. The Jews were very good at forecasting weather but were quite insensitive to the warnings of physical Roman abuses and of the danger of city walls falling. But more importantly, they were insensitive to the warnings Jesus was giving them concerning their spiritual crisis because if they did not repent they would “face an equal fate”.

To paraphrase *Wikipedia 01/01/13*, which sheds further light on the parable, the owner of the vineyard is generally regarded as representing God, who came seeking repentance and baptism via Jesus the gardener, for his people Israel, or more specifically for the religious leadership, who are represented by the fig tree. We cannot help but feel the tension building as Jesus pleads for the people to repent because in the commentary we read “It is now the climatic hour” and on line we read “the parable reflects Jesus offering his hearers one last chance for repentance”. But if they do not repent, they will be lost just as the fig tree will be cut down if it does not produce fruit.

**Tuesday March 5, 2013**

**(Rev. Dr. Jay Koyle)**

**Readings for the Day**

Song of the Three Young Men 1:2-20

Psalm 25:3–8

Matthew 18:21–35

**Matthew 18:32-35**

“Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

**God of compassion and love, forgive our sins, relieve our misery, satisfy our longing, and fulfil all our hopes for peace; through your Son Jesus Christ our Redeemer.**

This parable can make me laugh to the point of tears. My laughter erupts, in part, because of the absurdity of the tale. Here is a king who forgives his slave the equivalent of 150,000 years' wages, interest not included! (I am not sure what strikes me as most hilarious, the forgiveness of such a debt, having allowed it in the first place, or the slave's promise to pay it back.)

Yet mine is nervous laughter, too. I can see something of myself in that slave who, moments later, is asked to forgive one of his own debtors the sum of a mere three months' wages. The same script that he laid on the king doesn't move him when issued from the lips of another. He demands his due and refuses to wipe clean the slate.

I suspect the slave totally missed what had happened to him. Perhaps he thought he managed to pull a fast one on the king. Or maybe he simply didn't appreciate the gravity of his original debt. Whatever the case, I'm sure he missed the experience of forgiveness. Otherwise, his life would have been changed.

In Hugo's "Les Miserables," the central character, Jean Valjean is released from prison after serving a nineteen-year sentence for stealing a loaf of bread. When a kind bishop befriends him, Valjean, who now sees himself as a thief, behaves accordingly and steals from his benefactor. The bishop, however, refuses to acknowledge the crime to police. Instead, he not only allows Valjean to keep the stolen goods, he also adds a costly candelabra to the pack, more than enough to provide for a new life. Then the bishop tells Valjean he has claimed his soul for God; Valjean no longer belongs to evil, but to good. Valjean's life is transformed. He becomes a new man, a person of mercy and compassion.

The penitential dimension of Lent is not meant to draw our focus primarily upon our sinfulness, but rather on God's extraordinary mercy. Peter's question about how much we should forgive proves unnecessary once we realize how much we have been given and forgiven by God. In that light, any scorecard we might keep seems pointless.

I suppose there is a third reason why this parable can move me to tearful laughter: there is overwhelming joy in being forgiven into new life!

**Wednesday March 6, 2013**

**(Kate Scott - Written, Candy Keith - Image)**

## **Readings for the Day**

Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-10

Psalms 147:13-21

Matthew 5:17-20

## **Matthew 5:18-19**

For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

***Accept our praise,***

***God of justice, defender of the oppressed,  
Give us grace to join in this your holy work,  
that all the world may see your glory, through  
Jesus Christ our Lord.***

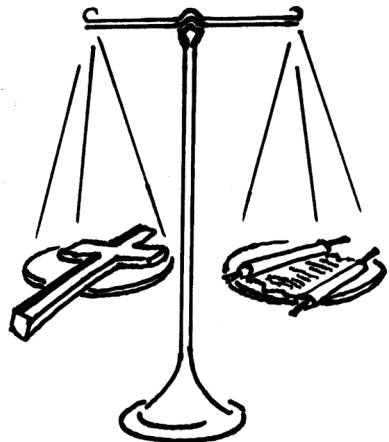
(BAS pg. 909)

## Justice Must Be Done and Seen to be Done

There is a legal saying that justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done. It means that it is not enough for justice to take place; it must be seen and acknowledged publically. Jesus came so that all could see that the law had been fulfilled and justice was being accomplished.

And yet it doesn't end there. In v.18, Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law will disappear until its purpose is achieved." If this is an ongoing process how do we ensure that all will continue to see justice done and the law fulfilled? Jesus tells us in v.19 that the answer lies in obeying God's laws and teaching them. And in Mark 12 Jesus gives us the directions for how to do that: "Love your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself." John tells us in his first letter that although this is an old commandment, it is also new – that Jesus lived the truth of this commandment and we are to live it also. Reciting the law will not move people's hearts and minds, but love will. We know this but do we really get it? If we really got it and lived it, our world would look a lot different.

Take the time during the remainder of this Lenten Season to review your life and examine your heart. Prayer: Lord in helping me to love you with all my heart and soul and mind and strength, may I learn to accept your deep love for me and to share it with others.



Thursday March 7, 2013

(Kayla Krasnor)

**Readings for the Day**

Jeremiah 7:21-28

Psalm 95:1-9

Luke 11:14-23

**Luke 11:22**

“He takes away his armor in which he trusted”

***O GOD the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace:  
Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great  
dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions.  
Take away all enmity and prejudice, and  
whatsoever else may hinder us from godly  
union and concord; that as there is but one  
Body and one Spirit, and one hope of our  
calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one  
God and Father of us all, so we may henceforth  
be all of one heart and of one soul, united in  
one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and  
charity, and may with one mind and one mouth  
glorify thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.***

(Book of Common Prayer, p. 40)

What if I told you that the members of God's church conspire together to weaken it, to watch it fall? We set up our churches like a social fortress. We welcome people on the surface, but we don't let them in, not really. Many people have his or her own role, which is believed essential to identity. We live in fear of one who will come—one stronger or better than us—than our fortress, who will destroy everything we have worked for. We are afraid of change; we have trusted in our armour. We are demons casting out demons. There will always be a stronger "man" than any of us, and our armour will soon fall and we will feel plundered.

