

Week One

- "return to the LORD your God"

Wednesday 2/25

Joel 2:12 – 15

"Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing - grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God. Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly.

In the Old Testament, the people of Israel knew they were special to the Lord, because of the life they lived, the ways they followed. When they called upon God for mercy – they approached him with “*fasting, weeping and mourning*”, “*rending their clothes*” – to remind themselves that they were a people who were far from perfect and who needed the grace of the Lord. At the beginning of this season of special seeking of the Lord, we should approach him humbly, aware of our sin and need of his grace. The prophet Joel tells the people to “*rend your heart and not your garments*”. Make a commitment today to pray and seek the Lord with all your heart in this season of the 40 days. **[Start a journal for these forty days. Write down 3-5 things you will do in these 40 days to express and remind yourself of the commitment you make today.]**

Thursday 2/26

Exodus 24:12-18

The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction." Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide, and Moses went up on the mountain of God. He said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are with you, and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them." When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

A time of 40 days to seek the Lord is a scriptural principle. Moses, Elijah, and Jesus all sought the Lord God in this way. When we set aside time to be with the Lord, to seek his will, and when we declare to him that this is our aim, he *will* come and meet

us. Are you ready to meet the Lord this season? What do you think he has for you? **[Continue your journal with an entry on what you think God is saying to you for this period.]**

Friday 2/27

Daniel 9: 3-5, 20

So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill.

Part of approaching the Lord is recognizing who he is, and who we are in relation to him. We are his creation – created to know, love and serve him, the creator. As we seek the Lord, we recognize that we as individuals and as a people are far from what we were created to be. Romans 3 notes *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"*. The prophet Daniel recognizes this and intercedes on behalf of the whole people of God, as well as himself. Intercede today on behalf of the church – that we would be quick to recognize our need for God and turn to him. **[Write on a note card you can carry with you all day, a few things you could intercede for.]**

Saturday 2/28

Psalm 25

...The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them. My eyes are ever on the LORD, for only he will release my feet from the snare. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish. Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins...

The Psalmist calls upon God to hear his cry, and to defeat those who would stand against him. To find the Lord, we need his help. He has power to overcome Satan our enemy and to rescue us from the sin in our life. We can call on the name of the Lord and be sure that he will answer us and reveal himself to us, if we are sincere in our search for him. What are the areas in your life where you need the Lord's saving power to overcome sin? **[Spend some time today committing these things to the Lord, with expectant faith that he will work in your life.]**

Week Two

- **“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me”**

Sunday 3/1

Matt 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:" 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. 'Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Sometimes we can have a negative view of the 40 days. They can seem like a long desert, a time to focus on the sand, the rocks, and the stony soil in our lives. Often we can be tempted to view the 40 days as merely a physical exercise, a time to “endure” what we can to “show” God how we love him. Jesus experienced this temptation also. The devil tempted him in his physical (hunger), mental (vanity), and spiritual (worshipping false Gods) being. Jesus’ faith and obedience, however, were *strengthened* by a period of testing in the desert rather than broken. God can use times of temptation and testing to turn our hearts more fully towards him and cause us to rely on him more as we see where we are weak. Pray against temptation, that God will give you the grace to fight this season. **[Identify three areas where you think you might be tested this season. Share them with a friend and commit to seeking the Lord’s grace through this time.]**

Monday 3/2

Ez 18:23

Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?

God is never pleased when we fall away from him. Rather, he is desperately seeking after us to bring us back into right relationship with him. Forgiveness is at the heart of who God is, and what his plan for us involves. We should never think of ourselves as so far from him that we cannot turn to him, and be confident he will receive us.

[Think of someone whom you need to ask forgiveness of, or who has asked forgiveness of you, recently. Make a point of contacting them and receiving/giving forgiveness today.]

