



Lenten Devotional 2022

What is Lent and why is it 40 days?

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. Lent comes from the Anglo Saxon word *lencten*, meaning "lengthen" and refers to the lengthening days of spring. The forty days represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing to begin his ministry.

Lent is a time of repentance, fasting, and preparation for the coming of Easter. It is a time of self-examination and reflection. In the early church, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by new converts and then became a time of penance by all Christians. Today, Christians focus on relationship with God, growing as disciples and extending ourselves, often choosing to give up something or to volunteer and give of ourselves for others.

Sundays in Lent are not counted in the forty days because each Sunday represents a "mini-Easter."

Praying, fasting, and giving are the three pillars of Lent. ⁽¹⁾



Ash Wednesday – March 2

During Ash Wednesday worship, you will receive the sign of the cross on your forehead with the following words: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return," or "Repent, and believe the gospel." Each points to an aspect of what the ashes represent: our humanity (and therefore our mortality) and our sorrow.

On Ash Wednesday, we confront our sin. We recognize our inability to live up to all God has created us to be, and our need to be forgiven. No matter how far we have come in our spiritual journeys, each of us has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). ⁽²⁾



TODAY'S PRACTICE:

Attend worship & receive ashes. If you are unable, watch livestream or view the recording later on Asbury's Youtube channel. Make your own ashes and apply them to yourself and others in your household with the words listed above.

Thursday – March 3

Let's talk about fasting. This is the spiritual discipline we take part in when we "give up" something for Lent. We can fast anytime during the year, but (unfortunately) we seldom think about it outside the season of Lent.

Fasting and praying go hand in hand. Fasting is biblical. Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 6:16 "when you fast..." which some scholars believe indicates that fasting was a practice Jesus expected his followers to regularly take part in.

Usually, food is the main thing we refer to when we talk about fasting, but there are plenty of other things from which to fast. Think about anything that interrupts relationships—with God or others—habits, activities, etc. Richard Foster rightly states that "fasting reveals what controls us."

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Read Matt 6:16-18. Spend some time in prayer (and journaling) and ask God what controls you, how you can deepen your relationships (with God and others), and possible next steps. Tomorrow we will consider more about fasting and make a commitment to this Lenten practice.

Friday – March 4

More on Fasting: You are welcome to join me on a 40 day sugar fast, complete with weekly check ins and a daily devotion, Mondays beginning on March 7. Let me know you are coming—I will save you a seat (or zoom link). This is for everyone and anyone.

Although fasting from food is always appropriate, here are some other ideas to consider fasting from (and maybe begin with a few hours at a time. Feel free to try fasting from a variety of things): social media, video/phone games, giving your advice/opinion unless asked, complaining, gossiping, overspending, judging others (yes thoughts count). You get the idea. If you fast from food, drinks, or anything you pay money for, save out what you would have spent and give it away. Take the time you would have spent doing whatever and hang out with God.

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Carve out some prayerful quiet time and commit to fasting from _____ for a day, week, or the remainder of Lent. Ask God for help and direction. Be blessed.

Saturday – March 5

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Select one of the following verses. Read it out loud, slowly, three times, then write it out. Underline, highlight, or circle the word(s) or phrase(s) that stand(s) out to you. Reflect on what invitation you sense from God based on those words.

Next, prayerfully plan a time on your calendar once (or more) every week in Lent for silence and solitude. Keep that appointment with God the same way you would keep any other appointment.

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” (Mark 1:35)

“Jesus went out to a mountain side to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him.” (Luke 6:12-13. See also Mark 3:13)

“After [Jesus] had dismissed [the crowds], he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was [still] there alone.” (Matthew 14:23)

Monday – March 7

Yesterday in worship we celebrated Holy Communion preceded by a prayer of confession, asking for God's forgiveness. Something we hear frequently around the Lord's Supper is “Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. This proves God's love toward us...”

TODAY'S PRACTICE: In light of the above statements, journal about the following:

1. What does confession have to do with coming to the Lord's Table? Why do you think it matters?
2. Does the knowledge that Christ died for us while we were still sinning come into play in your decision to forgive others? Why or why not?
3. Take some time in prayer and make your honest and specific confession to God, trusting in the grace of forgiveness that is promised.

Sunday – March 6

Our theme for lent focuses on becoming like a child.
When you think about children, what are some characteristics you notice?
What can they teach us about living our faith life?