God does not desire us to be forcibly overtaken. God does not desire us to fail. I don't think this gospel message is an encouragement to gather more strength and stronger armour. I think it's a warning against the armour that appears trustworthy. The armour we put on when we feel a sense of entitlement to a role or suspicion toward new ideas is an example of the Kingdom of God divided against itself. It will be laid waste unless we follow God's commandment: "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you." (Jer 7:23). Jesus, the only one capable of putting up a resistance that no man could overcome, does nothing but lay His armour down. Let us stand with Jesus, totally submitting our lives and our wills to God. What does that look like? Looking toward Good Friday, that looks like death on a cross. Looking even further to Easter Day, that kind of obedience looks like resurrection and life eternal. We do this symbolically when each and every one of us, priest and congregation alike, kneels down and confesses our sins, laying down our own strength, our own armour. The armour of your humanness will fail you. Lay down your human armour and don the armour of Christ. Jesus, in total submission to the Father's plan of salvation, sits as King of the Universe on the throne of the cross. Remember Jesus' example, and in both personal strength and personal weakness, remember that individual powerlessness leads to Godly strength as the Body of Christ.

**Friday March 8, 2013  
(Fawna Andrews)**

**Readings for the Day**

Hosea 14.1–9

Psalm 81

Mark 12.28–34

**Psalm 81: 13-14**

If my people would but listen to me,  
if Israel would follow my ways,  
how quickly would I subdue their enemies  
and turn my hand against their foes!

**Psalm 81:16**

...you would be fed with the finest wheat;  
with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.

***Lord God,***

***Help me this day to listen to you and follow you with all my heart and soul and mind and strength. And in so doing, may I be filled with the love that satisfies and brings peace. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.***



*Psalm 81: 13*

*If my people would but listen to me,  
if Israel would follow my ways...*

In my work as a counselor I have met with many people as they try to come to terms with the aftermath of their destructive choices: choices made with an obstinate heart and a desire to follow their own will. Haven't we all done that? Convinced that we know best, we forge ahead without seeking any counsel or direction, often seduced by the values and wisdom of this world.

Although Psalm 81 opens with the people of Israel singing for joy and praising the God who has been faithful to them, by verse 11 we find God lamenting that "...my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices." We are complicated creatures who long to have fellowship with God, yet at the same time want to follow our own stubborn hearts.

Amazingly, the nature of God is such that in spite of our rejection, in spite of our obstinate will and our reckless choices, His love is waiting for us and He longs for us to listen and to follow so that we might know good things.

**Saturday March 9, 2013**

## **Readings for the Day**

Hosea 5:13—6:6

Psalm 51:1–2, 17–20

Luke 18:9–14

## **The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector**

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: 10 “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”



*Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

*Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your Holy Spirit from me.*

*Psalm 51:10*

**Sunday, March 10, 2013**

**(Father Andrew Nussey)**

## **Readings for the Day**

Joshua 5. 9-12

Psalm 32

II Corinthians 5. 16-21

St. Luke 15. 1-3, 11b-32

### **St. Luke 15. 28-30**

Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!"

***Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.***

(- Collect for Ash Wednesday, Book of Common Prayer, p. 138-9)

***Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy power and come among us; that by thy protection we may be rescued from the bondage of our sins, and saved by thy mighty deliverance; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.***

(- Collect for a Parochial Mission, Book of Common Prayer, p. 326)

When I was serving in rural Newfoundland, a popular hymn at funerals went, in part, like this: “Then do we wonder why others prosper / Living so wicked year after year.” The hymn is a great big head-shaking in the face of loss: how could it be that I should lose my loved one? Life (and death) isn’t fair! The hymn was frowned-upon by the diocesan hierarchy, and eventually only an altered version was permitted to be sung. This is because our understanding of God’s justice is not based on “just desserts.” You don’t get what you deserve. You get God’s love and mercy because of whose you are (His child!), not because of what you’ve done. The sooner you recognize that, the sooner you’ll get what you don’t deserve. Thank God for that!

In the familiar tale of the Prodigal Son there is bitter resentment and anger on the part of the older brother who considers himself righteous and obedient to his father. It seems gravely unjust that his younger brother is rewarded as he is. How is it that he is celebrated for his loose living? He should be condemned! This, however, is not the case. His brother is celebrated because he repents—even when it might appear to be too late, God’s mercy is infinite.

God values our repentance. Imagine the anguished heart of the father who had lost his son, and now imagine his joyful relief upon his son’s return. Of course, the effects of the younger son’s sins remain (his inheritance is squandered), but perhaps the son’s once-hardened heart—broken, melted, and moulded—has now received an inheritance worth more than the finest gold.

**Monday March 11, 2013**

**Bishop Eddie Marsh**

**Readings for the Day**

Isaiah 65.17–21

Psalm 30

John 4.43–54

**John 4:53**

“So he and all his household believed.”

***Loving God,***

***Thank you for your love and power revealed to us through your continuing involvement in our lives. Give us wisdom to respond to you in faith, and to share that faith with others.***

Our family arrived in Greenspond, Bonavista Bay, Newfoundland, in the early sixteen hundreds. They were a tough crowd who were anything but committed Christians. One spring morning in the late nineteenth century my mother's great grandfather, Thomas Green, was catching seals in the slob ice several miles from shore. As he was pulling two large seals aboard his 16 foot dory, the oars were knocked overboard and were irretrievable. The ice moved offshore and he was left adrift in the Atlantic. For 72 days he survived by consuming the seal meat and some fish, and by catching rain water by spreading out his oilskins. He was rescued about fifty miles from Scotland. His family had attended a memorial service for his death, and were shocked to receive a telegram from him ten weeks later. On returning home Thomas called his family together and declared to them that life was going to change. He had known the presence of God in his time at sea and he was determined that he and his family would worship and serve God from that day on. Like the official in the gospel story he and all his household believed. My mother claimed that her faith which she received from her father (and eventually passed on to me) was a result of that event.

While sitting in quiet meditation reflect on some of the life changing stories of turning points in your life of faith. Consider sharing those stories with your children and your grandchildren.

The family of God has recorded its stories of faith in the Bible...perhaps some of these stories or special texts have been formative for you at some time. It will encourage others if you share how the scriptures have deepened your faith.

