



*There*

*Will Be*

*Joy*

Lenten  
Meditations

Asbury UMC  
Lafayette, LA

# The Season of Lent

The English word “Lent” is a shortened form of the Old English word “lencten,” meaning “spring season.” Lent is traditionally described as lasting forty days, in commemoration of the forty days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness before beginning his earthly ministry. Sundays are excluded when counting the forty days of Lent because they are each considered “little Easters.” The season of Lent was originally established in the fourth century to prepare those who were to be baptized on Easter Sunday. It was a time of study and examination to deepen their understanding of their baptismal vows. Today it continues to be a meaningful time of preparation and renewal, a time for self-examination, acts of mercy and intentional spiritual practices such as daily prayer and bible readings, as we anticipate the coming joy of Easter.

## How To Use This Resource

This booklet is designed to be used for individual devotional time or as a discussion guide for small groups interested in following a six-week Lenten practice.

The Lectionary Scripture Readings for the season of Lent (Year B) are listed on page 2. You may read all the passages listed for a particular week or choose to focus on one passage which you return to throughout the week.

Beginning on page 3, you will find writings, quotes and scriptures divided into six chapters, one for each week of Lent. Each chapter focuses on one aspect of Jesus’ self-giving, sacrificial acts on our behalf.

May the daily reading of these reflections bring you a sense of renewal, hope and joy.

## Small Group Discussion Guide

1. From this week’s scripture readings, was there a verse or passage which particularly caught your attention? What has come to mind as you have reflected on these words?
2. From this week’s collected writings, which reading or quote stood out for you? What thoughts have come to mind?
3. How can we pray for you this week?

# Scripture Readings for Lent

## Revised Common Lectionary - Year B

### First Sunday in Lent

<b>First Reading</b>	<b>Psalm</b>	<b>Second Reading</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
Genesis 9:8-17	Psalms 25:1-10	1 Peter 3:18-22	Mark 1:9-15

### Second Sunday in Lent

<b>First Reading</b>	<b>Psalm</b>	<b>Second Reading</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
Genesis 17:1-7, 15-1	Psalms 22:23-31	Romans 4:13-25	Mark 8:31-38

### Third Sunday in Lent

<b>First Reading</b>	<b>Psalm</b>	<b>Second Reading</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
Exodus 20:1-17	Psalms 19	I Corinthians 1:18-25	John 2:13-22

### Fourth Sunday in Lent

<b>First Reading</b>	<b>Psalm</b>	<b>Second Reading</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
Numbers 21:4-9	Psalms 107:1-3, 17-22	Ephesians 2:1-10	John 3:14-21

### Fifth Sunday in Lent

<b>First Reading</b>	<b>Psalm</b>	<b>Second Reading</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
Jeremiah 31:31-34	Psalms 51:1-12	Hebrews 5:5-10	John 12:20-33

### Palm Sunday

<b>First Reading</b>	<b>Psalm</b>	<b>Second Reading</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
Mark 11:1-11	Psalms 118:1-2, 19-29	Philippians 2:5-11	Mark 14:1– 15:47

WEEK ONE

# Jesus Christ - God With Us

*“Have I been so long with you  
and yet you have not come to know me, Philip?  
He who has seen me has seen  
the Father.”*

John 14:8-9

What Jesus introduced was an entirely new way of looking at God.

God does not hate sinners.

He loves them with boundless and unconditional self-giving love.

God’s love is perfect:

it is all-encompassing, whole, complete, life-giving,  
life-sustaining, life-enhancing, and life-affirming for all humankind.

Nowhere do we see God’s radical love  
for the entire world expressed as clearly as on the Cross.

In Jesus’ torturous and scandalous death,  
we see a God who would rather be destroyed by sinners  
than destroy sinners, who would rather die  
at the hands of enemies than kill enemies.

C. S. Cowles: *Who is God? His Character Revealed in the Christ*

THIS HAS BEEN THE FATHER’S WORK  
FROM THE BEGINNING -  
TO BRING US INTO THE HOME OF HIS HEART.

George MacDonald

*“For I have come down from heaven,  
not to do my own will,  
but the will of him who sent me.  
For this is the will of the Father,  
that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in him,  
may have eternal life.”*

John 6:38, 40

You have tried to find God.