Tuesday 3/3

Is 55: 6-7

Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

The Bible indicates that some periods of time are special ones. God commanded his people to keep every 7th day (the Sabbath) holy. He asked them to sanctify the time to him, or to “make it holy time” because he asked them to do it. He also commanded them to keep special feasts and seasons in which he would relate to them in a particular way. During the 40 days we have sanctified the time to the Lord. We have set aside and prepared our hearts to meet him. As the prophet here points out – we should seek the Lord *while he may be found*. In this season, we have already declared a time of special dedication to the Lord – we should now make sure we are keeping it as he would wish. **[Take today to review the progress of the past week. Have you made time to pray to the Lord these past days? Have you been faithful in seeking him? Have you stuck to commitments and decisions which you have made? Take time today to recommit and strengthen the patterns and decisions which you have begun anew.]**

Wednesday 3/4

Ps 51:1-7

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Psalm 51 is accounted a classic in the Christian tradition, in part because of the earnestness of David's confession and his longing to return to right relationship with his God. Another reason it is so famous however, is that it is not vague – David knows “*my transgressions*” and his sin is “*always before me*” – just as it is before us. The bible tells us that he slept with another man's wife (2 Sam 11). We cannot approach God and ask for his forgiveness properly, if we do not recount before him what we have done, and why we are asking forgiveness. Unless we open to God “*the inner parts*” he cannot wash them clean. **[In your prayer today, speak out to God the transgressions for which you desire forgiveness. Name the sin in your life and then be assured that the Lord has forgiven you for it.]**

Thursday 3/5

Ps 51:8-14

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

When we ask forgiveness for our sins it is a time for sadness as we remember when we were not perfect, but it is a time of great rejoicing also. David expresses this as he sings of the “*joy of your salvation*” and “*of your righteousness*”. Recounting our sin before the Lord ironically brings joy, brings hope, and most of all brings the Holy Spirit – who works in us to make us stronger than we were previously. This is a chance for testimony; just as David's story is an inspiration to us to turn back to the Lord, so our story can help others in their search for God. **[Pray for an opportunity today to tell someone of the forgiveness you have received in Christ. When you see your chance – witness!]**

Friday 3/6

Titus 3: 3-7

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Jesus, the Christ, saves. He is the one who brings us to spiritual renewal and the joy of salvation. We are now “*heirs having the hope of eternal life*”. Take time today in your prayer to thank God for the salvation he has won for you in Christ. **[Think of a person – friend, parent, pastor or stranger - who was instrumental in bringing you to Christ, and thus, salvation. Send them an email today thanking them for the part they played in your conversion.]**

Saturday 3/7

Ps 51: 15 - 19

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. In your good pleasure make Zion prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Unrepentant sin stands between us and God, blocking our access to him, but repentance opens up his presence to us and allows us to worship him acceptably. When we repent of our sin, somehow, we are brought closer to God than we were before. In the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus says that “*there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent*” (Luke 15). Repentance from sin does not merely return us to the state we were in before we sinned, it “*makes Zion [us] prosper*”. **[Look over the areas you committed to the Lord last week (Sat 2/28). Have you seen improvement in them? How has the Lord made you prosper? Thank God for the growth you see and intercede for his help to continue.]**

Week Three

- **“Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart”**

Sunday 3/8

Matt. 17:1-9

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

Before Jesus made his final journey to Jerusalem, he took the disciples to a mountain and was transfigured before them, so that they would know who it was, that they were following. The bible records that *“his face shone like the sun”* and that everything about him was “transfigured”. The prefix “trans” indicates movement, or literally, “across” – we use words like trans-continental, or trans-national to speak of something which crosses boundaries. Jesus is a boundary crosser. He crossed the enormous chasm between humanity and divinity and made them one in his person – is this action upon the mountain he was seen in his true state by the disciples, “God in man’s clothing” as it were. This is God’s plan for us, to unite his divinity in our mortality through the person of his son. Awesome. **[Read the passage of the transfiguration in the bible. Meditate on God assuming human form and coming down to earth. In church today, share with one other person the fruit (or frustration) of these meditations. Ask them to pray for you this season as you seek to become more like Christ.]**

Monday 3/9

Ps. 32:1-2, 8-11

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit...I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding, but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you. Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him. Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