**Tuesday March 12, 2013**

**(Marsha Grawbarger)**

## **Readings for the Day**

Ezekiel 47:1-9

Psalm 46

John 5.1–18

## **Psalm 46:10**

“Be still, and know that I am God!  
I am exalted among the nations,  
I am exalted in the earth.”

*Thanks to you dear God for this verse which reminds us to stop and to reflect on you and your sovereign nature. Help us to remember that you are always in charge.*

*As we rush about trying to solve problems and worrying about things over which we have no control, thank you for your reminder to let go of our sense of power over events. Help us to remember that we cannot do it all ourselves, but we need to place our trust and confidence in you alone.*

*What a difficult task it can be to let go and let God. The words come so easily but the living of those words means I am not the God of my universe, you are. My sinful nature wants me to be in charge. It wants me to be in control. It wants me to be the one who receives honor and praise. Dear God, I pray for your help, which is always present, to renew my heart and help me remember that you alone are in charge of my life.*



“Be Still”. How many of us have heard or spoken these words? I remember telling my children “Sit still and listen to me!” This message is not just for our children. How can we hear what God has to say to us today if we do not take the time to sit still and listen to him?

We fill our lives with busyness. We schedule our time carefully. We schedule our prayer time. If we aren't able to talk to God in the morning, we tell ourselves that we will do little pop-up prayers during the day. What does this say about us? Are we spending all of our prayer time talking to or at God? Are we leaving any time at all for him to talk to us? Do we do our list of prayers, say “Amen”, and leave to begin the business of our day? Or do we take the time to let God answer? He is there to not only listen to us, but to communicate with us. A deep relationship is not built with only one person doing all the talking.

The verb which is translated from the Hebrew to “be still” is raphah. This literally means “to let something drop, to let go, or to abandon something.” When we read this verse with that interpretation, it takes on the new meaning.

**“Let go, and know that I am God!”**

**“Abandon \_\_\_\_\_ and know that I am God!”**

**“Drop \_\_\_\_\_ and know that I am God!”**

Perhaps we need to drop our “laundry list of prayers at times and just listen. Perhaps we need to let go of our worries and just rest in God's presence. Perhaps we need to abandon our need to be in control and give the power over to God. Perhaps in these ways we can really “know that I am God!”

**Wednesday March 13, 2013**

**(Heather Chambers)**

**Readings for the Day**

Psalm 145.8–15

John 5.19–30

Isaiah 49:8-15

**John 5: 24**

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgement, but has passed from death to life”.

***Dear Heavenly Father,***

***You have given me the promise of a gift so great to have eternal life with you. Guide me as I go throughout my day that I will feel your presence within me and hear your voice leading me in the right direction. Help me to live my life according to your will so that I may dwell in your house forever. Amen.***

Each day we are bombarded with promises that will make our lives better. We see this through ads on the internet, TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and billboards. How much of this we buy into depends on us. We do have free will. When we do succumb, how much better do we really feel?

In John's Gospel Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem but he has upset the Jewish authorities because he has said that God was his own Father. They feel he has made himself equal with God. This is giving them more reason to want to kill Jesus. Jesus then explains to them that His Father works all the time and as his Son he does what His Father does. He tells them that His Father loves his Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. He says to them that they will be amazed by the great things that he will be able to do. Just as The Father can raise men to life so, too, can he choose who he would like to bring to life. What should really frighten the Jewish authorities is when Jesus tells them that God does not judge anyone; he has given that right to his Son. He goes on to tell them that, those who believe what the Son says and believes in his Father, will pass from death to eternal life without any judgement. He says to them that the time is coming when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and be raised from the dead.

This promise is being made to us. What are we doing on a daily basis to keep our thoughts centered on God and Jesus? They are at the very core of our being. We can be in constant communication with them whenever we need them. With the Father and the Son we can go through life with a true sense of peace which guides us through our daily comings and goings and leads us to a guarantee of eternal life.

Thursday March 14, 2013

(Bernice Cleator)

## Readings for Today

Exodus 32: 7-14

Psalm 103: 1-12

John 5: 31-47

## John 5: 36

Jesus is speaking to a group in Jerusalem:

...”What I do, that is the deeds my Father gave me to do, these speak on my behalf and show that the Father has sent me...”

The Gospel of John presents Jesus as the one who became a human being and lived among us. It was written so that we might believe that Jesus is the promised Saviour, the Son of God, and that, through our faith in him we may have life.

***May our prayer, O Christ, awaken all thy human reminiscences, that we may feel in our hearts the sympathizing Jesus. Thou hast walked this earthly vale and hast not forgotten what it is to be tired, Thou hast not forgotten what it is to feel the sharp stabs of pain, or hunger, or thirst. Thou knowest what it is to be forgotten, to be lonely. Thou dost remember the feel of hot and scalding tears. We thank Thee that Thou wert willing to come to earth and share with us the weaknesses of the flesh for now we know that Thou dost understand all that we are ever called upon to bear. We know that Thou, our God, art still able to do more than we ask or expect. So bless us, each one...***

***Peter Marshall***

Mort Crum, late renowned essayist and inspirational speaker, has given us a clear delineation of Jesus' work on behalf of his Father.

Two thousand years ago a young radical stepped into history with a message so vital it has been known ever since simply as "the gospel". This young visionary was a genius at seeing the potential in a man or woman or situation. He never overlooked what was; yet he always looked beyond to what could be.

To those who mourned mankind's future he said, "Because I live you also will live." He taught that in the ultimate economy of existence, good finally will overcome evil. He taught that people and societies can be changed. He taught that every person has intrinsic value, that every individual has ultimate worth.

To those who found life totally frustrating or unbearably boring, he announced that life could be meaningful and vibrant. To those drifting aimlessly in a sea of confusion, he proclaimed that life could be purposeful. To the sick he offered health. To the slave he promised freedom.

It wasn't only what he said that attracted people to his way. It was what he was. It was what he did, how he lived, how he loved. It was how he died and how he conquered death.

Jesus not only told it like it was; he showed how it ought to be. Everyone who would follow his way must do likewise.

Heavenly Father, help us to follow in these footsteps.

