



RETURN &  
REMAIN

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
**2026 LENT DEVOTIONAL**



## Remember You Are Dust

**Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2026**

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:19; Psalm 90:12

**Reflection:** Lent begins low to the ground. “From dust you came, and to dust you shall return.” These words are not meant to shame us but to steady us. In a culture that prizes achievement, control, and permanence, Scripture reminds us that we are finite. Our lives are fragile. Our breath is borrowed. We are creatures, not creators.

Yet this truth, while humbling, is not hopeless. Dust in the hands of God is not discarded. In Genesis, God forms humanity from dust and breathes into it the breath of life. The reminder of our mortality is not meant to diminish our worth; it is meant to return us to dependence. When we forget we are dust, we begin to live anxiously — grasping for security, building identities that must be defended, trying to hold together what was never ours to sustain.

Moses prays, “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” To number our days is to live with clarity. It refines our priorities. It loosens our grip on trivial pursuits. It draws our attention toward what endures.

Lent begins in humility because resurrection life grows best in surrendered soil.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Sit quietly with your hands open. Pray slowly: “Lord, I am dust, sustained by Your mercy. Teach me to live wisely and humbly before You.” Remain in silence for several minutes, aware of each breath as a gift.



## Search Me, O God

Thursday, February 19, 2026

**Scripture:** Psalm 139:23–24

**Reflection:** David’s prayer is courageous: “Search me, O God, and know my heart.” It is one thing to ask God to bless us, protect us, or guide us. It is another thing entirely to invite Him into the hidden corners of our inner life. To ask God to search us is to relinquish control over what is revealed.

The most destructive sins are rarely the obvious ones. They are the subtle attachments we protect: the need for approval, the quiet resentment, the fear of losing control, the pride that hides behind spiritual maturity. Lent invites examination not as an exercise in self-condemnation but as an act of trust. We believe that the God who searches is the same God who restores.

David assumes there may be “offensive ways” in him that he cannot see. That humility is essential for growth. We cannot surrender what we refuse to acknowledge. When God reveals something within us, it is not to humiliate us but to lead us “in the way everlasting.”

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Pray, “Lord, show me what I cannot see.” Sit quietly and allow thoughts, patterns, or attitudes to surface. Write them down without defensiveness. End by praying, “Lead me in Your everlasting way.”



## Rend Your Heart

Friday, February 20, 2026

**Scripture:** Joel 2:12-13

**Reflection:** In the ancient world, tearing one's garments was a public display of grief or repentance. Yet through the prophet Joel, God says, "Rend your heart and not your garments." The outward sign without inward surrender is hollow. God is not interested in spiritual performance. He desires the heart.

It is possible to participate in religious activity while remaining emotionally guarded. We can give up comforts for Lent and still cling tightly to pride. We can attend services and still resist transformation. The tearing of the heart is more painful than the tearing of cloth because it involves releasing defenses and admitting our need.

But Joel anchors this call to repentance in the character of God: "For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love." We do not return to a harsh taskmaster. We return to mercy.

True repentance is not fueled by fear but by trust in God's goodness. The heart that breaks open before Him is the heart He restores.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Ask, "Where am I resisting surrender?" Bring that area before God and pray, "Soften my heart." If you are fasting from something this season, connect that fast intentionally to this deeper surrender.



## Led into the Wilderness

**Saturday, February 21, 2026**

**Scripture:** Luke 4:1-13

**Reflection:** Luke tells us that Jesus was “led by the Spirit into the wilderness.” The wilderness is not accidental. It is part of God’s forming work. In that barren place, Jesus faces temptation that cuts to the core of identity and mission: prove Yourself, secure comfort, grasp power.

The wilderness strips away distraction. It exposes what sustains us. Hunger sharpens temptation. Silence amplifies inner voices. Yet Jesus responds not with panic, but with Scripture. He stands on truth rather than impulse.

We often assume that difficult seasons mean God has abandoned us. Yet Scripture shows that the wilderness can be the place of preparation. It is where false dependencies are exposed, and identity is clarified.

Lent intentionally creates smaller wilderness spaces like silence, fasting, and restraint, so that we may confront what governs us before it quietly rules us.

If you find yourself in a season that feels dry or disorienting, do not assume it is purposeless. The Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness also sustained Him there.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Set aside fifteen minutes today without devices or noise. Ask, “What am I tempted to grasp or prove?” Invite God to strengthen your identity in Him.



## Come to Me

**Sunday, February 22, 2026**

**Scripture:** Matthew 11:28–30

**Reflection:** Jesus' invitation is both tender and direct: "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." In the middle of a season that emphasizes reflection, repentance, and discipline, it is possible to drift into quiet striving. We can begin to measure ourselves by how well we are fasting, how deeply we are praying, or how honestly we are examining our hearts. But Lent was never meant to become another arena for spiritual self-reliance. It is meant to lead us into deeper dependence.

Jesus does not call the impressive, the disciplined, or the put-together. He calls the weary. He calls those who feel the weight of responsibility, expectation, regret, and quiet exhaustion. The rest He offers is not a reward for effort but a gift received through closeness. To take His yoke upon us is not to add another burden; it is to exchange isolated striving for shared obedience. His yoke is "easy" and His burden "light" not because discipleship lacks seriousness, but because it is carried with Him.

Sunday interrupts the illusion that everything depends on us. It reminds us that God remains faithful even when we pause. Rest becomes an act of trust – trust that we are sustained by grace, not by constant output. The invitation is not to perform better or try harder, but simply to come. To draw near. To remain. In coming to Him, we discover that the One who calls us is also the One who carries us.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Today, practice intentional rest. Take a slow walk or sit quietly without multitasking. Pray slowly, "I receive Your rest," and allow yourself to remain in His presence without agenda.



## **Create in Me a Clean Heart**

**Monday, February 23, 2026**

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:10–12

**Reflection:** After his sin with Bathsheba, David does not ask for minor improvement. He asks: “Create in me a clean heart, O God.” The Hebrew word used here is the same word found in Genesis 1, describing God’s creative power. David recognizes that transformation is not self-generated. It is God’s work.

Shame tempts us to hide. David does the opposite. He moves toward God in confession. He trusts that mercy is greater than his failure. He longs not only for forgiveness, but for renewal — for joy restored.

Repentance is often misunderstood as grim and joyless. Yet David’s prayer reveals something deeper: sin robs us of joy; restoration returns it. The clean heart he desires is not sterile perfection but renewed intimacy.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Pray Psalm 51:10 slowly three times. After each repetition, pause. Ask God to restore joy where sin or distraction has dulled it.