TODAY'S PRACTICE:

Read or hand copy Matthew 18:15-35.

Think about how you would explain each section of this passage to a child.

How might a child explain it to you (go ask a child)?
How do these explanations speak to your inner child?



****As you journey through Lent, mark the devotions that are particularly challenging or that you want to go back to****

Tuesday – March 8

If we see a child snatch a toy away from her playmate, we take her aside and explain why that isn't kind. We may try to help children understand this by asking them to think how they would feel if that were done to them.

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Read or hand copy Luke 6:31-36. Think of a time when a person showed you grace when you messed up. Maybe they forgave harsh words, gave you a second chance at something, or gave you the benefit of the doubt (AKA erring on the side of grace). Give thanks to God for that person. Pray to be that person for someone else.

3-minute breath prayer*:

Set a timer for 3 minutes.

Take a few deep breaths and then breathe normally.

Sink into this breath prayer:

Inhale: God, change my heart

Exhale: to reflect your love

*use this format wherever you have a breath prayer

Wednesday – March 9

Sometimes the hardest person to forgive is ourselves. But God has already agreed to reconciliation. A big part of our faith is accepting God's acceptance of us—to accept the grace offered. God has done everything necessary for our forgiveness, it is offered freely to us.

"The reasons for forgiving ourselves are the same as for forgiving others. It is how we become free of the past. It is how we heal and grow. It is how we make meaning out of our suffering, restore our self-esteem, and tell a new story of who we are." (3)

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Read or hand copy Psalm 32:5.
Journal and reflect:

1. What does it say about us if God has forgiven us but we do not forgive ourselves?
2. Can we fully forgive others if we cannot forgive ourselves?
3. Can we truly live out a life of discipleship, staying on the path, if we do not forgive ourselves?

Thursday – March 10

Typically, children aren't good at holding grudges, but adults are very skilled at it. There are different levels of hurt, which have various impacts. Think of annoyances, frustrations, bitterness, resentments, and hurts, as stones that we carry around. If we do not lay them down, give them to God, and let go, we carry their cumulative weight around with us every day.

When dealing with "pebbles" or small stones, e.g., someone not returning a phone call, Adam Hamilton(4) suggests using "R.A.P.":

1. Remember your own shortcomings. When you feel that someone has offended you, consider how many times you've done something like it.
2. Assume the best of the person who has slighted you....or, ALWAYS ERR ON THE SIDE OF GRACE!
3. Pray—pray for the person who has frustrated you.

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Gather some small pebbles for the smaller hurts you may be holding on to. Read or hand copy Matthew 18:21-22. Feel these small stones in your hand and honestly think about what grudges you are holding, set them down and give them to God.

Friday – March 11

There are pebbles—or the small resentments we carry—but then there are stones—medium, large, and boulder size hurts we cart around: a friend betrayed us, a co-worker has lied about us, or we have been deeply hurt (physically and/or emotionally) in some other way.

Forgiveness does not mean condoning. It means letting go of the right to retribution. We are choosing not to let these wrongs continue to affect us or give the wrongdoer any more power or control over us. In addition, forgiveness does not mean we must remain in relationship. We get to decide to restore or release the relationship (family are harder relationships to release). Toxic relationships and/or abuse is not what God intends for any of us.

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Read or copy Romans 12:18-19. Honestly reflect on the hurts you are harboring in your heart. Make a list of the people attached to these hurts. Collect the number of stones of people on your list. Take each stone and pray for that person and for guidance from God about forgiveness and the state of your relationship. Do this regularly. Depending on the size stone, this may take days, weeks, months, or years. When you are able to forgive, consider tossing that rock into a deep body of water, just like God done for us.

Saturday – March 12

TODAY'S PRACTICE:

Carve out 30 minutes with God today.

Reflect on your week:

Where did you feel closest to God?

Furthest away?

What do you need to confess?

What do you need God's help with?

Go back over this week's devotions and cover any that you may have missed or revisit one that was particularly meaningful or difficult.

Prepare your heart for worship tomorrow and commit to attending with the Body of Christ—virtually or in person.

Sunday – March 13

TODAY'S PRACTICE:

Read or hand copy Matthew 20:1-16.

Think about how you would explain this passage to a child.

How might a child explain it to you (go ask a child)?

How do these explanations speak to your inner child?