The Lord forgives those who turn to him and repent, but he also teaches them how to conduct themselves in future, “*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go*”. Just as an animal has to be led and guided so that it will perform the Master’s purposes, so too must our spirits be malleable and available to the Lord if we are to turn from sin and amend our lives to be more like him. When Jesus called Peter and performed the miracle of the catching of the fish, Peter recognized that he was a sinful man – and said so (Luke 5). Jesus, however, was not interested in the man he was, but more in the man he could become *because* he fell down on his knees and professed his sin. The psalmist here encourages the same response from us. **[Are you tractable in your relationship with God? Are you willing to acknowledge your sin and allow God to form you? Think of three ways you could be more easily led by the Lord in your relationship with him – areas of pride, stubbornness or even merely strong personal inclination. Are you willing to lay these aside to learn from him? Write these areas in your journal and pray through them.]**

Tuesday 3/10

Psalm 24: 3-6

Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God his Savior. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob.

The Psalms were written to express profound truths about our relationship with God through images and metaphors, rather than deep theological terminology. Nevertheless, the truths which they contain are some of the most profound in the bible, written in a language which is accessible and easy for us to understand. Here, the Psalmist questions who may ascend to God, who may climb to the place where he is. Only he who has “*clean hands*” and a “*pure heart*”. The order is important here – we do not receive clean hands without washing, without recognizing that we are sinful and doing something about it – only then will we be able to approach God in the right way, and receive what he has for us. **[Water and washing are strong**

metaphors in the Psalms. Whenever you use water today, to drink, to wash, or to clean, repeat the words of Psalm 24 – try and have them memorized by the end of the day.]

Wednesday 3/11

Matt 5:4, 8

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Jesus' message at the Sermon on the Mount was a simple, but a profound one. The Kingdom of God was not to be a physical one. This was a message which reordered the religious expression of the Jews in a dramatic way. It should have the same effect on us today – we struggle to see the spiritual life which God calls us to and instead are caught up in the physical world which surrounds us. Pray that the Lord will give you eyes to see his kingdom on earth today. **[Think of someone you know who was recently bereaved – send them a note or a message to let them know that you are thinking and praying for them. Remember them and their family in your prayer today]**

Thursday 3/12

Is 57:14-19

And it will be said: "Build up, build up, prepare the road! Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people." For this is what the high and lofty One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite. I will not accuse forever, nor will I always be angry, for then the spirit of man would grow faint before me, the breath of man that I have created. I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger, yet he kept on in his willful ways. I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him, creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel. Peace, peace, to those far and near," says the LORD. "And I will heal them."

The great paradox of the Christian life is that the more we see our own sinfulness and imperfection – the more Christ can come to us and fill us and make us more what he wants us to be, more like him and thus, closer to the Father. God says "*I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly*" how can God dwell in a place that is lowly? How can he dwell, in short, in us? Only through the power of the Holy Spirit renewing us day by day can God be close to us, for he does not speak anger, or wrath, or distance to his people through Isaiah, but peace and healing. Pray that God will fill you more and more with his Holy Spirit this day and make you into the image of his Son. **[Spend some time today praying for areas of the world which are not at peace. Search online for a country which is not at peace, print a picture of it and stick it to your wall – pray God to send his Spirit**

of peace to the place you pray for and remember it throughout your day today, and through the rest of the season of the 40 days.]

Friday 3/13

Rev 7:13-17; 22:14-15

Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." ...Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood

The access which we gain to the throne room of the Father comes through the blood of his Son, the lamb. We cannot approach God without knowing Jesus – he is the way, the truth, and the life, however the worshippers in Revelation do not direct their praise to Jesus, "*they are before the throne of **God** and serve him day and night*". Christian worship is directed to God the Father, through the person of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, but the worship is for God the Father – this is how he has revealed himself to us, and it is how Jesus taught us to pray "*Our Father*" (Matt 6). In your prayer today pray to God the Father, praising him for who he is, and what he has done. **[Pray specifically to the person of God the Father today – focus upon his majesty, his power, his glory and praise him for this. Praise him for his intervention in human history, the sending of his son and your adoption as his child.]**

Saturday 3/14

Ps 119:1-3

Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart. They do nothing wrong; they walk in his ways.