But every way you have taken has turned into a blind alley.  
Time and again you were sure you had found the way, the truth,  
the life, only to be disappointed, frustrated, deceived.

And you have tried to be good, to do right.

But the good you would do, you have not done.

Even your best-intentioned efforts have turned out wrong.  
You have yielded to temptation in spite of your efforts to resist.

Everywhere you turn, you are convinced that you are  
no good, worthless, without hope.

A friend comes to you. That friend finds you where you are.

He accepts you, welcomes you, embraces you.

He reassures you and urges you to go on.

Finally, he takes your punishment, pays your debt,  
dies on your behalf.

You do not have to be told,

“This is the ultimate act of self-giving love.”

You know.

William Willimon: *Sunday Dinner: The Lord's Supper and the Christian Life*

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,  
that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.  
For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world,  
but that the world should be saved through him.”*

John 3:16-17

We have seen God's self-giving love in Jesus Christ  
when “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (John 1:14a)

In Christ, God's love was made visible.

God knows that we can give nothing to him,  
so God gives to us.

God knows that we have failed to find him,  
so God finds us.

God knows that we cannot, on our own, return to him,  
so God turns to us.

William Willimon: *Sunday Dinner: The Lord's Supper and the Christian Life*

## WEEK TWO

# Jesus Christ - Our Ransom

*Jesus said,*

*"The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,  
and to give his life a ransom for many."*

Mark 10:45

The God who promised, through the great Old Testament prophets,  
to visit and redeem his people, did precisely that  
through coming to dwell among us in Jesus.  
God entered into our situation in order to transform it.  
Far from demanding that we raise ourselves to heaven,  
he came down from heaven in order to bring us there himself.

Alister McGrath: *Redemption*

*You were ransomed  
from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors,  
not with perishable things like silver or gold,  
but with the precious blood of Christ,  
like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.  
Through him you have come to trust in God,  
who raised him from the dead and gave him glory,  
so that your faith and hope are set on God.*

I Peter 1:18-19, 21

Ransom - what is the meaning for us? Consider this image:  
there are some people in captivity and they cannot break free.  
Unless someone is able to liberate them, they will remain trapped.

A ransom price is demanded by their captors.

The greater the value of those captured,  
the greater the value of the ransom demanded.

The Christian Gospel is clear on this point:  
God showed the amazing depth of his love for us by paying  
an astonishing, unsurpassable ransom for each of us.

Alister McGrath: *Redemption*

*Those who passed by derided him, saying,  
“Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days,  
save yourself and come down from the cross!”*

*In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes,  
were also mocking him, saying,*

*“Come down from the cross and save yourself!”* (Mark 15: 29-31)

Here is the point:

the crowds called upon Christ

to come down from the cross and save himself.

But he chose not to. He stayed there and saved us instead.

Alister McGrath: *Redemption*

I can do nothing to earn my salvation.

My redemption is a pure gift of grace,

a gift offered to me without qualification or reservation.

I am God’s beloved, embraced in God’s love for now and eternity.

All words are inadequate to describe

the extravagance of this wondrous gift of salvation.

Rueben Job: *A Guide to Prayer for All God’s People*

*God our Savior desires everyone to be saved  
and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

*For there is one God;*

*there is also one Mediator between God and humankind,*

*Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all.*

I Timothy 2:3-6

Hanging from the cross,

Jesus first speaks to his Father about forgiveness,

quotes from Psalm 22, addresses his mother,

addresses the thief on the cross,

then makes his first self-referential remark,

***“I thirst.”***

These stark words force us to reckon with

the reality that Jesus is in the flesh.

His suffering is real.

William Willimon: *Thank God It’s Friday*

WEEK THREE  
Jesus Christ - Our Restoration

*Jesus said,  
"Greater love has no man than this,  
that he lay down his life for his friends."*

John 15:13

"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

These are Jesus' first words from the cross.

Forgiveness is the first step,  
the bridge toward us that only God could build.

The first word into our darkness is,

"Father, forgive."

On the cross, before he asks anything for himself,  
he asks something for us:

"Father, forgive them."

What wondrous love is this,

O my soul, O my soul...