Monday – March 14

This week our theme is “Thank You and Please,” phrases we teach our children to say. Specifically, we are focusing on gratitude this week. Gratitude changes things—changes us—our perspective, our attitude, how we choose to live in the world.

It can be difficult to be thankful for what we have when we compare ourselves to others. This week be mindful of when you are comparing yourself, your family, your job, your possessions with another’s. Pray for contentment and eyes to see blessings with authentic gratitude.

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Memorize Psalm 23:1: *The Lord is my Shepherd, I have all that I need.* This will be our touchstone for the week.

Make a list of the relationships for which you are grateful.

1. Give thanks to God for each one.
2. If possible, share your appreciation with the people on your list this week.

Tuesday – March 15

It is easy to overlook the everyday blessings that many of us enjoy, e.g., clean water flowing from (multiple) taps in our homes—a secure home that is warm, safe, and comfortable, a vehicle that allows us to get to where we need to go, access to the internet, a variety of stores with choices galore. The list goes on and on.

Thank You, God!

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Recite or write Psalm 23:1 five times.

Imagine your typical day from the moment you wake up. Make a list of as many “everyday” blessings as you can think of. Give thanks to God and pray to be a good steward of said blessings.

Wednesday – March 16

It is an exercise in humility to recognize that the gifts that we employ are not ours, but are given to us by God. It might be our ability to sing, crunch numbers, interact with people, write, craft, learn, teach, play sports or an instrument, cook, paint, build, etc.

We all have gifts. What are yours? Are you using them for God’s glory? If you are having trouble answering the questions, ask someone you trust what gifts they see in you.

Thank You, God!

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Recite or write Psalm 23:1 five times.

Make a list of your gifts and give God thanks. If you are not employing at least one of your gifts for the Kingdom of God, pray about how you may do that.

Thursday – March 17

"How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number – living things both large and small."

Psalm 104:24-25

God's creation is a fabulous source for our gratitude—it literally keeps us alive!

Thank You, God!

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Recite or write Psalm 23:1 five times.

Make a list of all of your favorite places and things about nature. Give thanks to God for each one. Visit the places today or make a date on your calendar to do so (and keep it!).

Go photograph or paint beautiful things in creation while giving thanks.

Write a poem or prayer to God sharing your gratitude for these places and things.

Friday – March 18

Some of us have issues around our bodies—breaking down, disease, fatigue, and other health issues. It can be frustrating and at times can cause us to despair. God hears our cries and is walking alongside us.

Our bodies are amazing creations that are gifts from God. Our body is made up of trillions of cells that continually renew so that we can keep doing all of our living. It truly is a miracle that only God could orchestrate! Our bodies are the vehicle to doing the work of the kingdom.

Thank You, God!

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Recite or write Psalm 23:1 five times.

Make a list of things you are grateful for regarding your body. Give God thanks.

Saturday – March 19

TODAY'S PRACTICE:

Carve out 30 minutes with God today.

Reflect on your week:

Where did you feel closest to God?

Furthest away?

What do you need to confess?

What do you need God's help with?

Go back over this week's devotions and cover any that you may have missed or revisit one that was particularly meaningful or difficult.

Prepare your heart for worship tomorrow and commit to attending with the Body of Christ—virtually or in person.

Sunday – March 20

TODAY'S PRACTICE:

Read or hand copy Matthew 22:1-14.

Think about how you would explain this passage to a child.

How might a child explain it to you (go ask a child)?

How do these explanations speak to your inner child?



Monday – March 21

Children have a habit of saying, “that’s not fair!” quite frequently. As adults, even if we don’t like it, we have an understanding that life isn’t fair and sometimes that’s just the way it is. Sometimes that is the case. However, there are instances when others tell us that something is unfair, and we make excuses as to why it is that way, or perhaps we think they are being too sensitive or unreasonable. But if we find ourselves in a similar situation—look out! In our culture it is common to not find “unfairness” a problem if it isn’t happening directly to us. This goes against loving God and neighbor.

TODAY’S PRACTICE: Read Matt 22:1-14 out loud. Pause after each sentence to allow what you have read to settle. Journal and reflect: What struck you about this passage? What questions do you have? What did you notice?

Bonus: Go to workingpreacher.org and search Matthew 22:1-14. Check out Lance Pape’s commentary.