The bible is fairly clear; those who obey God and walk in his ways receive the blessing of those who belong to the kingdom. The Psalmist proclaims that those who walk in these ways are "*blameless*" and "*do nothing wrong*". This is God's promise to

us, when we follow him, when we seek with all our hearts to walk in his footsteps, we will not go astray – what an amazing promise! **[Review the past week, look back through what you have written and done. Have you felt the Lord guiding you in his paths? Do you feel as though you are walking in his ways? Spend some time in prayer, thanking God for the ways in which he is changing you and molding you in this season.]**

Week Four

- “Your face, LORD, I will seek”

Sunday 3/15

John 4:10, 13-14, 21-24

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."... Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."...Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

The woman at the well came thirsty, thirsty in a spiritual as well as a physical sense. She asks, she questions, and she tries to seek reasons. This passage begins with a simple statement, “*Jesus answered her*”. When we come to Jesus, he answers us – in every way. He was not merely a wandering mendicant who had a talent for reading people, he is the Lord of the Universe, a person of the Trinity and the one who opens the way for us to receive the Holy Spirit and worship the Father. Pray for God to reveal himself more fully to you today in the person of Jesus. **[Meditate on the person of Jesus today – write a list of the titles of Jesus that you know in your journal (wonderful counselor, prince of peace etc.) and pray through it. Ask God to give you a fuller knowledge of the person of Jesus.]**

Monday 3/16

Ps 27: 7-10, 13

Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek. Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior. Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me. I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Often we think that our relationship with God would be improved if “God would only just give me a sign”. Or that we could believe in him more strongly, if we could “see

him". The Psalms often talk of God seemingly "hiding" from us. The Psalmist here implores the creator not to "*hide your face from me*". This we understand as poetic language –God does not run and hide from us as in a game, but the full view of him is hidden from us because of our sinful state. The apostle Paul writes that "*we see but a poor reflection as though in a mirror*" (1 Cor 13) the whole image will not be revealed to us in this life. What the Psalms encourage us to do however, is to search, to be constantly seeking a greater union with our maker. This is the true image of the Christian life here on earth, a constant seeking after greater holiness, rather than a game of hide-and-seek with a capricious God. Pray that God would continue to reveal himself to you during this season. **[Remember a time when God revealed himself to you – though a scripture verse, another person, or an event. Write it down. Thank God for his divine revelation in your life.]**

Tuesday 3/17

Ps 42:1-2; 43:3-4

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?...Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God.

Once we know God, and begin to experience a desire for him, this will only be satisfied when we see him face to face – when we worship him in his throne room. Prayer is a lifting of the soul to God, to his throne room. It is also, however, a realization that we are not there yet. Prayer should renew and up-build us, but it should also leave us somewhat dissatisfied, aware of our humanity and our distance from God. Prayer should cause us to expend effort, it should cost us more than time to come into the throne room of the King of Kings – it should leave us perhaps somewhat tired and yet wanting for more. Is this your experience of prayer? How can you experience more of a "longing" or a "panting" for God in your prayer? **[Take a longer time of prayer than you normally would today (or if that's not possible then schedule it in somewhere this week). Focus upon your need for God, ask him to make you desire him more and more, desire him even to the point of dissatisfaction with the world around you. Pray that God will come to be the one thing which you desire from this life.]**

Wednesday 3/18

Ps 84

...How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty...

The Jews believed that God dwelt in the Temple in a special way, in a way in which he did not dwell in the rest of the earth. Psalm 84 is a song written by someone who

was far away from the Temple (in captivity in Babylon) who was longing for the “*courts of the Lord*”, the place where God was, and who was physically cut off from them. As Christians living under the New Covenant of Jesus, we don’t have to be in a special place to come to God – we can approach him anywhere. Our true home is not here however; our true home is with God – in his kingdom to come. Psalm 84 expresses a helpful attitude towards heaven. We should long to be there... **[In your prayer today ask God to give you more of a desire for his kingdom to come. Think of those you know who do not know the Lord, and who are thus without the hope of heaven. Write their names in your journal and pray for them through the day.]**

Thursday 3/19

Ps 65:1-4

Praise awaits you, O God, in Zion; to you our vows will be fulfilled. O you who hear prayer, to you all men will come. When we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions. Blessed are those you choose and bring near to live in your courts! We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple.