William Willimon: *Thank God It's Friday*

REDEMPTION, IN ITS DEEPEST SENSE,  
IS ABOUT BEING ACCEPTED AS WE ARE,  
WHILE BEING TRANSFORMED  
INTO WHAT WE ARE MEANT TO BE.

Alister McGrath

Our sinful, restricted self is uncomfortable  
and fights being revealed.

But deeper within us is the longing for God,  
placed within our true self by God.

So we come to God as we are:

caught by sin and longing for God;

and we are always met by God's grace and mercy.

Wendy Miller: *Learning to Listen*



*“But while he was still far off,  
his father saw him and was filled with compassion;  
he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.”* (Luke 15:20)

It is so easy to read this familiar passage  
without noticing the critical point.  
How could the father have seen the returning son  
when he was still some distance away?  
Surely the father would have been busy with the affairs of his estate.

Then, gradually, we realize the truth -  
*the father has been waiting.*  
He has been watching from the flat roof of his house,  
in order to be able to see farther,  
awaiting the return of his son from the far country  
of the son’s self-imposed exile.

This parable came from the lips of Jesus,  
a poignant description of his Father,  
our Father.

Alister McGrath: *Redemption*

THE GREAT THING TO REMEMBER IS THAT  
THOUGH OUR FEELINGS COME AND GO,  
HIS LOVE FOR US DOES NOT.

C. S. Lewis

The love of God is greater than our guilt, our doubts, our shame.

In the hour when you feel yourself sinking,  
stay before the cross.

The love of God that gave all for you  
will not let you go.

When nothing else could help,  
love lifted me.

Gary D. Stratman

*“Just as the Father has loved me,  
I have also loved you;  
abide in my love.”*

John 15:9

WEEK FOUR  
Jesus Christ - Crucified Love

*Jesus said,  
"He who has seen me has seen the Father."*

John 14:9

Christians believe that in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have seen as much of God as we ever hope to see.

Jesus Christ is the full, perfect, sufficient revelation of who God is and what God does.

Everything we believe about God flows from what we've seen of God in Jesus Christ.

William Willimon: *This We Believe: The Core of Wesleyan Faith and Practice*

*For God so loved the world,  
that he gave his only begotten Son,  
that whoever believes in him  
should not perish, but have everlasting life.  
For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world,  
but that the world should be saved through him.*

John 3:16-17

We are able to love God boldly because, in Christ, God has first boldly loved us.

We need not spend our lives in anxiety-ridden worry about just where we stand with God.

We know whose we are.

We believe that God does not let go of those lives for which God, in Christ, has so dearly paid.

William Willimon: *This We Believe: The Core of Wesleyan Faith and Practice*

AMAZING LOVE!  
HOW CAN IT BE THAT THOU, MY GOD,  
SHOULD DIE FOR ME?

Charles Wesley

*By this the love of God was manifested to us,  
that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world  
so that we might live through him.*

*In this is love,  
not that we loved God, but that he loved us  
and sent his Son to be the complete payment for our sins.*

I John 4:9-10

ONLY THE POWER THAT MAKES A WORLD  
CAN MAKE A CHRISTIAN.

Rev. John Wesley

I am not skilled to understand  
What God hath willed, what God hath planned;  
I only know at his right hand  
Stands One who is my Savior.

I take him at his word and deed:  
"Christ died to save me," this I read;  
And in my heart I find a need  
Of him to be my Savior.

That he should leave his place on high  
And come for sinful man to die,  
You count it strange? So once did I  
Before I knew my Savior.

And O that he fulfilled may see  
The workings of his soul in me,  
And with his work contented be,  
As I with my dear Savior!

Yes, living, dying, let me bring  
My strength, my solace, from this Spring,  
That he who lives to be my King  
Once died to be my Savior!

Dora Greenwell (1821-1882)

WEEK FIVE  
Jesus Christ - Savior

*"I have come to seek and to save that which was lost."*

Matthew 18:1

It is only when we see ourselves as we really are that we realize our need for transformation and our own inability to bring this about.