**Friday March 15, 2013**

**(John and Mary Lee Stennett)**

## **Readings for the Day**

Wis 2:1a, 12-22

Psalm 34:15-22

John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

## **Psalm 34:18**

The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

***O Lord,***

***We beseech thee, mercifully hear our prayers, and spare all those who confess their sins unto thee; that they, whose consciences by sin are accused, by thy merciful pardon may be absolved; through Christ our Lord. Amen.<sup>3</sup>***

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<sup>1</sup>Book of Praise: Anglo-Genevan Psalter, 1972, Psalm 51 second half of stanza 6

<sup>2</sup>J.I. Packer, Concise Theology, A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs, Tyndale House Publishers, copyrighted 1993 by Foundation for Reformation, pg 96

<sup>3</sup>Book of Common Prayer, pg 613

“**One gift alone is pleasing in God’s eyes:  
The contrite heart of one who has repented.  
A broken spirit thou wilt not despise  
When as a sacrifice to thee presented.”<sup>1</sup>**

“Conscience is the built-in power of our minds to pass moral judgements on ourselves, approving or disapproving our attitudes, actions, reactions, thoughts and plans, and telling us, if it disapproves of what we have done, that we ought to suffer for it.”<sup>2</sup>

It is God Who gives each of us a conscience and it is His Spirit working in our conscience that brings us to have a “broken heart” and a “contrite spirit”. During Lent we make a special effort to examine our hearts and “pass moral judgements on ourselves” and when we do so He brings our sins to our remembrance and a broken heart and contrite spirit are inevitable.

With the Psalmist we are brought to our knees and cry out to God:

**O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your wrath,  
nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure!  
For Your arrows pierce me deeply,  
and Your hand presses me down.  
There is no soundness in my flesh  
because of Your anger,  
nor any health in my bones  
because of my sin...  
I am feeble and severely broken;  
I groan because of the turmoil of my heart” (Ps 38:1-8)**

**And with the Psalmist, in today’s Psalm, as we cry out the Lord hears us and delivers us out of all our troubles (Ps 34:17).**

**Saturday March 16, 2013**

**(Joice Edwards)**

**Readings for the Day**

Jeremiah 11:18–20

Psalms 7:1-12

John 7:40–53

**John: 13:12-17**

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

***Righteous judge of the nations,  
You know the secrets of our hearts; our sins are  
not hidden from you. Rise to our defence and  
strengthen us in the faith, that we may struggle  
against evil and bear witness to your justice, in  
the name of Jesus Christ our Redeemer.***

***Amen***





*Mary washing the  
feet of Jesus...*

**Sunday March 17, 2012**  
**(Reverend Marie Loewen)**

**Readings for the Day**

Isaiah 43: 16-21

Psalms 126

Philippians 3: 4b-14

John 12: 1-8

**John 12:2b, 3**

Martha served while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with Jesus. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, and expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

**2 Corinthians 2:14**

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him.

***Dear Jesus,***

***Help us to love you with a wild extravagance that is willing to serve you with every bit of our being – down to the last hair, down to the last drop of our most precious possession. And may the fragrance of that love spread to the darkest corners of the “houses” in which we dwell.***

The dear friends of Jesus gather for a dinner and if we let ourselves enter the scene we will see lives that Jesus has touched and changed.

Martha's querulous and begrudging service has been transformed. She has come to believe that Jesus is, in fact, the resurrection and the life and her response is indicated in the quiet and simple words "Martha served". No dramatic acts for Martha, but simple, faithful service from a heart filled with love; a service precious enough to be enshrined in John's narrative.

Lazurus has literally moved from death into life and all around him at the party that night, life throbs. I imagine the noise of singing and conversation and dishes scraping and laughter bubbling. The one who was dead is now alive and those who love him are giddy with joy.

But then, in my mind's eye, I see Mary – Mary who was so angry with her Lord when he seemed to be uncaring in their hour of need. Mary who had stood stunned and in awe at the death-wrapped figure staggering out of her brothers' grave, looks with love to Jesus and sees not laughter, but pensiveness in his eyes. She sees death. And in one crazy and extravagant moment of sacrifice, she dares to pour out her most precious gift in humble worship. She looses her hair and wipes his feet in a wild act of aching love. "And the house was filled with the fragrance". And in his pain, Jesus is comforted. Can my touch, my gifts, and yes, if I dare, my wild and extravagant love, be equally precious to my Lord?

**Monday March 18**

**(Steve Kitzul)**

**Readings for the Day**

Sus 1:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62

Sus 1:41c-62

Ps 23

Jn 8:1-11

**John 8:3**

The Scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and (made) her stand before all of them.

***Almighty and eternal Father, I stand before you naked, deep in sin, displayed before all the world, trembling, awaiting your judgement; have mercy on me loving Father.***

***Look not upon my sin, but accept the faith of your beloved son, Jesus the Christ, and forgive me, not for my sake, but to your glory and the establishment of your Kingdom. Amen.***

It is rather interesting that most ancient authorities do not have this passage, (Jn 8:1-11), but nonetheless, I take great comfort that the ecclesial canon includes this section, for it reflects that this is a story about Messiah that has truth and veracity, and identifies Jesus as not under a commission to render civil judgment but under a mandate to announce the coming Kingdom of God.

I marvel at the misguided chicanery of those who dragged this poor woman into the Temple precinct, shoving her towards Jesus, sitting on the ground teaching. Before him and the crowd around him, they baldly stated that she had just been caught in the act of adultery, that is, an engagement in sexual activity that violated either her own marriage commitment, or that of her paramour. Adultery is a sexual act, and it involves the breach of the marriage covenant. And here is the nub; Jewish Law demanded the same punishment for the man as for the woman, but these learned men of the Law themselves broke the Law by not bringing forth the man! They wanted to trap Jesus into making a judicial judgement knowing full well that Roman law allowed only the Roman magistrate to declare such. Jesus said nothing, except to quote Jewish Law: None of you is in a position to stone this woman, for you have disregarded the very law you profess to honor.

So here I am, before the Lord, naked in my sin. Do I take comfort that my accusers have left and I am not judged? No. I take comfort in Jesus' next words: "Go on your way; and from now on, sin no more."

Go on your way; and sin no more.