Tuesday – March 22

Some synonyms for ‘justice’ are: what is right, truth, correction, honesty, integrity, equity, reparation.

Some synonyms for wisdom are: common sense, astuteness, insight, experience, prudence.

TODAY’S PRACTICE: Read or copy Proverbs 2:6-12 and Isaiah 55:8-9.

Reflect on and journal the following:

What might be the differences between our sense of “fair” and God’s justice?

What does wisdom have to do with our perception of God’s justice?

Wednesday – March 23

As human beings we have lenses through which we view the world. Our lenses are comprised of our race, gender, age, sexual orientation and identity, socioeconomic status, culture, etc.—our combined life experience. We are being challenged in this series to put on the lenses of children. We are all children of God, even if adult children. Let’s think about the story of the prodigal son(s).

TODAY’S PRACTICE: Read or copy Luke 15:11-32. Put yourself in the place of each brother near the end of the story when the younger sibling returns home.

What feelings do you sense from each brother’s perspective? How do you identify with each character?

How do you see God’s wisdom and justice being larger than each character’s perspective and ideas about what is “fair”?

Think of a situation where you thought you were treated unfairly. How could you reframe it?

Thursday – March 24

When we teach young children, they seldom claim to already know whatever it is, nor do they argue with us when we are teaching them. While there is definitely merit to life experience and acquired knowledge, children have a lot to teach adults (which is the point of our Lenten series!). Here are some fantastic lessons that children can teach us:

1. Have fun! Laugh, play, imagine, dance, let loose!
2. Each day is a brand new start.
3. Try new things—be brave!
4. Being creative is good for you—and fun!
5. It’s ok to cry when you are upset and say when you are mad.
6. It’s ok to ask for help when you need it. We’re all learning.

TODAY’S PRACTICE: Have you noticed these qualities in the children in your family? Give thanks to God. Where do you need to take some more notes from this list? Reach out to a child who has taught you valuable lessons and let them know (even if they are no longer a child).

Friday – March 25

One thing that children teach us is that our time and full attention are what they truly need and desire. In fact, adults aren't that much different in this regard.

TODAY'S PRACTICE: 1. Make plans to spend quality time with your child(ren), grandchild(ren), nieces, nephews, or neighbors. Make it a point to communicate God's love for them (a gift, card, verbally). If you don't have any children in your life right now, volunteer to help with Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, or donate to a worthy children's charity.

2. Give each person (children and adults) your full attention when they are talking to you-no looking at your phone, your watch, or fidgeting. Pay attention and really listen to what they are saying. This is harder than it sounds in our distracted culture. This may take some practice, but is totally worth it!

3. Make a time to give your full attention to God today. God desires this as well.

Saturday – March 26

TODAY'S PRACTICE:

Carve out 30 minutes with God today.

Reflect on your week:

Where did you feel closest to God?

Furthest away?

What do you need to confess?

What do you need God's help with?

Go back over this week's devotions and cover any that you may have missed or revisit one that was particularly meaningful or difficult.

Prepare your heart for worship tomorrow and commit to attending with the Body of Christ—virtually or in person.

Sunday – March 27

TODAY'S PRACTICE:

Read or hand copy Matthew 25:1-13.

Think about how you would explain this passage to a child.

How might a child explain it to you (go ask a child)?

How do these explanations speak to your inner child?



Monday – March 28

As you reflect on this parable of the 10 bridesmaids in Matthew 25:1-13, what is your initial reaction? Maybe it is like mine: 'We're supposed to share!' Even though our theme references sharing this week, this parable is more about being prepared in times of waiting and unexpected delay.

Some of us are planners and don't do well when our plans don't pan out like we envisioned. For example, if your plan is to quickly run in and out of the store for something you really need, but you find the lines to be long and check outs few, what is your initial reaction? In this situation we don't necessarily need to be physically prepared like the bridesmaids, but what about being mentally prepared for situations like these?

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Reflect and journal about how you can respond to unexpected waiting with grace and patience. Visualize a bothersome situation in your mind and your grace-filled, patient response to it—both internally and externally. Repeat as necessary. Pray that it may be so. Being patient and kind is part of being Christ's representative in the world.

Tuesday – March 29

Sharing with others is easy on paper. It makes sense. But when we are in a situation to carry that out, it can be a bit more difficult. For example, we might recognize that it would be much easier for a child to share a toy she doesn't play with than to share her favorite stuffed animal.