Prayer, we are often told, is a conversation with God. The psalmist in this passage is singing about the benefits prayer brings to us. As Christians, we believe that prayer is not merely a performance however, it is transforming. A life of prayer changes us, brings us into the courts of God, by makes us sensible of the forgiveness God offers, “*we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions*” so that the blessedness of living with God in his presence is itself even greater than the benefits prayer brings **[A life of prayer transforms us into the creatures we were created to be, and thus brings us closer to God. Do you pray regularly throughout the day, or is it limited to your quiet time in the morning? Make an effort to maintain a conversation with God throughout the day today – taking the bus, crossing the street, eating with friends – ask his help and grace to make your life a life of prayer today.]**

Friday 3/20

Ps 27:4

One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

What is the “*one thing*” you would ask of the Lord if you had the opportunity? Jesus, in the gospel of Luke tells Martha that “*only one thing is needed*” (Luke 10) – the one thing that is needed is the attitude of her sister Mary, to sit at the feet of Jesus and to be with him. To “*gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple*”.

Is this what you seek? **[Take a simple thing which you own, something which is of value to you – a piece of clothing, a favorite book, a baseball card. Bring it to a charity store or give it away to a friend as a gift. Say a prayer as you do so that God will be the one thing which you desire in this life.]**

Saturday 3/21

Ps 73:21-28

When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you. But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds

One of the most beautiful things about the Psalms is the author's absolute confidence in God. In a world shifts wildly from one extreme to another, where a news cycle is the time it takes to refresh a computer screen, there is enormous comfort in the simple words, "*as for me, it is good to be near God*". Rest in God's goodness today, experience the peace that comes from a life centered on him. **[Take time today to review the past week, has the Lord come to be more the "one thing" which you desire?]**

Week Five

- **“you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places”**

Sunday 3/22

Ps 73:21-28

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man." "How then were your eyes opened?" they demanded. He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see." "Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said.

Jesus is the light of the world; he came to bring forgiveness to sinners, healing to the sick, and hope to the world. When he heals the man born blind, he sends him to wash in the pool – a symbol of baptism, a symbol of new life. God's action in our lives, should lead to conversion, repentance and new life. We are then *sent* to bear witness of that action to others. **[Thank God for his action in your life today. Take time to go and visit a friend, relative or someone who is sick and suffering. Comfort them in their sickness and pray for them this week.]**

Monday 3/23

Ps 36: 7-9

How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

The bible uses physical imagery to express spiritual realities. Here the psalmist expresses his fulfillment in God, who is like a feast for him. God is the one who does not merely provide food, but a feast for us when we dwell in his love. What he will provide for us is not meat and drink, but a life with him. **[Consider skipping a meal, going without meat, or even fasting for the whole day today as an expression of your dependence on God. Instead of eating, spend the time in prayer, and experience God's provision of spiritual food for you.]**

Tuesday 3/24

Ps 63: 1-8

O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.

The love of the Lord should affect our whole lives. Jesus tells the scholar that the greatest commandment is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matt 22). Here the psalmist proclaims that his soul “thirsts for you” that his “lips will glorify” and that “I will lift up my hands” as he praises the Lord. It is helpful to use our bodies and our lips in worship of God. The physical actions and spoken words help us to remember the spiritual realities that we are praying. **[In your prayer today, use your hands and your voice to praise God, as well as praying quietly. Thank him for the gift of your body, and use it to express your thanks.]**

Wednesday 3/25

Ps 40: 7-8

Then I said, "Here I am, I have come— it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

This psalm is a prophecy of the Son of God who desires to do what God wants—in this case, to offer his life for the sins of the world (Heb 10). During this season of the 40 days as we seek to draw closer to the Lord, we should remember especially the event towards which the 40 days points – the sacrificial death of Jesus. The prophetic writings of the Old Testament point towards the sacrifice of Jesus, but they also express what our own attitude to God's will should be – “I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart” - as we follow his example. **[How do you approach sacrifice? Is it a chore or is it something which you embrace**

willingly, as the psalmist writes? Look for a way to sacrifice today – try and find a practical way to put yourself last and think of someone else first – at work, in your living situation or in your family, through giving up your preference. Thank God for the sacrifice of his Son on the cross as you do so.]