**Tuesday March 19, 2013**

**(JOHN AND MARY LEE STENNENT)**

## **Readings for the Day**

Numbers 21:4-9

Psalm 102: 1-2, 15-22

John 8:31-47

### **Genesis 2:17**

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

### **John 8:23-24**

“I am from above. You are of this world...Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins...”

### **Psalm 102:19-20**

“From heaven the Lord viewed the earth...to release those appointed to death...”

***O God, forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee: Mercifully grant, that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; and, because the frailty of man without thee cannot but fall, keep us ever by thy help from all things hurtful, and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.<sup>7</sup>***

“ . . . *the* issue was whether Adam would let God tell him what was good and bad for him or would seek to decide that for himself, in disregard of what God had said. By eating from this tree Adam would, in effect, be claiming that he could know and decide what was good and evil for him without any reference to God.”<sup>1</sup>

“By man came death. In Adam all die”<sup>2</sup> : Adam, made in God's image, was perfect and sinless, but he spoiled all that by his disobedience and as a result we, his descendants, are now made in his image,<sup>3</sup> and therefore inherit both his sinful nature and will die as a result of our disobedience. That is the bad news and we should spend some time during this time of self-examination meditating on that fact.

“By Man came also the resurrection of the dead”<sup>4</sup> : But the Lord did not leave us in this desperate state. He sent His Son to die for us, in our place, so that we might live. The Holy Spirit working in our hearts gives us the faith to believe that, to trust in His saving death on the cross. Depend on Him to give you that certainty.

“In Christ shall all be made alive... The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”<sup>5</sup> : In Christ we are made alive! What a glorious thought: to be truly alive to love and serve Him both here and in the hereafter. He has delivered us and made us free to be, once more, totally dependent on Him to decide what is good and bad for us. And that is made abundantly clear in His Word, the Bible. Let us read it eagerly searching for the guidance He has provided in it.

“**Q.** How many things are necessary for you to know, that you...may live and die happily?

**A.** Three; the first, how great my sins and misery are; the second, how I am delivered from all my sins and misery; the third, how I am to be thankful to God for such deliverance.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>J.I. Packer, Concise Theology, A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs, Tyndale House Publishers, copyrighted 1993 by Foundation for Reformation, pg 80

<sup>2</sup>1 Corinthians 15:21, 22

<sup>3</sup>Genesis 5:3

<sup>4</sup>1 Corinthians 15:22

<sup>5</sup>1 Corinthians 15:22, 26

<sup>6</sup>Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 1, Q&A 2.

<sup>7</sup>Book of Common Prayer, pg 249 and 240

**Wednesday March 20**

**(Ramona Furst)**

**Readings for the Day**

Daniel 3:13-28C

Psalm 24:1-6

John 8:31-42

**John 8: 31-47**

*To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"*

*Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are looking for a way to kill me, because you have no room for my word. I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father."*

*"Abraham is our father," they answered.*

*"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do what Abraham did. As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the works of your own father."*

*"We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself."*



## I Collect Sheep

I collect sheep. They come in all shapes, sizes and colour. They are made out of porcelain, wood, glass and even sandstone. It's a great reminder how fickle, faithless, and stubborn I can be in my spiritual walk with the Lord. Sheep are like me because I can be easily distracted. Not content with what my shepherd has provided for me, looking for self worth in achievements that I can so easily boast about (verse 33).

There's a new one in my collection that doesn't fit the mould. This lamb is the biggest of them all. She's gangly, with a curly white coat. And her ears stretch out like small propellers. There's a look on her face that makes me sure she's soon going to bleat out "save me". Looking at her I think "I've been there!"

The first part of my journey was to believe that I needed to be saved from something. Doing things my way wasn't real freedom. Like sheep I had to learn the hard way. Head knowledge wasn't enough, there had to be a commitment to be in a relationship with Jesus Christ. My head and heart had to agree and believe that Jesus was what He has claimed all along to be. I was then able to understand when Jesus said in John 8:32 "... the truth will set you free..."

Giving thanks that I once was lost. But now am found and I'm learning to hear God's voice daily.



**Thursday, March 21, 2013**

**(Derek Neale)**

**Readings for the Day**

Genesis 17:3–9

Psalm 105:1–9

St. John 8:51–59

**St. John 8:58 (NEB):**

Jesus said, 'In very truth I tell you, before Abraham was born, I was.'

***Jesus,***

***Please help me to know the limits of my own understanding, and to trust in you. Amen.***

Jesus says this at the end of a long conversation with “the Jews who had believed in him” (v. 31, NRSV). In other words, he is not speaking to people whose minds are completely closed against him. He is speaking to those who are trying to believe in him, but are baffled by what he says about himself. Yet Jesus makes it harder, not easier, for them.

When I read this passage I get the distinct feeling that John wants us to see the Jewish audience as either bone-headed or obstinate. Yet I can't see them that way. They are trying, at least at first. But Jesus' words are not transparently clear; they don't “make sense.” Jesus is asking them to take a big step outside their conventional ways of thinking in which everything about their tradition does make sense. It follows logical rules. Similarly, I often want my religion to be rational. I want everything to make sense intellectually. I feel quite sympathetic to that Jewish audience.

So it is meaningful that Jesus here caps the conversation with the most counter-logical statement in the passage. How can he have been (or in some translations, be) before Abraham? He seems to be saying: “There comes a point where your own rational understanding won't serve you, and at that point you must trust.”

**Friday March 22, 2013**

**(Eva Black)**

**Readings For The Day** (Read from The Message)

Jeremiah 20:7–13

Psalms 18:1–7

John 10:31–42

**Psalm 18:4-5**

The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me. The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me.

***Praise to you,***

***God of our salvation; you come to our help and set us free. May your strength be our shield and your word be our lamp, that we may serve you with pure hearts and find victory through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen***

When I was a teenager and needed to do serious thinking I would make my way to a spot on the lake where the shore was rocky and few dared to walk unless one knew exactly the path that led to a ledge nestled between two large boulders. There I could sit, stare at the sunset, write in my journal and think all my private thoughts.

These verses in Psalm 18 always make me think of that particular spot where I felt hidden and safe. I know I talked to God back there. I wonder what I said to him. Was I honest with him? I hope so. In that private, away-from-it-all spot, surely my heart was able to pour out everything I ever wanted to say from the deepest places of my heart.