Let's also recognize that sharing can be seen as temporary ("Gillian, share your stuffed unicorn with Gabe so he can have a turn") or permanent ("I made a sandwich for you two to share").

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Read Luke 6:38 and Galatians 6:7-8 in several translations (at biblegateway.com you can see 5 translations at one time).

Reflect and journal: What do you sense is the message of these scriptures? What questions arise for you? Are these about temporary sharing? Permanent sharing? Both? Neither?

Think about some instances that you shared temporarily and permanently. How did you experience each?

Wednesday – March 30

Our bridesmaids passage this week isn't about casting judgment on the foolish bridesmaids. It is about the call to remain vigilant and being prepared for Christ's return. Here is how Carla Works describes it:

"Readers today may find themselves secretly sympathetic to the foolish maidens. Does the church really live as though the bridegroom's arrival is certain? ... To live in vigilance means for the disciples to do the tasks that they have been appointed to do in preparation for the Master's coming. In Matthew's Gospel, those tasks include bearing witness to God's kingdom by welcoming the stranger, feeding the hungry, visiting the sick and imprisoned (25:31-46), and making disciples in all the world (28:19-20)." (4)

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Light a candle (bonus points for an oil lamp!). Reflect and journal: How does this commentary land with you? Have you given thought to Christ's return? Expound on that.

How are you being vigilant for Christ's return?

Thursday – March 31

Sometimes we want to share, but there are just some things we cannot give to others. We can exhibit but cannot share things like patience, understanding, gentleness, and love. In other words, we can be patient and kind with another person, but we cannot make that person be patient and kind. That comes from their heart.

We can certainly plant seeds—which can be incredibly powerful. Then, we pray and let the Holy Spirit take over. A person's heart is the receptacle for seeds—and the heart is the determining factor for what happens to those seeds. We can't control what resides in another person's heart or how or when the Spirit will move in the situation. We pray. We plant seeds. We remain faithful.

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Read or copy Matthew 13:1-8, 18-23. Reflect and journal: When has someone planted seeds for you? What was the process like? Pray for a person or situation in which you are waiting to see growth. Maybe it's you.

Friday – April 1

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Reflect on Ann Bell Worley's words, fittingly set to the music of "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus," which is #196 in the UM Hymnal. Sing along!

God Almighty, we are waiting for the Savior to appear.
Meet us in our desert journey;
give a sign that you are near:
burning bushes, parted waters, food a plenty in the wild.
As we look for signs and wonders help us see you in a child.

God incarnate, we are waiting
for the feast day of your birth.
Looking back and looking forward
to the Christ's return to earth.
Help us to proclaim the gospel 'til the world is reconciled.
Let us set your holy table for each woman, man, and child.

God the Spirit, we are waiting
for your presence here and now.
Humbled by our sinful weakness
at your mercy we will bow.
Search our hearts and make us ready,
speak in language strong and mild.
Help each one of us your people, to receive you like a child.

Saturday – April 2

TODAY'S PRACTICE:

Carve out 30 minutes with God today.

Reflect on your week:

Where did you feel closest to God?

Furthest away?

What do you need to confess?

What do you need God's help with?

Go back over this week's devotions and cover any that you may have missed or revisit one that was particularly meaningful or difficult.

Prepare your heart for worship tomorrow and commit to attending with the Body of Christ—virtually or in person.

Sunday – April 3

TODAY'S PRACTICE:

Read or hand copy Matthew 25:31-46.

Think about how you would explain this passage to a child.

How might a child explain it to you (go ask a child)?

How do these explanations speak to your inner child?



Monday – April 4

According to dictionary.com "nice" is defined as "pleasing; agreeable," while "kind" is defined as "having, showing, or proceeding from benevolence."

"Nice" can be trying to improve others' impression of us. It can be superficial or disingenuous at times. This does not mean that we should take off the filter and go around saying whatever comes into our mind (that would not be kind). Our mothers had a point when they said (say it with me), "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all." There is indeed wisdom in that advice. But let's be honest, many of us are "nice" to our own detriment, the situation's detriment, or to the detriment of those who are suffering because we are worried about what others will think. Jesus didn't have that problem as we read in Matt 25:31-46 and throughout the gospels.