## Return to Your First Love

**Tuesday, February 24, 2026**

**Scripture:** Revelation 2:4–5

**Reflection:** The church in Ephesus is commended for perseverance and doctrinal faithfulness. Yet Jesus says, “You have forsaken the love you had at first.” It is possible for us to serve faithfully while our affection quietly fades. Love rarely disappears suddenly. It drifts when attention drifts. Busyness can crowd out intimacy. Familiarity can dull wonder.

Jesus does not threaten abandonment; He invites remembrance. “Consider how far you have fallen... repent and do the things you did at first.” The path back to love often involves simple practices like lingering in prayer, attentive worship, and gratitude for grace.

Lent is not only about removing sin; it is about rekindling affection. The goal is not merely moral improvement but renewed love.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Reflect on a season when your love for Christ felt vibrant. What marked it? Thank Him for that season and ask Him to renew your affection today.



## Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

**Wednesday, February 25, 2026**

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:9–13

**Reflection:** When Jesus teaches His disciples to pray, He gives them a rhythm of dependence. “Give us this day our daily bread.” It is a simple request, but it challenges our deepest instincts. We prefer guarantees. We want stored provision, secured futures, and clear plans. Yet Jesus forms His followers around daily trust.

The language of “daily bread” echoes Israel’s experience in the wilderness, where manna was given one day at a time. When they tried to hoard it, it spoiled. God was teaching them that survival did not depend on their ability to accumulate, but on His faithfulness to provide. Dependence is not weakness; it is the posture of sons and daughters.

We often pray for outcomes far ahead of us. But Jesus directs our attention to today. Grace is portioned according to need. Strength is given for present obedience. Tomorrow’s worries do not yet require tomorrow’s grace.

Lent recalibrates our cravings. As we fast and resist excess, we discover how tightly we cling to control. Daily bread invites us to unclench our fists and receive life as a gift.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Pray the Lord’s Prayer slowly. When you reach “daily bread,” name one specific need for today and entrust it to God. Resist projecting into tomorrow.



## Not My Will

**Thursday, February 26, 2026**

**Scripture:** Luke 22:39–46

**Reflection:** In Gethsemane, Jesus prays with honesty that unsettles us. “Father, if You are willing, take this cup from Me.” He does not pretend the cross is easy. He does not suppress anguish. Faith does not require emotional denial.

Yet the prayer does not end there. “Yet not My will, but Yours be done.” This is the hinge of trust. Desire is named, but surrender follows. Jesus does not cling to preference; He entrusts Himself to the Father’s wisdom.

We often stop at the first half of the prayer. We tell God what we want changed. Lent invites us into the second half to say, “Your will be done.” This is confidence that the Father sees beyond our limited horizon.

Notice that the cup is not removed. Instead, Jesus is strengthened. Sometimes God answers not by altering the circumstance, but by sustaining obedience within it. Trust grows when we move from control to surrender.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Bring a situation before God that you wish were different. Speak honestly about your desire. Then pray slowly, “Yet not my will, but Yours be done.” Sit in silence and allow trust to deepen.



## Take Up Your Cross Daily

Friday, February 27, 2026

**Scripture:** Luke 9:23

**Reflection:** When Jesus calls His followers to take up their cross daily, He is not inviting mild inconvenience. The cross was an instrument of death. To take it up was to walk toward the surrender of self-rule.

We often prefer a discipleship that adds Jesus to our existing priorities. But Jesus speaks of denial, not self-hatred, but relinquishment of ultimate authority over our own lives. The word daily is important. Cross-bearing is not dramatic once-for-all heroism. It is quiet, consistent yielding.

Each day quietly places before us choices that mirror the shape of the cross. We are invited to choose humility where pride would be easier, forgiveness where resentment feels justified, and obedience where convenience tempts us to drift. These decisions often pass unnoticed by anyone else; they do not draw applause or recognition. Yet it is precisely in these hidden moments that the soul is formed. Over time, these small acts of surrender carve Christ's likeness into us, shaping who we are, becoming far more than any public achievement ever could.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Ask, "Where am I clinging to control?" Identify one concrete act of surrender today and follow through quietly.



## **Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit**

**Saturday, February 28, 2026**

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:3

**Reflection:** “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Poverty of spirit is the recognition that we stand before God with empty hands.

The kingdom is not earned through competence or accumulated virtue. It is received by those who know they cannot secure it themselves. Spiritual pride is subtle. It hides in experience, in knowledge, in the quiet belief that we are more mature than we once were.

Lent strips away illusion. It reminds us that even after years of following Christ, we remain dependent on grace. Poverty of spirit opens the door to mercy because it abandons self-sufficiency. There is freedom in admitting need. We no longer have to defend our image before God. We simply receive. The paradox of the beatitude is that those who acknowledge emptiness discover fullness.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** If you are able, kneel in prayer. Say simply, “I need You.” Remain there longer than feels comfortable, allowing dependence to shape your heart.



## Abide in Me

**Sunday, March 1, 2026**

**Scripture:** John 15:1-5

**Reflection:** Jesus does not command fruitfulness; He commands abiding. “Remain in Me, as I also remain in you.” Branches do not strain to produce fruit; they remain connected to the vine.

Much of our spiritual frustration comes from trying to produce what can only grow. We push for patience, gentleness, love — but apart from abiding, effort becomes exhausting. Abiding requires attentiveness. It is cultivated through prayer, Scripture, silence, and obedience. It is less about intensity and more about consistency.

The Father prunes branches that bear fruit, not to diminish them but to deepen their yield. Pruning feels like loss — habits removed, idols exposed, distractions cut away. Yet pruning is a sign of care. Lent is a season of abiding. It invites us to remain rather than rush, to attach rather than achieve.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Read John 15 slowly, pausing after each verse. Ask God to show you where you have drifted from connection. Pray, “Keep me rooted in You.”



## Where Your Treasure Is

**Monday, March 2, 2026**

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:19–21

**Reflection:** Jesus speaks about treasure not merely to address money, but to expose allegiance. “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Treasure is whatever you rely on for security and identity.

Our emotional reactions often reveal our treasure. What provokes anxiety? What stirs defensiveness? What do we fear losing? These responses uncover where we have invested our hope.

Earthly treasures decay. Reputation shifts. Wealth fluctuates. Comfort disappears. When our hearts are tethered to fragile things, we become fragile with them.