Now, so many years later, God is bedrock under my feet in ways I had not imagined so many years ago. Interestingly, I just made a typo and wrote “tears” instead of “years” and perhaps I should have left them both for certainly God sometimes used my tears to become my bedrock.

I love David’s honesty in verses 4,5 when he does not hold back on his feelings about his situation. He thought he was going to die, he just couldn’t go on anymore. Have we not all felt that way a few times in our lives?

But God is enough. David cries to God to help him and God hears his voice. Of course he does. David’s cry brings him right into a private audience! Oh how sweet to think that when I cry out in desperation, God gives me his full attention!!!

I don’t need to be sitting on a rocky ledge on the shores of a lake to have a private conversation with God. When my world wobbles and lurches, he restores me and sets my feet on the solid ground of his bedrock. God and I have a long history together. I love you God. You make me strong.

**Saturday March 23, 2013**

**(Joice Edwards)**

**Readings for the Day**

Ezekiel 37.21b–28c

Psalm 121

John 11.45–57

**Psalm 121:5-8**

The Lord watches over you— the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

***Be present, merciful God,***

***And protect us in times of danger, so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this life may rest in your eternal changelessness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen***



If it be thy will - Take this cup from me  
Nevertheless thy will be done

**Sunday March 24, 2013**

**(Rev. Richard White)**

**Readings for the Day**

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalm 31:9-16

Phillipians 2:5-11

Luke 22:14-23, 56

**“When I Survey the Wonderous Cross”**

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

*Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God!  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.*

*See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

*His dying crimson, like a robe,  
Spreads o'er His body on the tree;  
Then I am dead to all the globe,  
And all the globe is dead to me.*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*



The jockey-sized teen winced. He thought about church. Why were they forced to sing such dreadful hymns Sunday after Sunday? Anything had to be better than singing...

- *Ye monsters of the bubbling deep, your Master's praises spout;*
- *Up from the sands ye coddlings peep and wag your tails about.*

Young Isaac Watts shuddered. The family was walking home from church. He couldn't contain himself any longer. He spoke his mind. The hymns were dreadful, he insisted. Like parents though out the ages, his father said basically, if you think you can do better – do! And Watts did. Before the next service a new hymn was written and English hymnody was changed forever.

Isaac Watts was born in Southampton, England in 1674, the eldest of nine children. He would become ordained. He would write over 600 hymns, and it's as a hymn writer he is best known. His hymns are direct. They are lean on adjectives or adverbs, and rich on Biblical and theological truth. "When I survey the wondrous cross," is one such example.

For this meditation I invite you to read this hymn slowly. First, read only the first two verses three or four times. Allow Watts' description of the human condition to speak to your soul. Next, read only the last three verses, again three or four times. Let the author take you to that crimson tree. Underline every word that describes the Cross. Double underline every word that describes our Saviour.

Finish this meditation by reading this hymn from start to finish. Begin with a simple prayer, such as "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." Then after you have read it a final time, perhaps write down what God has said about yourself, about that Cross, and about our Saviour.

**Monday, March 25, 2013**

**(Derek Neal)**

**Readings for the Day**

Isaiah 42:1–9

Psalm 36:5–11

Hebrews 9:11–15

John 12:1–11

**Psalm 36:6–7 (NRSV):**

Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your judgments are like the great deep; you save humans and animals alike, O Lord.

***Lord of all Creation,***

***Help me to see your presence everywhere  
in your world, and to love it as you do. Amen***

It seems right that the Psalmist should look to the extremes of God's creation on Earth—the heights of mountains and the depths of the sea—to praise God's care for the inhabitants of Earth. And those inhabitants include the animals! How often are we guilty of thinking that only humans count, that only humans are "saved?" But God's righteousness is shown by his care for all Creation. In the story of Noah, after the Flood, God makes his covenant with Noah's descendants and "with every living creature." Those words are repeated five times in that passage (Genesis 9:10, 12, 15, 16, 17), lest we miss the point!

Consider these words by an American theologian of Cherokee descent:

"[I]n Scripture, Jesus "saves" (the Greek word *sōzō*, meaning to heal or to make whole) the whole person....Our salvation (or healing) implies the restoration of our whole selves to God and the whole of creation... In Scripture our souls do not depart from our bodies. The resurrection of the dead is a bodily resurrection. The biblical composite is not about God's interest in our soul or spirit; it is one where God is interested in our viewing all of creation as having spiritual properties."— Randy Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation: an Indigenous Vision* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2012), p. 102.

**Tuesday March 26, 2013**

**(Mike Burke)**

**Readings for the Day**

Isaiah 49:1-7

Psalm 71:1-14

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

John 12:20-36

**John 12:35-36**

Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light." When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

***Heavenly Father,***

***You are with me and for that truth I am grateful and truly humbled. That You would be there in my times of need providing refuge and healing, offering Your loving, tender touch and guidance. You do not forsake us in our weakness, but carry us through the desert and further into your loving graces. Guide me and be with me always that your will in my life be done. Amen***

“ **D**o not forsake me when my strength is spent .”

It can be such a shock and a surprise to find ourselves at a loss. At those times, whether we have been with God all along or not, God is with us. Because God is different. God is always with us. When we remember that, we find that God is indeed with us. We will find rescue, refuge and recovery, into a state of health and a place of grace.

***“I have been like a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge.”***

Even those who seem, like, way smart, who give advice on thorny , tricky issues, will need God’s help. And once God’s help is sought, well, then - it’s like the Easy Button in the Staples commercials - God takes over, we put our trust in God, and we are on our way out of whatever mystery or misery we have found ourselves in.

***“I will hope continually and will praise You yet more and more.”***

And that is the glory of it all.

**Wednesday March 27, 2013**

**(Joan Topps)**

**Readings for the Day**

Isaiah 50.4–9a

Psalm 70

Hebrews 12.1–3

John 13.21–32

**Psalm 70:4b**

But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who long for your saving help always say, “The Lord is great!”

***Deliver us, Lord, from every evil, and grant us peace in our day. In your mercy keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety, as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen***

(BAS pg. 795)

While out enjoying my almost-daily walk, I ponder the possibility of contributing to the Lenten Meditations effort of which I have read in the Church bulletin earlier in January. I also mull over and marvel at the four thank-you notes that have arrived recently in the mailbox from the three Ottawa 'grands' and their parents.