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Reflect and journal: In your own words, define "nice" vs. "kind." Are they the same? Can they be the same? Is "being nice" fake, polite, or both? Is it possible to be kind and say hard things to people? 3 minute Breath Prayer- Inhale: Gracious God Exhale: Instill your kindness in me.

Tuesday – April 5

As we reread our passage for the week here are some thoughts to ponder from Dirk Lange:

"When 'Lord, when did we see you...' is asked by [the sheep], the question stems from what might be called a holy ignorance. These were people who had entered the joy of their master without even knowing it. Such participation is not self-evident. The joy they knew was not complete; it was mixed with suffering, danger, risk, tribulations and most likely many disappointments. And yet, it was joy. They acted out of mercy. They went the way of the cross and now find themselves at the right hand of the Son of Man. On the contrary, [the goats] did not know mercy or joy and we might add they did not know simplicity either. They complicated every situation allowing their own judgment as to whom they had to serve deafen them to the cry of those who were calling out in need. They did not live in the spirit of the beatitudes." (5)

TODAY'S PRACTICE: 3-minute breath prayer:

Inhale: Cleanse my soul

Exhale: With your grace

Wednesday – April 6

Have you ever been taken aback by what a child has said to you? Not in a rude way, but in an “I don’t know what a filter is” kind of way. Usually, we laugh, but more often than not, the child is correct in their declaration or observation (maybe that spinach we have in our teeth *does* make it look like we are missing a front tooth). When a child says such things, we tend to take it in the spirit it was intended—a spirit of honesty, authenticity, and innocence. What about when adults tell us hard things (albeit more in a more polished way)? Are we able to receive it in the spirit with which it was intended (with the acknowledgement that the spirit is not always altruistic)? Are we able lay aside our defensiveness and pride to be open to the Holy Spirit?

Sometimes we have to hear hard things about ourselves and those we love. No one likes it. Regularly practicing the spiritual disciplines helps us to train our spiritual muscles so that our pride and cynicism doesn’t get in the way of the messages. Remember, our hearts are the receptacle for the seeds.

TODAY’S PRACTICE: 3-minute Breath Prayer:
Inhale: Servant of all/Exhale: melt my pride

Thursday – April 7

Beth Richardson eloquently lays out some points from our text this week: “I thought about this passage in which Jesus speaks ... about a day when he will confront us with the choosing we have done: what we embraced, what we rejected. ...This text from Matthew lies at the deepest core of our call as followers of Christ. And it is, perhaps, the one that most fiercely challenges us...By his words,... Jesus assures us that our greatest sin lies not in having the wrong theology Our sin lies in neglecting to recognize and respond to him where he already is.

Jesus gets awfully specific in telling us where we can find him. Each of the habitations he lists here is marked by lack: lack of food, lack of water, lack of hospitality, lack of clothing, lack of health, lack of freedom. Christ chooses these places, inhabits these spaces, waits for us to show up. Waits, too, for us to recognize those places in ourselves. He knows that if we haven’t recognized the poverty within our own souls, and how he dwells there, it’s hard to see him and serve him in others without being patronizing.” (6)

TODAY’S PRACTICE: Reflect and journal a response to Richardson’s commentary. What arises in your heart?
3-Minute Breath Prayer: Inhale: Open my eyes, Lord
Exhale: that I may see you

Friday – April 8

These song lyrics, written by Daniel Charles Damon, (7) help us to sing our theology:

Together we serve,
united by love,
inviting God's world to the glorious feast.
We work and we pray
through sorrow and joy,
extending God's love to the last and the least.

We seek to become
a beacon of hope,
a lamp for the heart and a light for the feet.
We learn, year by year,
to let love shine through
until we see Christ in each person we meet.

TODAY’S PRACTICE:

Craft a 3-minute breath prayer out of the lyrics above and pray it.

Inhale:

Exhale:

Saturday – April 9

TODAY’S PRACTICE:

Carve out 30 minutes with God today.

Reflect on your week:

Where did you feel closest to God?

Furthest away?

What do you need to confess?

What do you need God’s help with?

Go back over this week’s devotions and cover any that you may have missed or revisit one that was particularly meaningful or difficult.

Prepare your heart for worship tomorrow and commit to attending with the Body of Christ—virtually or in person.

Sunday – April 10 Palm Sunday

Holy Week Begins

TODAY'S PRACTICE:

Read or hand copy Matthew 21:1-13.