Jesus invites us to store treasure in heaven – to anchor our hope in what cannot erode. This does not mean neglecting responsibility; it means refusing to assign ultimate value to temporary goods. Lent reveals how easily our hearts cling to what will not last.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Examine where most of your emotional energy has gone this week. Ask God to reveal what it says about your treasure. Pray for a heart anchored in Him.



## Forgive as the Lord Forgave You

**Tuesday, March 3, 2026**

**Scripture:** Colossians 3:12–13

**Reflection:** Forgiveness is one of the clearest expressions of trust. Paul roots it in identity: “As God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved... forgive as the Lord forgave you.” We forgive not because others deserve it, but because we have received mercy.

Unforgiveness can feel protective. It convinces us that holding onto resentment preserves justice. Yet resentment quietly reshapes the heart. It narrows compassion. It hardens perception. Forgiveness does not deny harm. It refuses to let harm have the final word. It releases vengeance to God and entrusts justice to His hands.

The measure is sobering: as the Lord forgave you. His forgiveness was costly, undeserved, and complete. When we forgive, we participate in that same redemptive posture. Lent invites us to lay down the weight we have been carrying.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Bring before God the name of someone you struggle to forgive. Pray for them, even if your emotions resist. Ask God to soften your heart toward release.



## Quick to Listen, Slow to Speak

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

**Scripture:** James 1:19–20

**Reflection:** James gives instruction that feels deceptively simple: “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” Yet few disciplines are more revealing than our speech. Words often spill out before reflection has time to intervene. In moments of disagreement, we instinctively defend, clarify, correct, or win.

Listening requires humility because it assumes we do not see the whole picture. It creates space for another person’s experience, perspective, or pain. When we rush to speak, we often speak from insecurity or fear. When we slow down, we allow the Spirit to govern our response.

James links anger and righteousness. “Human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.” This does not mean all anger is sinful. It means reactive anger rarely leads to redemptive outcomes. It is easy to baptize irritation as conviction. Lent invites us to examine the difference.

Speech reveals what fills the heart. If impatience surfaces quickly, something deeper may need tending. If defensiveness rises sharply, perhaps pride has taken root.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Before your next significant conversation, pause and pray, “Lord, slow my speech and steady my heart.” Practice listening without interrupting. Notice what changes when you respond more slowly.



## The Narrow Way

**Thursday, March 5, 2026**

**Scripture:** Matthew 7:13–14

**Reflection:** Jesus describes two roads – one broad and one narrow. The wide road requires little thought. It accommodates whatever we choose to carry. It asks little and promises ease. The narrow road demands intention. It requires discernment about what we bring along.

The narrow way is not about restriction for its own sake. It is about focus. Following Christ often means relinquishing what distracts or divides the heart. It means choosing conviction over convenience, and faithfulness over applause.

We live in a culture that equates freedom with limitless choice. Yet Scripture presents freedom as alignment with truth. Lent sharpens awareness. Where have we subtly widened the path to fit our preferences? Where have we justified compromise because it seemed small or culturally acceptable?

The narrow way does not always feel impressive. It may feel hidden and slow. But it leads toward life that endures.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Ask God to reveal one area where convenience has quietly shaped your decisions. Pray for courage to choose obedience instead, even if it feels countercultural.



## The Potter and the Clay

Friday, March 6, 2026

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 18:1–6

**Reflection:** Jeremiah watches a potter at work. When the vessel becomes marred, the potter reshapes it into something new. The image is both comforting and unsettling. Clay does not direct the potter. It yields.

We prefer growth that feels empowering. Yet spiritual formation often feels like pressure — circumstances that stretch us, confront our impatience, and expose our pride. The hands of the potter press and smooth, sometimes dismantling what we thought was finished.

God does not discard the marred vessel. He reforms it. Our failures do not disqualify us from His work; they become part of it. To be clay is to trust that the hands shaping us are good. It is to relinquish the illusion that we can sculpt ourselves into holiness. Lent invites surrender to the slow, patient craftsmanship of God.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Pray, “Lord, shape me as You see fit.” Reflect on an area of discomfort in your life. Consider whether it may be part of God’s forming work.



## When You Fast

**Saturday, March 7, 2026**

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:16–18

**Reflection:** Jesus assumes His followers will fast. He does not treat it as exceptional, but as formative.

When something familiar is removed, like food, media, or comfort, deeper cravings surface. Irritation may rise. Distraction may intensify. Fasting exposes dependency. It reveals how easily we seek relief in habits rather than in God. The absence created by fasting is meant to become space for communion. Hunger becomes a reminder to pray. Longing becomes a pathway to worship.

In Scripture, fasting often accompanies repentance, clarity, or preparation. It quiets noise so that the voice of God can be heard more clearly. Lent invites intentional restraint so that desire may be redirected. The body learns what the heart must remember: we do not live by bread alone.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** If you are fasting from something this season, connect it explicitly to prayer today. When the desire surfaces, turn it into a brief prayer: “You are enough.”



## **My Grace Is Sufficient**

**Sunday, March 8, 2026**

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 12:9

**Reflection:** Paul pleads with God to remove his “thorn in the flesh.” Instead of relief, he receives assurance: “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.”

We often interpret weakness as failure. Yet God sees it as a place where dependence replaces self-reliance. Paul learns not merely to tolerate weakness, but to boast in it, because it becomes the stage on which Christ’s power rests. Grace does not always eliminate hardship. It sustains faith within it.

Lent has likely revealed areas of weakness in you – impatience, distraction, pride, and fear. These exposures are not signs of defeat. They are invitations to lean more deeply into grace. You do not need to present yourself as strong before God. You need to present yourself as available.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Name an area of weakness in prayer. Instead of asking for immediate removal, pray, “Let Your power rest on me here.” Sit in dependence.



## The Fruit of the Spirit

**Monday, March 9, 2026**

**Scripture:** Galatians 5:22–23

**Reflection:** Paul describes the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. These qualities are not achieved through force of will. They grow as a result of abiding in the Spirit.

Fruit grows slowly and quietly. It requires time, nourishment, and pruning. We often wish for immediate transformation. We want patience without provocation, gentleness without testing. Yet fruit develops precisely in the presence of difficulty.

When impatience surfaces, it reveals the need for deeper rooting. When self-control falters, it reveals where desire has outrun dependence. The Spirit's work is gradual but faithful. He reshapes reactions, softens impulses, and aligns desires with Christ.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Ask the Spirit to cultivate one specific fruit in you this week. Notice opportunities that stretch that very quality, and respond intentionally.