Some days later I approach Rev. Marie, asking if all the spaces for the Lenten exercise have been filled - no she tells me, there are two remaining days. I indicate to her that IF either of those two days contains a reading referencing Thankfulness/Thanksgiving I will be pleased to write for that particular day... And so, for 27 March, Psalm 70:4b in the Good News Bible reads, "May all who are thankful [for your salvation]... "and therein lay the spark to light and fan the fire to move forward with the grandchildren's part of the tale...

After receiving those three beautiful Thank-you letters, one from each of them, I "write back" via email, To our three dear grandchildren:

"Thank you ALL very, very much for your excellent Thank you letters for your Christmas gifts. You each did such a good job: Indie with your fine artwork and such good printing to Grandma and Grandpa, Micah for your excitement about the Hardy Boy books and your interesting news of Fetch, the dog, and Joshua for your Grade 5 level writing and composition with all the revealing details of your Christmas, including "The Upside Down Christmas" Christmas Eve Church service!

It makes me very proud of each of you to see that you don't forget to say "Thank you" when you receive something, especially when my friend tells me about her friend's grandson, who is more than a teenager and doesn't have the manners to say even a little Thank you to his Grandma for gifts. I am very thankful that you have parents who have taught you to say Thank you when someone has done something for you.

It is always a good thing to be thankful!

See you very soon, we hope.

Love from Grandma and Grandpa T in N.B"

An interesting little observation, as it is recorded/or not, in the John 13 reading: Judas did not express gratitude on accepting the bread from Jesus (v. 30)...It was right. Something to meditate on...

Even so, we as living faith communities, continue in the tradition of celebrating The Great Thanksgiving as oft as we participate in the gift of The Holy Eucharist/The Lord's Supper/The Mass/Holy Communion. Thanks be to God.

**Thursday March 28, 2013**

**(Mike Burke)**

**Readings for the Day**

Ex 12.1–4, (5–10), 11–14

Ps 116.1, 10–17

1 Cor 11. 23–26

John 12:20-36

**John 12:24-26**

Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

***Jesus, Son of man, so often we do not understand what you are saying to us. We cannot predict where you will call us or how your plan will unfold. Yet we discover that only by abandoning our own life and agenda can we find our true life - the life which is eternal. Give us the grace to discard our own agendas and fears so that we may follow you unreservedly. For you are the truth and the life. Amen***



One cannot read this passage but be struck by the depth of the truth which Jesus brought to us. He foretells his death and resurrection. He explains and gives a parable on how we have to fundamentally change if we want to follow Him. There is a demonstration from God that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus makes the promise that if we follow Him, we will join him in the Light. And He tells us that to follow Him requires that fundamental change. He speaks to eternal life.

I would have felt so dumb if I had been there. I know that I would never have comprehended what He meant by those words. But I don't feel alone in that. I think that there are many who do not get it. Indeed it seemed to take a few centuries before the full significance of Jesus words started to really take root. And because His words stand the test of time, because of their fundamental truth, they do shine through. And even I can start to comprehend them, can start to comprehend how fundamental Jesus is to living a life that we can honestly love. It is to feel enlightened, to feel a sense of eternity in the truth of His words. And even in my elementary state, I can feel their comfort and feel that I know Jesus, and God a little better for it. and I feel better.

**Friday March 29, 2013**

**(John Irwin)**

**Readings for the Day**

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Psalm 22

Hebrews 10:16-25

John 18:1-19: 42

**John 18:11**

Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

**John 19:30**

When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

**John 3:16**

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

***Heavenly Father, let this day be a strengthening of our faith in Your Son's wonderful revelation, that His resurrection is a true assurance of life to come in His great Majesty and Glory. Amen***

“ **S** IS IT NOTHING TO YOU, ALL YE THAT PASS BY?”  
(from Stainer's 'Crucifixion', 1887 cantata)

**GOOD FRIDAY!** It has been a long road from “Olivet to Calvary” (*J H Maunder, 1905*) when Christ first declared: “They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.” Thus He mapped out the course ahead of Him...teaching, healing, loving ... culminating in His triumphant procession into Jerusalem, followed closely by bitter betrayal and apparent defeat. Our Holy Week readings present an escalating drama which inevitably carried Our Saviour to the Cross. “The cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (*John 18:11*)

Stainer's cantata portrays Christ “from His throne on the Cross” amid His suffering He appeals to the onlookers, “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?”

In the course of the Church year we frequently speak of Christ's suffering on the Cross, but it loses its impact through repetition. Of course we can summon on computers vividly realistic images of horrendous agony in crucifixion, and we can be humbled to appreciate His suffering.

We can at the same time ask, is this the climax of three years of ministry abruptly destroyed in a six-hour horror? “Is it nothing to you?” In our emotional ‘highs’ we must be cautious... too much sentimentalism can overshadow what REALLY was happening on that first Good Friday. As a perfect sacrifice, the Crucifixion had to take place, but when we next hear those ironic words, “**IT IS FINISHED**” (*John 19:30*) the despair seems complete... but don't these words also introduce just two days later a glorious new beginning? Our real assurance is summed up in John 3: **GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD!!!**

**Saturday March 30, 2013**

(Laughlin Trowsdale with forward by Rev. Marie Loewen)

## **Readings for the Day**

Job 14.1–14

Lamentations 3.1–9, 19–24

Psalms 31.1–4, 15–16 1

Peter 4.1–8 Mt 27.57–66

John 19.38–42

## **John 19:38**

Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away.