Think about how you would explain this passage to a child.

How might a child explain it to you (go ask a child)?

How do these explanations speak to your inner child?



Monday – April 11

Yesterday we read about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, but also him overturning the tables in the Temple. Here is Eugene Peterson's rendition from *The Message*:

"Jesus went straight to the Temple and threw out everyone who had set up shop, buying and selling. He kicked over the tables of loan sharks and the stalls of dove merchants. He quoted this text:

My house was designated a house of prayer; You have made it a hangout for thieves.

Now there was room for the blind and crippled to get in. They came to Jesus and he healed them."

TODAY'S PRACTICE: Set up a card table or TV tray. Place some non-breakable things on it and knock it over. Do it a few times—at least twice—once as gently as possible, and once while thinking of something that makes you angry. Can you imagine Jesus doing this? What feelings does that evoke in you? Wariness? Fear? Solidarity? Confusion? Disgust? Suspicion? Something else? Reflect and journal about your reaction to this passage.

Tuesday – April 12

For the remainder of Holy Week, we will be reading through the scriptural story of the Passion.

As you read (silently or aloud) the scripture throughout the week, picture yourself as a child who is a spectator in the crowd, watching these events unfold.

Keep your journal handy for prayer and reflection. Pay close attention to what stands out to you as you attend to this most sacred story.

TODAY'S PRACTICE:

Find a quiet place you won't be interrupted.

Light a candle.

Read Luke 22:14-38, slowly.

Read the passage again, this time allowing questions and observations to surface in response to the text.

Jot them down.

Journal your response to this time in scripture. Spend some time in prayer.

Wednesday – April 13

TODAY'S PRACTICE:

Find a quiet place you won't be interrupted.

Light a candle and read Luke 22:39-71, slowly.

Read the passage again, this time allowing questions and observations to surface in response to the text. Jot them down.

Journal your response to this time in scripture. Spend some time in prayer.

****Commit to attending worship tomorrow evening—virtually or in person.**



Maundy Thursday – April 14

WORSHIP 7:00pm

TODAY'S PRACTICE:

Find a quiet place you won't be interrupted.

Light a candle.

Read Luke 23:1-25, slowly.

Read the passage again, this time allowing questions and observations to surface in response to the text.

Jot them down.

Journal your response to this time.

Spend some time in prayer.



Good Friday – April 15

TODAY'S PRACTICE:

Find a quiet place you won't be interrupted.

Light a candle.

Read Luke 23:26-56, slowly.

Read the passage again, this time allowing questions and observations to surface in response to the text.

Jot them down.

Journal your response to this time.

Spend some time in prayer.



Holy Saturday – April 16

TODAY'S PRACTICE:

In addition to, or instead of our regular Saturday practice below, find an hour to go to a quiet place to be in silence and solitude on this holy and solemn day. Imagine what the disciples might have experienced thinking all had been lost, including their friend, teacher, and Savior.

Reflect on your week:

Where did you feel closest to God? Furthest away?

What do you need to confess?

What do you need God's help with?

Go back over this week's devotions and cover any that you may have missed or revisit one that was particularly meaningful or difficult.

Prepare your heart for worship tomorrow and commit to attending with the Body of Christ—virtually or in person.

Easter Sunday – April 17

Attend Worship at the time of your choice

TODAY'S PRACTICE:

Take some time today (or this week) to go back over the devotional and revisit the ones you marked as challenging or that you want to spend some more time with.

Easter blessings to you and yours!

Most importantly—don't forget to

Rejoice!!



CITATIONS IN THE ORDER OF APPEARANCE:

1. <https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-is-lent-and-why-does-it-last-forty-days>.
 2. <https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-when-did-ash-wed-begin-and-why-do-we-celebrate-it>.
 3. Desmond & Mpho Tutu. *The Book of Forgiving*. New York: Harper One, 2014.
 4. Adam Hamilton. *Forgiveness: Finding Peace Through Letting Go*. Nashville: UMC Publishing House, 2012.
 5. <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-32/commentary-on-matthew-251-13-3>.
 6. <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/christ-the-king/commentary-on-matthew-2531-46>.
 7. <https://paintedprayerbook.com/2008/11/19/christ-among-the-scrap/>.
 8. Daniel Charles Damon. *Together We Serve*. ©1998 Hope Publishing Co.
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