## Love the Lord Your God

**Tuesday, March 10, 2026**

**Scripture:** Mark 12:29–31

**Reflection:** When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus centers everything on our love for God and love for neighbor. To love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength is to allow Him to become the organizing center of your life.

Our love orders desire. It shapes priorities. It directs time and attention. What we love most inevitably governs us. The second commandment flows from the first. When love for God deepens, love for others becomes a natural overflow rather than an obligation.

Where has comfort outranked obedience? Where has reputation outranked compassion?

The call is not merely to feel differently, but to orient life around the One who first loved us.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Ask, “What currently competes with my love for You?” Then consider one tangible act of love toward someone near you today.



## The Servant King

Wednesday, March 11, 2026

**Scripture:** John 13:1-17

**Reflection:** John tells us that Jesus, “knowing that the Father had put all things under His power,” rose from the table, wrapped a towel around His waist, and knelt to wash His disciples’ feet. The sequence is important. Jesus knows who He is. He knows where He has come from and where He is going. From that place of settled identity, He stoops.

The world associates power with elevation. Jesus reveals that power, in the kingdom of God, is expressed through self-giving love. He washes the feet of those who will misunderstand Him, abandon Him, and even betray Him.

For many of us, the challenge is not whether we will serve at all, but whether we will serve in ways that feel hidden or humbling. We may prefer visible roles, recognized efforts, or tasks that affirm our competence. Yet Christ kneels in obscurity.

True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Ask God to show you where pride subtly guards your comfort. Look for one opportunity today to serve in a way that costs you time or recognition.



## The Least of These

Thursday, March 12, 2026

**Scripture:** Matthew 25:31–46

**Reflection:** In this sobering parable, Jesus identifies Himself with the hungry, the stranger, the sick, and the imprisoned. “Whatever you did for one of the least of these... You did for Me.” The righteous are surprised.

Compassion grows in hearts that have been softened by grace. The “least” are often those easily overlooked: the person who lingers at the margins, the coworker carrying silent grief, the neighbor whose loneliness is hidden behind routine.

We may imagine that serving Christ requires grand gestures. Yet Jesus reveals that ordinary acts of mercy are sacred encounters. To feed, to visit, to welcome become acts of worship.

Lent slows us enough to notice who we typically pass by. It widens our field of vision.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Ask God to heighten your awareness of someone who may be overlooked in your daily routine. Take a concrete step toward them this week – a meal, a conversation, a gesture of care.



## Hidden Faithfulness

Friday, March 13, 2026

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:1-4

**Reflection:** Jesus warns against practicing righteousness “to be seen by others.” The temptation toward recognition is subtle. We may not crave applause, but we often appreciate being perceived as faithful, generous, or compassionate.

Hidden obedience purifies motive. When no one sees, the only audience is the Father. This is not secrecy born of fear, but intimacy born of trust. The God who sees in secret delights in quiet faithfulness.

In a culture saturated with visibility, anonymity feels uncomfortable. Yet spiritual depth often grows where recognition is absent. Roots deepen underground before fruit appears above it.

Lent invites us to practice faithfulness that does not depend on affirmation.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Perform one act of generosity or kindness this week that cannot be traced back to you. Offer it as worship, unseen except by God.



## Clothed in Humility

**Saturday, March 14, 2026**

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 5:5–7

**Reflection:** Peter urges believers to “clothe yourselves with humility.” Clothing is visible. It shapes how we move and interact. Humility, then, is not an occasional gesture but a daily garment.

Pride often disguises itself as self-protection. We defend our perspective, justify our reactions, and resist apology. Beneath these responses may lie fear — fear of being diminished, misunderstood, or overlooked.

Peter links humility with trust: “Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.” When we trust that God cares for us, we no longer need to secure our worth through dominance or defensiveness. Humility is strength anchored in God’s care. It allows us to admit fault, to listen well, to release the need to be right.

Lent gently exposes the ways we grasp for control in relationships. It calls us to lay down that grip.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Ask God to reveal one relationship where humility is needed. Consider whether an apology, a listening ear, or a softened tone might be your next faithful step.



## Rejoicing in the Lord

**Sunday, March 15, 2026**

**Scripture:** Philippians 4:4-7

**Reflection:** “Rejoice in the Lord always,” Paul writes from a prison cell, reminding us that joy is not fragile optimism tied to favorable circumstances. It is anchored confidence in the nearness of God. “The Lord is near” is not a sentimental phrase; it is the foundation of Christian joy. Lent often carries a sober weight as we examine our hearts and move toward the cross, yet it is not meant to be joyless. Repentance does not shrink the soul; it clears space for gratitude. As distractions are stripped away and attachments loosened, the steady goodness of God becomes easier to see.

Paul weaves joy together with prayer and thanksgiving, showing that gratitude reshapes perspective even when circumstances remain unchanged. Anxiety does not always disappear, but it loses its authority when the heart remembers who stands near. Joy rooted in Christ does not deny sorrow or uncertainty; it coexists with them. It is a steady undercurrent, flowing from trust that God remains faithful even in confinement, in waiting, in suffering. As we continue our journey toward the cross, we are reminded that hope is not postponed until Easter morning. It has already begun to rise.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Write down five specific reasons you are grateful today. Offer thanks slowly. Ask God to steady your heart in joy that rests in Him.



## **Bearing One Another's Burdens**

**Monday, March 16, 2026**

**Scripture:** Galatians 6:2

**Reflection:** “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Burden-bearing is slow work. It requires presence more than solutions. It invites us into another’s sorrow without rushing toward repair.

We live in a culture that values efficiency. Pain interrupts efficiency. Sitting with someone in grief feels unproductive. Yet the ministry of presence reflects the heart of Christ, who entered our suffering rather than solving it from a distance. Bearing burdens means allowing another person’s weight to affect us. It may cost time, emotional energy, or convenience. But love does not calculate loss; it shares it. When we carry one another’s burdens, we participate in the cross-shaped love that carried ours.

Lent deepens compassion. As we acknowledge our own frailty, we become more patient with the frailty of others.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Reach out to someone navigating difficulty. Ask how you can pray for them, and follow through. Consider whether practical help might lighten their load.