Holy Scripture and Christian experience offer us these images to shape our thinking:

We are lost;

***Christ has come*** to find us.

We are ill;

***Christ has come*** to bind our wounds.

We cannot see;

***Christ has come*** to illuminate our minds and the path ahead of us.

We are alone;

***Christ has come*** to accompany us and guide us, as our Shepherd.

We are guilty;

***Christ has come*** to purge that guilt and renew us morally.

We are held captive by sin and our mortality;

***Christ has come*** to break their power and set us free.

Alister McGrath: *Redemption*

*Joyfully give thanks to the Father,  
who has enabled us to share in the inheritance  
of the saints in the light.*

*He has rescued us from the power of darkness  
and transferred us into the kingdom*

*of his beloved Son,  
in whom we have redemption,  
the forgiveness of sins.*

Colossians 1:12-13

God loves sinners -  
we must never lose sight of this truth.  
We do not need to be perfect to be loved by God.  
Yet God's gracious acceptance leads to personal transformation.

No one who knows God's love  
is left unchanged by it.  
We are daring to speak of a love  
that cannot leave broken, wounded people as they are,  
but wants to heal them,  
to enable them to become something still better.

That is what redemption encompasses:  
an acceptance of what we are  
on account of Christ  
and the beginning of the process  
of healing and restoration.

Alister McGrath: *Redemption*

*God was in Christ  
reconciling the world to himself,  
not counting our trespasses against us.  
God made him who knew no sin  
to be sin on our behalf,  
that we might become the righteousness of God in him.*

II Corinthians 5:19, 21

Jesus said,  
"Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin...  
If the Son makes you free,  
you will be free indeed." (John 8:34, 36)  
Jesus sets us free from the tyranny of sin  
to become the unique persons  
we were created to be.

C. S. Cowles: *Who Is God? His Character Revealed in the Christ*

I WOULD RATHER WALK WITH GOD IN THE DARK  
THAN GO ALONE IN THE LIGHT.

Mary Gardiner Brainard

# WEEK SIX

## Jesus Christ - Sustaining Presence

*Jesus said,  
"Today you will be with me in Paradise."*

Luke 23:43

This brief dialogue between Jesus and the criminal on the cross  
holds out the promise that,  
even in the worst situations of this life,  
it is possible to be with Jesus, here, now.

Paradise is whenever, wherever you are with Jesus.  
On the basis of this story of Jesus and the thief on the cross,  
the Christian faith is our participation,  
now, today in paradise.

It is a promise of what Christ can be for us here and now:  
life with the living God, here, now.

William Willimon: *Thank God It's Friday*

ALL THE WAY TO HEAVEN  
IS HEAVEN.

Catherine of Siena

*We have beheld and bear witness that  
the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.  
Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God,  
God abides in him and  
he is in God.*

I John 4:14-15

The only thing that matters is  
that wherever we go, wherever we grow,  
God undergirds us.  
God goes with us, God goes ahead of us,  
God will be there to welcome us!

Flora Slosson Wuellner

After the crucifixion, the disciples, victims of their fear,  
were behind closed and locked doors when Jesus appeared to them.

Once the reality of his living presence was clear,  
their fears gave way to courage.

Ever since Jesus appeared to the disciples,  
Christians have discovered that there is no need to fear  
when one is in the presence of God.

To walk with God is to be reassured of direction,  
guidance, and strength for our daily journey.  
This does not mean that we will be spared life's difficulty.

It does mean that we will never be alone.  
It means we will know the joy and tranquility of living  
in the presence of God in every circumstance of life.

Reuben Job: *A Guide to Prayer for All God's People*

*"I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate,  
to be with you forever.*

*The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name,  
will teach you everything,*

*and remind you of all that I have said to you.*

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.*

John 14:16, 26-27

HE DEPARTED FROM OUR EYES  
THAT WE SHOULD RETURN TO OUR HEARTS  
AND FIND HIM THERE.

St. Augustine

We are able to follow Jesus closely, side by side,  
when we choose to live actively aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

It is the power of the Holy Spirit that makes Jesus present to us now.

It is the power of the Holy Spirit that channels everything  
to us that Jesus desires for us to know.

The disciples may have had the privilege of living in the presence of Jesus;  
but we have the privilege of having the presence of Jesus living in us.

Kimberly Dunnam Reisman: *Following At a Distance*

# Notes



# Notes

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

*John 3:16*