Thursday 3/26

Is 42:1-4

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope.

The Father's plan was to bring us to fullness of relationship with him, through the sacrifice of his Son. Even though Jesus was fully God and fully man however, the Father still acted in his human life – pouring out the Holy Spirit upon him in confirmation, gracing him to perform his mission, and acknowledging him as his Son. "My chosen one in whom I delight" is a phrase repeated at the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan – it is a phrase applicable to us as well. When we turn to the Father, and seek relationship with him he will "put my Spirit upon him" as the Father did with Jesus in the Jordan – this is his promise. **[In your prayer today, pray for a fuller release of the Holy Spirit in your life. Ask the Father to pour out his Spirit upon you and to show and fill you for the mission and purpose which he has called you.]**

Friday 3/27

Ps 16: 1-6

Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing." As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight. The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips. LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.

Sometimes we can have the attitude that the lot of a Christian is a difficult one, that God asks us impossible things and that we struggle to fulfill his plans for us. The life of a Christian does not promise ease, but it should bring joy. The psalmist speaks of this when he writes, "The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places" – to follow God is a pleasant occupation, the Lord's corral is better than a life of wanton freedom, it is a "delightful inheritance". **[Are you a joyful Christian? What are the things which God has asked you to do which grate against your will? Write**

down the areas that occur to you in which you follow a particular road, way of speaking, or course because God has marked it for you. Try and be joyful about the lines within which God has placed your life. Thank him for his guidance.]

Saturday 3/28

Ps 16:7-11

I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

This psalm is also a prophetic psalm about Jesus - its fulfillment is in Acts 2. The presence of the Lord is the fullness of our joy, but this comes to fulfillment only in the resurrection of Christ. Our joy in God, is Jesus' resurrection joy that he shares with us – this is where our hope lies, and this is where our joy comes from. **[Review the past week. Have you experienced joy in following Jesus, in sacrificing things for him, in seeking to display your faith through actions and words? Ask God to give you the joy of the resurrection of Christ.]**

Week Six

- **“Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today”**

Sunday 3/29

Jn. 11:22-27

But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

Martha is a great example to us of how a practical person can have faith. She is one of the characters in the bible who struggles to see the heavenly realities which are playing out around her, concerned with what she is doing in the day to day world rather than the spiritual one. Even after her great confession of faith, she tells Jesus that her brother “will smell” if he opens the tomb! The strength of Martha’s belief, however, is shown in her words to Jesus – *I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask*. Although her brother is dead, she has the faith to believe that his life is not over, and the perception to see that this is connected with Jesus – *the Son of God who was to come into the world*. Do we see the heavenly realities which are going on around us as we live and work in the practical world? Are we ready to say with Martha “*I believe*”? **[Where is your faith weak? Are the areas in your life into which you do not see with spiritual eyes, the practical things that “just need to get done”? Write some of these areas into your journal and make a concerted effort this week to have Jesus be Lord of the practical, as well as the spiritual.]**

Monday 3/30

Is 43:16-21

This is what the LORD says— he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland. The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the desert and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.

Isaiah speaks of the deliverance of Israel from Babylon as a new Exodus, a new work of God for his people. In the same way, the new Exodus through Christ is an even greater work of God for his people, prefigured by the Exodus of old. **[How has Christ saved you from sin in your life? What are the areas which you used to struggle in which he has freed you from? Take some time today to review your walk with God – thank him for the growth you see in areas in which you used to struggle. Pray for his deliverance in areas you still find a challenge.]**

Tuesday 3/31

Jer 31:31-34

"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Jeremiah prophesies about the time when the people of Israel will no longer need written tablets of stone on which to see the instrument of their deliverance – the law – but when it will be inscribed on their own hearts. God writes his new covenant of love with us through the sacrifice of Christ – but we have to be ready to receive it, we must present ourselves willingly to God so that he might write “*my law in their minds and write it on their hearts*”. Are you willing? **[Take some time today in your prayer time to think about the coming feast of Easter, are you ready to receive the Lord Jesus into your heart afresh? How can you present your mind and heart to the Lord in a more pure way?]**

Wednesday 4/1

Ex 12:12-14

"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. "This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD -a lasting ordinance.