## As Far as It Depends on You

**Tuesday, March 17, 2026**

**Scripture:** Romans 12:18

**Reflection:** Paul writes, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone,” acknowledging both the complexity of relationships and the responsibility we carry within them. Peace is not always fully attainable, since it requires willingness on both sides, but our posture remains within our control. Reconciliation can be uncomfortable and humbling. It may mean initiating a difficult conversation, admitting fault, or absorbing misunderstanding without retaliation. Pride would rather create distance or protect reputation, yet love moves toward restoration even when it feels costly.

Peace does not require the denial of truth or the minimization of injustice. Rather, it seeks wholeness without revenge and clarity without cruelty. At its heart, reconciliation mirrors the gospel itself. The cross stands as the ultimate act of peace-making, with God moving toward us when we could not move toward Him. In light of such grace, we are invited to move toward others wherever possible. Lent gives us space to examine the relational fractures we have quietly accepted or postponed. Where reconciliation is possible, pursuing it becomes a sacred act of obedience.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Ask God whether there is a relationship that requires a step toward peace. Consider what “as far as it depends on you” might look like.



## In This World You Will Have Trouble

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

**Scripture:** John 16:33

**Reflection:** Jesus does not soften the reality of discipleship when He says, “In this world you will have trouble.” He does not promise exemption from hardship, but endurance within it. Faith does not shield us from sorrow or prevent suffering from touching our lives; instead, it anchors us in the middle of it. The presence of trouble is not evidence of God’s absence. It is part of the terrain of following Christ in a broken world.

Yet Jesus immediately adds, “Take heart! I have overcome the world.” His victory does not erase present pain, but it reframes it. The cross itself appeared to be defeated before it was revealed as triumph. What looked like an irreversible loss became the doorway to redemption. In the same way, what feels overwhelming now may be the very place where God is quietly at work.

Suffering tempts us in two directions: toward despair, which insists that this pain is final, or toward denial, which refuses to admit how deeply it wounds. Christ offers something steadier — courage grounded in His finished victory. Lent teaches us a resilient hope, not loud or superficial optimism, but a quiet confidence that suffering does not hold the last word. Whatever burden you are carrying may feel heavy, but it does not define the ultimate story of your life.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Bring a current hardship before God. Pray slowly, “You have overcome.” Sit quietly and allow that truth to settle beneath the weight of your concern.



## The Lord Is Near to the Brokenhearted

Thursday, March 19, 2026

**Scripture:** Psalm 34:18

**Reflection:** Scripture does not avoid sorrow or rush past it. It speaks plainly: “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted.” That nearness does not promise the removal of pain, but the presence of God within it. We often assume we must steady ourselves before approaching Him. We think that we need to regain composure, organize our thoughts, or diminish our grief before we pray. Yet the Psalms teach us otherwise. Lament is not only permitted; it is welcomed. Brokenness draws Him close.

When grief fractures our certainty and exposes our limits, we stand at a crossroads. We can harden ourselves in self-protection, or we can allow the ache to open us more deeply to God. Lent gently encourages the latter. It invites us to bring our sorrow honestly before the Lord without editing or minimizing it, trusting that He meets us in truth. His nearness in suffering does not trivialize our pain; it dignifies it. It assures us that we are not abandoned in the valley. Jesus Himself wept. To grieve, then, is the faithful act of bringing our humanity into the presence of God.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Sit quietly and name a grief without trying to solve it. Pray simply, “Be near.” Allow space for silence.



## Those Who Wait on the Lord

Friday, March 20, 2026

**Scripture:** Isaiah 40:31

**Reflection:** Waiting tests faith in ways that activity rarely does. We are far more comfortable with clear direction, visible progress, and measurable outcomes. Momentum reassures us that something is happening. Waiting, by contrast, feels unproductive and uncertain. It exposes how deeply we equate faithfulness with forward motion. Yet Scripture consistently portrays waiting not as wasted time, but as formative space.

Isaiah promises that those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength. That renewal does not always alter circumstances; often, it reshapes endurance. The situation may remain unresolved, but the heart is steadied within it. Waiting becomes a discipline of trust and a quiet refusal to grasp at outcomes God has not yet given. In the stillness, impatience surfaces, control begins to tug at us, and anxiety grows louder. But it is precisely in that tension that trust matures. We learn that God's timing is not careless or indifferent. It is deliberate and purposeful, even when we cannot yet see what He is forming.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Identify one area where you feel stalled. Pray, "Teach me to wait well." Practice patience intentionally today in a small inconvenience.



## The Light Shines in the Darkness

**Saturday, March 21, 2026**

**Scripture:** John 1:5

**Reflection:** “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” Darkness feels heavy and expansive. Light can seem fragile by comparison, like a small flame against a vast night.

Yet darkness cannot extinguish light. Even the smallest flame alters its surroundings. John writes these words at the beginning of his Gospel, but they echo throughout it, especially at the cross, where darkness will attempt to swallow hope.

Faith often requires believing in light before dawn breaks. Lent cultivates that kind of vision. It trains us to trust that God’s work continues even when visibility is low. The darkness you face does not nullify the presence of Christ. It may, in fact, become the place where His light becomes most visible.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Light a candle in a darkened room. Sit quietly and reflect on Christ as Light in your life. Pray for renewed vision in areas that feel dim.



## **A Living Hope**

**Sunday, March 22, 2026**

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 1:3-7

**Reflection:** Peter describes hope as living, not a fragile wish or distant optimism, but something dynamic and enduring, rooted firmly in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What makes his words striking is that he writes them to believers who are not insulated from grief or trials, but immersed in them. Living hope does not eliminate hardship or deny sorrow; it exists alongside it. It breathes within suffering rather than waiting for circumstances to improve before appearing.

Peter compares trials to fire refining gold. The process is intense and uncomfortable, yet it produces something genuine and lasting. Faith that has never been tested can remain shallow and easily shaken, but faith that has passed through refinement grows resilient. As we move closer to Holy Week, hope may feel subdued. The shadow of the cross grows longer, and loss seems imminent. Yet even there, resurrection is already woven into the story. Living hope steadies the soul because it reminds us that what we see is not the whole reality. God's purposes stretch beyond the visible horizon, and His redemptive work continues even when it is hidden from view.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Recall a past season where God proved faithful. Thank Him for sustaining you then. Pray that your present trials would refine, not erode, your faith.