***God our hope, when we are troubled by fear and uncertainty, teach us to commit our lives to your care and to go forward on our pilgrimage, trusting in the knowledge of your love and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.***

(BAS pg. 755)

*Being a disciple of Jesus means different paths for each of us. Jesus' call to each person is distinct and individual. Yet for everyone, there is an element of learning a new way to be, and there is always an element of sacrifice.*

*For Joseph of Arimathea, it did mean sacrificing an expensive piece of property. I suspect that was the easy part. More importantly, it meant sacrificing his safety. He had been a secret disciple - frightened of the religious authorities who could turn on him as quickly and brutally as they had turned on the Messiah he was following. But he turned his back on his fear and honoured the body of Jesus. To him, Jesus must have seemed a failure, but despite that, his love was stronger than his fear.*

*Earlier in the Gospels we read of Jesus' call to some fishermen. They hardly knew Jesus, yet they left their families and boats and expectations to follow this strange man they could not understand into a future they could never have imagined.*

*Jesus is still calling women and men, and children, from the life they know to one they cannot imagine. One day, he called a young boy nicknamed "Red". This is his story:*

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**S**n the Gospel we hear the story of fishermen following Jesus to be fishers of men. This is one of the biblical passages that has resonated with me since I was an Altar boy at the age of six. I remember when I heard it for the first time. After the service I stated to our minister Sid Horn that I wanted to be a fisher man, but I couldn't because as much as I had prayed for a fishing rod and reel, God at not yet seen fit to provide one for me. Sid chuckled and we sat down beside each other and he explained to me it was not men fishing for men as one would fish for fish, but going out and bringing others to Christ, being a server to the Lord. Some fifty eight years have now passed and this passage is as strong today as it was then at age six. We don't need fancy fishing rods and reels.

# About the Contributors

**BISHOP STEPHEN ANDREWS:** The Rt Rev. Dr Stephen Andrews is the Bishop of the Diocese of Algoma. Dr Andrews is married to Fawna, and they have two beautiful and talented children, Clare and Ellen.

**FAWNA ANDREWS:** I am the mother of two grown daughters, a social worker, a voracious reader, an avid cook and cookbook collector. I have recently taken up snowshoeing and love traveling around the Diocese with my purple clad husband.

## **BERNICE CLEATOR**

**KARRIE EMMS:** Ms. Emms lives in North Bay with her two children. She spends her time making jewellery, drawing and writing between being a gymnastics and kickboxing mom. She has written several books and works as an Academic Strategist at Nipissing University. Ms. Emms blogs at [www.storiesoflight.wordpress.com](http://www.storiesoflight.wordpress.com).

**PAM HANDEY:** Her physical journey began in England, continued across Canada then settled in North Bay. Here she enjoys cats, books and nature and writes about them and her family and work experiences for the A.C.W. Devotions in the Algoma Anglican and Newsletter. Pam enjoys remembering her life experiences and appreciates the opportunity of still learning and sharing her spiritual journey with readers.

## **JIM BULL**

**REV. ANNE GERMOND** Anne is the Chaplain of the Diocesan Anglican Church Women. She is the Incumbent of The Church of the Ascension in Sudbury and, originally, comes from South Africa, where the winters are short (or non existent) and the summers are long.

**REV. MARIE LOEWEN:** Marie loves to garden and finds God speaking often as she digs and prunes. She likes to read and travel with her husband, especially if it involves a visit to the grandchildren!

**STEVE KITZUL:** The author is a poor sinner who struggles with his failings, addictions and lusts, but who nonetheless holds firm to the promise of Yahweh God, and the prayer of His son Jesus: “your kingdom come”.

**RAMONA FURST:** Ramona Furst’s mission statement has been: El Roi... You are the God who sees. She is a watercolourist, and a member of The Word Guild.

#### **REV. MICHELLE FERGUSON**

**KAYLA KRASNOR:** Kayla Krasnor was raised in a Jewish household and became a disciple of Jesus Christ while involved in Western InterVarsity Christian Fellowship while in university. She was then baptized in 2009. She moved to North Bay in the Summer of 2010 after finishing her music degrees at Western University. She currently works as a Library Technician at the Harris Learning Library and is the Choir Director at St. John the Divine in North Bay.

**REV. DR. JAY KOYLE:** Jay Koyle serves as Congregational Development Officer for the Diocese of Algoma.

**KATE SCOTT:** Kate is a member of Northern Lights Parish who has a passion for justice, people and nature. She is a lawyer by weekday and moonlights as a lay reader by weekend.

**CANDY KEITH:** Candy is a member of Northern Lights Parish. She is a horticultural technician who not only grows life, she draws it and lives it to the fullest; leaving behind her a trail of laughing, happy souls wherever she goes!

#### **TOM CHAMBERS**

**FR. ANDREW NUSSEY:** The Reverend Andrew Nussey has lived in North Bay for just over two years, and he is enjoying a city one hundred times the size of his former town in rural Newfoundland. A native of Nova Scotia, Father Nussey has two children, Rebekah and John, who instruct him in the ways of life (Isaiah 11. 6). Father Nussey is rarely a competent student, however, and must often suffer the pains of correction.

**BISHOP EDDIE MARSH/EMMA MARSH:** The Rt Rev, Eddie Marsh and Emma have served God together in Newfoundland, nationally and internationally for 5 decades. Eddie, a retired Bishop in Newfoundland continues to serve in his local area when he is not off somewhere acting as an interim priest, a role he filled a number of years ago in North Bay. Emma has served in many capacities, but is best known in our area as a Spiritual Director and in her role as the primary instructor and guide to the Emmaus Road School of Spiritual Direction. When not traveling they enjoy the ocean views from their home in Sandy Cove.

**MARSHA GRAWBARGER:** Marcia was born and raised in the Episcopal Church of the U.S. and has spent most of Her adult life in the Anglican Church here in Canada. she is a member of St. Alban's Church in Restoule and a Spiritual Director and Lay Reader among other duties at this time.

**HEATHER CHAMBERS**

**BERNICE CLEATOR**

**JOHN AND MARY LEE STENNETT**

**DEREK NEAL:** Derek Neal is Associate Professor of History at Nipissing University, where he teaches courses in British and European history before 1700. Derek is also Pastoral Assistant to the Rector at the Church of St John the Divine in North Bay, where he sings in the choir and does a few other things around the place.

**JOHN IRWIN:**

**EVA BLACK:** Eva Black has 2 daughters, 2 grandchildren, 2 cats and 1 husband. In the spring, summer and fall she can be found in her garden but winter is for pondering.

**JOYCE EDWARDS**

**RICHARD WHITE**



**MIKE BURKE:** 60. Mostly retired. Married with Kathy since 1978. Proud, and sometimes bewildered, parent of Laura, Andrew and Julie. Student of the law and local government. Volunteer, swimmer, cyclist, runner, sometime musician, closet Christian.