The people of Israel were deeply conscious of their sin and the position they were in before almighty God – they feared even to speak his name because it was so holy and they were so aware of their own unholiness. The Exodus and the feast of Passover was so important to the people of Israel because it confirmed to them the forgiveness of their sin, by a just God. The placing of the blood on the door was a sign of hope for them; hope that although they deserved death for their sins, God would pass over them – because he had chosen them. They were for this reason his “chosen people” the ones he chose to pass over, rather than destroy. **[In your prayer today, thank God for his “choice” of you – remember that we do not deserve his forgiveness but that he chooses to bestow it upon us anyway. Thank him for his incredible gift.]**

Thursday 4/2

Ex 14:13-14

Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

Moses tells the people, “*The Egyptians you see today you will never see again*”. When God forgives us our sins, he operates in the same way – we need never see them again, they are washed away in the blood of the sacrifice of the lamb. The story of the Exodus is so important to us as Christians, not only because it teaches us how God relates to us in an analogous way, but because it shows how God relates to our sin also – he fights it, and he defeats it. He engages in spiritual warfare for our sake, on our behalf, *The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still*. **[Read the whole story of the Passover and deliverance from Egypt in your prayer time today (Ex 12-14). Think of your own life and insert into the story the places where God has fought for you and defeated the sin in your life. Pray through the story as a way to finish the meditation.]**

Friday 4/3

Ps 105:5-7

Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced, O descendants of Abraham his servant, O sons of Jacob, his chosen ones. He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth.

We are called to remember (and live by) God’s great deeds, both the Exodus from Egypt, but even more so the death and resurrection of Christ. We should take time, as the scriptures remind us, to remember the deeds which God has done for us, and the path on which he has led us – only in reflecting on his saving power in times past

will we build our faith for trials to come and be secure in our knowledge of his hand in our future. **[Review the past week. How have you felt God leading you and prompting you through these meditations? Are you more aware of his saving power and his hand in your life than before? Pray through any areas which may have come up throughout the week and make a new commitment to spend time with God in the final week before the feast of Easter.]**

Week Seven

- ***“the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all”***

Saturday 4/4

Luke 20:9-18

He went on to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out. "Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.' "But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. 'This is the heir,' they said. 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When the people heard this, they said, "May this never be!" Jesus looked directly at them and asked, "Then what is the meaning of that which is written: " 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone'? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."

The parable of the wicked tenants is an analogy about the people of Israel and their treatment of the prophets, and finally, Jesus –the son of God. Our initial response can be similar to that of the people in the gospel – “*may this never be!*” The workers in the vineyard however, are all of us as well as the people of Israel – we are the ones who put the Son of God to death. The capstone of which Jesus speaks, is himself. We must see that our sin has us “*broken to pieces*” for because of this we require him to come and save us. **[This week will be a series of meditations based upon the person of Jesus, the righteous and humble servant of God who, though innocent, was put to death that he might save us from our sins. Take time today to think upon Jesus’ words – do you see yourself “broken to pieces”? Pray that God would show you your brokenness this week – so that he would come and heal you afresh through the sacrifice of his son.]**

Sunday 4/5

Matt 21:1-17

...The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!" When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."...

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was marked by two things – his reception by the people of the town, and his rejection by the leaders. As he drives out the money changers and the temple sellers Jesus shows in action the new covenant which he will bring in fulfillment of the old - where there will be no mediator between God and man but himself, no need to change our currency to "temple money" to pay what God is owed but all covered by his sacrifice. What is the response on our lips when God calls on us? Do we recognize him as the one "*who comes in the name of the Lord*" or do we wrap him up in rules and outward observances? Is Jesus central to our faith? **[Our natural tendency as human beings is to be practical; this affects all of our life, including our faith. How is your faith based upon outward observance rather than real faith in Jesus? What can you change in this area to be more open to him? Write in your journal three tangible ways in which you can emulate the people in the crowd more than the leaders of the Jews.]**

Monday 4/6

Phil 2:5-11

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Christian life is summed up in this first sentence, "*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus*". Jesus' attitude was humility – obedience to the Father's will. Humility really means, having a right view of ourselves and our relation to God – knowing where he is and what our relation to him is. **[Look for an opportunity today to be humble. Seek for something practical which you can do to place someone else in a higher place, allow what you feel to be an insult or a slight in speech regarding yourself to pass unremarked, or take the opportunity to build up another in speech rather than yourself. As your action reminds you, thank God for his humility in taking on human form.]**

Tuesday 4/7

Is. 50: 5-9

The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back. I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame. He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who is he that will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up.