## A Grain of Wheat

**Monday, March 23, 2026**

**Scripture:** John 12:24

**Reflection:** Jesus teaches that unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces many seeds. The image is simple yet unsettling: life emerges through loss. Death precedes multiplication. We instinctively resist this pattern. We cling to what feels secure, protect what seems promising, and avoid surrender wherever possible. Yet Christ reveals that fruitfulness in the kingdom often grows out of what we are willing to release. What feels like diminishment may, in God's hands, become preparation.

As Holy Week draws near, Jesus speaks these words with full awareness of His own approaching death. The cross will look like a life interrupted or a mission cut short. But what appears as loss will become the seed of redemption for many. Lent invites us to consider what must fall in us. Pride, control, reputation, and ambition are seeds that resist burial, yet when surrendered, they give way to deeper life. The way of Christ is not self-preservation, but self-offering. In His kingdom, surrender is never the end of the story; it is the beginning of fruitfulness.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Reflect on something you fear losing. Pray, "If this must fall, bring life from it." Release it again into God's care.



## I Consider Everything Loss

**Tuesday, March 24, 2026**

**Scripture:** Philippians 3:7–10

**Reflection:** Paul speaks with startling clarity: whatever he once considered gain, he now regards as loss compared to knowing Christ. Status, accomplishment, and reputation all once defined him. Now they pale beside intimacy with Jesus. The language is not mild. He calls former sources of pride “rubbish” in light of Christ. This does not mean such things are inherently evil. It means they are insufficient as an ultimate treasure.

As the cross draws near, Lent invites us to examine what we count as gain. What would feel like success? What would feel like failure? How tightly are we tethered to those definitions?

Paul longs to “know Christ — yes, to know the power of His resurrection and participation in His sufferings.” Resurrection and suffering belong together. To know Christ fully is to follow Him fully.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Ask, “What do I still count as ultimate gain?” Offer that before God and pray for a deeper desire to know Christ above all.



## Count the Cost

Wednesday, March 25, 2026

**Scripture:** Luke 14:27-33

**Reflection:** As the journey toward Jerusalem nears its final turn, Jesus speaks plainly about discipleship. “Whoever does not carry their cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple.” These words are not a dramatic exaggeration. They are an invitation and a warning intertwined.

Jesus urges the crowd to count the cost, like a builder estimating resources before beginning a tower, or a king assessing strength before battle. Many are drawn to Jesus when the crowds swell, and miracles multiply. Fewer remain when the path leads toward sacrifice. To count the cost is not to calculate whether Jesus is worth it. It is to recognize that He is. The real cost is not what we give up, but what we cling to instead.

Lent has exposed attachments – comfort, reputation, control, self-protection. Now comes the question beneath the question: Are we willing to follow Christ when it is costly?

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Ask quietly, “Where have I been following at a distance?” Offer that space to Christ. Pray, “Give me courage to follow You fully, not selectively.”



## The Obedience of Love

Thursday, March 26, 2026

**Scripture:** Philippians 2:5–8

**Reflection:** Paul writes that Christ “made Himself nothing... becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross,” revealing that the movement of Jesus’ life was downward. Yet this descent was not one of defeat, but of deliberate humility. He did not cling to status, privilege, or recognition. He willingly released them. His obedience was not forced or reluctant; it flowed from love and trust in the Father. Christ’s surrender was relational, an expression of a Son aligned with His Father’s will.

We often resist obedience when it unsettles our comfort or challenges our instincts. We negotiate the terms, delay response, or quietly justify a compromise. But Jesus does not waver. He moves steadily toward what love requires, even when it leads to suffering. As Lent draws us nearer to the cross, obedience becomes more concrete. There is a quiet beauty in that kind of surrender. It reshapes our posture, aligning our hearts with Christ’s humility and forming His likeness within us. In the kingdom of God, the way down is not a collapse; it is a passage. The descent of obedience becomes the way through to life.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Reflect on an area where obedience feels costly. Pray, “Form in me the mind of Christ.” Take one small, concrete step of obedience today without announcing it.



## Faithful in the Small Things

**Friday, March 27, 2026**

**Scripture:** Luke 16:10

**Reflection:** Jesus teaches that “whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much,” reminding us that faithfulness is rarely forged in dramatic moments. It is formed quietly through small, consistent choices made when no one is watching. We are often drawn to visible platforms, measurable impact, and defining moments. Yet Scripture continually directs our attention to the ordinary: daily prayer offered in hiddenness, honest speech when exaggeration would be easier, generosity that expects no recognition, and restraint when irritation rises. The kingdom of God advances not only through bold acts but through steady, unseen obedience.

As Holy Week approaches, we are reminded that the disciples’ greatest failures did not begin with public betrayal. They began with smaller inattentions like sleeping when they were asked to pray, arguing over status instead of listening to their Teacher, and drifting when they were called to watch. These quiet compromises weakened their readiness for greater testing. In the same way, faithfulness in small things strengthens the heart for larger trials. It roots us deeply so that when pressure intensifies, we do not easily bend. Lent trains our attention and recalibrates our sense of importance, teaching us that obedience in the ordinary is preparation for obedience in the extraordinary. What feels insignificant today may, in God’s economy, carry eternal weight.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Identify one small act of faithfulness you’ve been neglecting, perhaps prayer, reconciliation, or gratitude. Commit to practicing it intentionally today.



## Set Your Face Toward Jerusalem

**Saturday, March 28, 2026**

**Scripture:** Luke 9:51

**Reflection:** Luke tells us that Jesus “set His face toward Jerusalem,” a phrase that conveys steady resolve rather than hurried impulse. He is not carried along by circumstance or pressured by the expectations of others. He moves intentionally toward the place where suffering awaits Him. This resolve does not suggest emotional detachment; it reflects clarity of purpose. Jesus knows that Jerusalem holds betrayal, injustice, and the cross, yet He walks forward with deliberate trust in the Father’s will.

There are moments in the spiritual life when we experience a similar clarity, not necessarily about outcomes, but about direction. We begin to sense that obedience may require sacrifice, that faithfulness may demand steadiness in the face of misunderstanding or loss. As Palm Sunday approaches, the tension within the story intensifies. The city will soon erupt with celebration, yet beneath the noise lies the shadow of crucifixion. Jesus walks into both the praise and the pain, anchored in purpose rather than public opinion.

Lent invites us to examine the direction of our own hearts. Are we drifting toward comfort, or moving with intention toward obedience? Are we reacting to circumstances, or responding to a deeper calling? To set our face, like Christ, is to choose faithfulness before the crowd either cheers or condemns. The road ahead may not be fully visible, but we do not walk it alone. The One who calls us forward has already walked it Himself.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Sit quietly and ask, “Where are You calling me to steady resolve?” Pray, “Strengthen my heart for what obedience requires.” Rest in His presence as you prepare to enter Holy Week.



## **Palm Sunday**

**Sunday, March 29, 2026**

**Scripture:** John 12:12–15

**Reflection:** Palm Sunday is filled with noise. Crowds gather. Branches wave. Voices rise in unison: “Hosanna!” which means “Save us.” The atmosphere feels triumphant, hopeful, electric. Yet beneath the celebration lies a misunderstanding. The people are longing for deliverance, but they imagine a deliverer who will overthrow Rome, establish visible power, and secure national restoration. Jesus enters Jerusalem knowing that He will not fulfill those expectations. He comes not on a war horse, but on a donkey.

It is easy to read this moment with hindsight and miss how deeply it confronts us. We, too, cry, “Save us,” but often with unspoken assumptions about how that salvation should unfold. We want relief without repentance. We want resurrection without crucifixion. We want God to move quickly, decisively, and visibly in ways that align with our preferences.

Palm Sunday invites us to examine whether we truly desire the King as He is, or whether we are still trying to fashion Him into the king we would prefer. Jesus refuses to conform to the crowd’s expectations, and in doing so, He reveals the heart of God: salvation will come through surrender, not force; through sacrifice, not spectacle.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Spend several minutes in quiet reflection and ask, “Where have I been expecting God to act according to my script?” Pray, “Lord, save me in the way You know is best, even when it is not what I would have chosen.”



## A House of Prayer

**Monday, March 30, 2026**

**Scripture:** Mark 11:15–17

**Reflection:** When Jesus enters the temple courts and overturns tables, His actions are not impulsive rage but purposeful confrontation. The temple was meant to be a meeting place between God and His people. It was meant to be a house of prayer. Yet the space has become crowded with transactions and noise. What was designed for worship has been overtaken by distraction.

It is important to notice that Jesus' anger is directed not at the idea of worship, but at the corruption of it. He quotes Scripture: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." The outer courts, where Gentiles could draw near, had been filled with commerce. Access to God had been obstructed.

This scene is not confined to ancient Jerusalem. It speaks into the clutter of our own lives. Prayer can be displaced by urgency. Silence can be crowded out by constant input. We can fill our days with activity that feels productive while intimacy with God quietly diminishes.

When Jesus overturns tables, He is reclaiming worship. His cleansing is an act of restoration.

Holy Week invites us to examine the temple of our own hearts. What has crowded out prayer? What has taken residence where quiet communion once flourished? We must remember that the Lord who cleansed the temple still desires a heart attentive to His presence.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Set aside unhurried time today. Remove a distraction that typically fills your attention. Sit quietly and ask God to restore your heart as a house of prayer.



## Watch and Pray

**Tuesday, March 31, 2026**

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:36–41

**Reflection:** In the Garden of Gethsemane, the air is thick with sorrow as Jesus withdraws a short distance from His disciples to pray, carrying the full weight of what lies ahead. He invites Peter, James, and John to remain near Him, asking them to “stay here and keep watch.” Yet when He returns, He finds them asleep. His response is both gentle and direct: “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Their failure is not born of rebellion, but of exhaustion. Their desire to be faithful is real, yet their endurance falters. In this moment, we see that good intentions do not automatically produce spiritual stamina.

Watchfulness in Scripture speaks of attentiveness, a steady awareness of what is unfolding both around us and within us. Temptation rarely explodes without warning; it grows gradually in unattended spaces of the heart. Spiritual drift often begins not with dramatic defiance, but with quiet weariness. Prayer becomes the place where dependence replaces self-confidence, where we admit that resolve alone is not enough. We need strength that does not originate in ourselves. As Holy Week continues, we are reminded that vigilance is not anxious striving but relational nearness. To watch is to remain present with Christ; to pray is to lean into Him when our strength begins to fade. The disciples slept through a moment of profound intimacy. The invitation before us is to stay awake, remain attentive, present, and near.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Set aside a brief period of focused prayer today. Ask God to reveal areas where you have grown inattentive or spiritually fatigued. Pray for renewed alertness and perseverance.



## The Fragrance of Devotion

Wednesday, April 1, 2026

**Scripture:** John 12:1–8

**Reflection:** In Bethany, just days before His crucifixion, Mary takes a jar of costly perfume, worth nearly a year's wages, and pours it over Jesus' feet. The act is intimate and vulnerable, and the fragrance fills the entire house. It is a gesture that cannot be ignored. Almost immediately, criticism arises. Some begin to calculate what the perfume could have achieved if sold and redistributed. They see waste. Jesus sees worship.

Mary's devotion stands in sharp contrast to the measured pragmatism around her. Where others assess efficiency and outcomes, she responds with love. She perceives something many do not yet grasp: Jesus is moving toward burial. Her offering is not reckless extravagance, but prophetic devotion. It flows from recognition of who He is and what is about to unfold. Love often appears excessive to those who assign value differently. Genuine worship cannot always be justified in economic terms because it is shaped by worth, not by cost-benefit analysis.

As the shadow of the cross lengthens, Mary holds nothing back. Her devotion is costly, misunderstood, and profoundly beautiful. Lent invites us to examine the nature of our own devotion. Is it cautious and calculated, or surrendered and wholehearted? Do we protect what is most precious, or do we offer it freely in response to Christ's worth? The fragrance of surrendered love lingers long after the moment itself has passed, bearing quiet witness to a heart that has recognized the King.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Reflect on what you hold most tightly – time, reputation, resources, security. Ask God whether He is inviting you to offer some part of it more freely. Pray for a heart that loves without calculation.



## Maundy Thursday

Thursday, April 2, 2026

**Scripture:** John 13:34–35

**Reflection:** On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus gathers with His disciples for a final meal, and the room carries a quiet weight. The moment is intimate, yet charged with what lies ahead. Knowing that betrayal, suffering, and the cross are imminent, He speaks words that reframe everything: “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” This command is not offered in abstraction. It is about to be embodied in blood and tears. Earlier that evening, Jesus had knelt to wash His disciples’ feet, even the feet of Judas.