Isaiah recounts the suffering of the Lord's chosen, who is accused, beaten and humiliated by his tormentors. The prophet however, is absolutely certain that the Lord God will be just to him – "*He who vindicates me is near*". How do we react to challenge, oppression and suffering? Do we instantly seek to justify ourselves, or do we wait meekly and allow the Lord to bring our vindication? Do we know that "*Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced*"? **[In your prayer today, take some time to pray through the passage of the suffering servant. Search for circumstances, incidents in your life where you still hold on to bad feelings, grudges or unforgiven relationships. Offer these things to God and ask for his spirit of meekness in dealing with them. Pray that his vindication will be all your desire.]**

Wednesday 4/8

Is 53:3-6

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all

The suffering of the servant of the Lord is in place of the punishment due to us for sin. The mystery of the Easter story is not that God "accepted" the sacrifice of Jesus instead of payment from us, but that God would allow *himself* to be put to death, that the almighty, eternal God became sin for us. Amen. **[Although Jesus has paid the price for our salvation, there is still sin and suffering in the world, because this is not our final home – we will not be wholly at peace until we go to be with God. Until that time, Jesus life is our model and image – we should seek to emulate him in everything. Meditate on the willingness of Jesus to become sin for us, to suffer for our sake. Are you willing to bear sorrow for God? How might the Lord be asking you to embrace suffering? Ask God to make you more willing to suffer for him.]**

Thursday 4/9

Is 53:7-12

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes ^[c] his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The suffering of the servant of the Lord is in place of the punishment due to us for sin. The mystery of the Easter story is not that God “accepted” the sacrifice of Jesus instead of payment from us, but that God would allow *himself* to be put to death, that the almighty, eternal God became sin for us. **[Take a time of thanksgiving in your prayer time today to thank God for his amazing sacrifice. Think of the sin in the world – war, famine, death and misery. Thank God that his sacrifice is enough to cover all of it.]**

Friday 4/10

Ps 22:1-21

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent. Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel. In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed. But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him." Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God. Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me;

a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. But you, O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me. Deliver my life from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

Psalm 22 is a prophetic psalm. It speaks about the trial and suffering of Jesus. The first part of the psalm is desolate – the psalmist speaks as one utterly lost, completely abandoned and with no hope. It even appears to mock the intervention of God – “*He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue him*” – the strength of sin to divide us from God is apparent. Dogs, bulls and roaring lions are envisioned as surrounding the psalmist – threatening his life. This is what sin does to us. It surrounds us, attacks us, and threatens our life, our eternal life. **[It is right to consider sin. It is appropriate to recognize the state in which we appear to God. It is of benefit to us to realize what we are, to experience sorrow for the state in which we find ourselves. In your prayer today, grieve. Look back through your notes from this time, think again of those things which you know separate you from God – cry out to the Lord, proclaiming him as your only salvation from sin.]**

Saturday 4/11

Ps 22:22-31

I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you. You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help. From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows. The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the LORD will praise him - may your hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations. All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him— those who cannot keep themselves alive. Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn—for he has done it.

The second half of Psalm 22 prophesies about the victory of Jesus sacrifice. It prophesies directly to us. We are those to whom the righteousness of the Lord will be proclaimed. We are “*people yet unborn*”. We, having mourned, should now rejoice, this greatest event in our history, this defeat of sin, this promise of everlasting life is now ours “*for he has done it*”. **[Review the past season of the 40 days. Look through your notes. How have you experienced the meditations? What has the Lord been saying to you through them? Where are the main areas you see growth and those which still need improvement? Take time today to thank God for what you have received through this season and rejoice in his saving sacrifice.]**