When Jesus says, “As I have loved you,” He establishes the measure. His love is patient amid misunderstanding, steady under rejection, and faithful through suffering. It is not sustained by mutual benefit or emotional warmth, but by covenant commitment. We often define love by compatibility or feeling, but Christ defines it by sacrifice. Holy Week confronts us with the costliness of divine love and reminds us that this command is not sentimental encouragement; it is an invitation to participate in the very character of God. To follow Jesus is to allow His self-giving love to reshape our posture toward others, especially when love feels inconvenient, unrecognized, or undeserved.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Reflect on someone you find difficult to love. Ask God to help you see them through Christ’s compassion. Consider one specific act of kindness or reconciliation.



## Good Friday

Friday, April 3, 2026

**Scripture:** John 19:28–30

**Reflection:** Good Friday resists our instinct to move quickly. It asks us to slow down and stand before the cross without distraction. There, exposed in stark clarity, we see both the depth of human sin and the reach of divine mercy. Jesus hangs between earth and heaven, bearing wounds shaped by injustice, betrayal, fear, and cruelty. Darkness settles over the land, as though creation itself recoils and mourns. The moment is not sanitized or softened. It is heavy, honest, and holy.

From the cross, Jesus declares, “It is finished.” The word carries the weight of completion — a task fulfilled, a debt paid in full. He does not cry out in defeat, as though overcome by suffering. What began before the foundation of the world now reaches its climactic fulfillment. At the cross, justice and mercy meet without contradiction. Sin is neither excused nor ignored; it is borne and answered. Love is not reduced to sentiment; it is revealed as costly, self-giving sacrifice.

Good Friday invites us to linger long enough for gratitude to move beyond familiarity. The cross is not merely an emblem we display; it is the place where our estrangement from God was reconciled. It exposes the seriousness of sin and magnifies the magnitude of grace. Silence becomes appropriate here. Awe becomes appropriate. Confession becomes appropriate. We do not rush toward Sunday without first honoring the weight of Friday, because it is only in facing the depth of the cross that we fully understand the wonder of resurrection.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Spend extended time in quiet before God. Consider writing a prayer of confession and gratitude, acknowledging both your need and Christ’s finished work.



## The Silence Between

**Saturday, April 4, 2026**

**Scripture:** Lamentations 3:25–26

**Reflection:** Holy Saturday is a day suspended in silence, a day of waiting without visible hope. The disciples do not yet know that resurrection is coming. For them, the story appears finished. Their teacher has been crucified, their expectations shattered, and the future feels fragile and uncertain. We read this day with the assurance of Sunday already in mind, but they did not share that perspective. For them, the silence must have felt heavy and unbearable, as though heaven itself had grown quiet.

Holy Saturday speaks into seasons of our own lives when God seems distant, and prayers feel unanswered. We may affirm the truths of resurrection with our minds, yet still carry the ache of delay in our hearts. Waiting exposes our limits. It tests trust in ways activity never does, requiring surrender without clarity and faith without visible progress. Yet Scripture gently reminds us that the Lord is good to those who wait for Him. Even when we cannot detect movement, His purposes are not stalled. Holy Saturday teaches us to remain faithful in the silence and to resist the assumption that quiet means absence. The tomb is still, but it is not empty of purpose. What appears motionless may be the threshold of redemption.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Sit quietly with any unresolved longing in your life. Pray, “Even here, You are faithful.” Resist the urge to force resolution.



## Resurrection Sunday - He Is Risen

**Sunday, April 5, 2026**

**Scripture:** John 20:1-18

**Reflection:** At dawn, Mary Magdalene approaches the tomb carrying grief, expecting nothing more than silence and sealed stone. Instead, she finds the stone rolled away. What she anticipated as a place of finality becomes the site of astonishment. The grave is no longer closed. Death has not held its ground. And then, in a moment that reshapes everything, the risen Christ stands before her. She does not recognize Him at first – sorrow has clouded her vision – but when He speaks her name, recognition dawns. In that single word, grief gives way to joy, confusion yields to clarity, and the darkness of despair breaks open to hope.

Resurrection is not a distant doctrine or symbolic optimism; it is living, embodied reality. The same Jesus who was crucified now stands alive. The wounds remain, but they no longer testify to defeat. They testify to victory. What appeared irreversible has been overturned by divine life. The grave has been emptied, and the power of sin has been broken. Resurrection does not minimize Good Friday or pretend that suffering was insignificant. The cross was real, the pain was real, the loss was real, but none of it was ultimate. Sunday does not erase Friday; it triumphs over it. The silence of Saturday gives way to the proclamation of new life. In the risen Christ, we see that darkness cannot extinguish God's purposes, and death cannot silence His promises. Hope is no longer deferred or imagined; it stands alive before us. Christ is risen, and because He lives, the story is still unfolding in grace.

**Contemplative Prayer / Action:** Begin your day by stepping outside or standing near a window where light is breaking in. Let the light fall on your face as a quiet reminder that the stone has been rolled away. Pray aloud, "Risen Christ, You are alive." Then sit in stillness and imagine Jesus speaking your name with the same tenderness He spoke Mary's and respond with gratitude. Thank Him for one place in your life where He has brought life out of loss. If possible, share the hope of resurrection with someone today, through a word of encouragement, a text, or an act of kindness, allowing the joy of the Resurrection to move outward through you.



## **Notes**



RETURN &  
REMAIN

Lent in the life of the Church it is a forty-day season leading up to Easter, beginning on Ash Wednesday. For centuries, followers of Jesus have entered this time as a journey of return — returning to God with honesty, humility, and renewed dependence. It is a season marked by repentance, reflection, and quiet attentiveness as we walk with Christ toward the cross and prepare our hearts to receive the hope of resurrection. Traditionally, Sundays are not included in the forty days, but this devotional includes them, creating a 47-day journey of daily reflection through the full season.

Lent reminds us that we are finite and fragile, yet deeply loved and sustained by God's mercy. We begin in humility — remembering that we are dust — and we move forward in surrender, allowing God to search us, reshape us, and restore what has grown distant or disordered. In a world that encourages constant motion, control, and self-sufficiency, Lent invites us to slow down, release what we cling to, and rediscover what truly sustains us. Through practices like prayer, fasting, silence, and repentance, we make space to notice what governs our hearts and to realign our lives with Christ.

Our prayer is that this devotional leads you into deeper surrender and deeper communion with God. May these reflections give you space to be searched, to be softened, and to be shaped. May they help you release what burdens you, return to your first love, and remain rooted in Christ's sustaining presence. And as you walk through this Lenten season, may you experience humility that frees you, grace that carries you, and hope that quietly rises. Above all, may you encounter the One who meets us in surrender, walks with us through the cross, and leads us into resurrection life.