



THE COMMUNITY CHURCH
OF VERO BEACH

Family Lenten Devotions



February 17, 2021

Family Lent Devotion: Week 1*

WEEKLY SCRIPTURE: LUKE 4:1-13 (CEB)



Jesus returned from the Jordan River full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. There he was tempted for forty days by the devil. He ate nothing during those days and afterward Jesus was starving. The devil said to him, “Since you are God’s Son, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” Jesus replied, “It’s written, People won’t live only by bread.” Next the devil led him to a high place and showed him in a single instant all the kingdoms of the world. The devil said, “I will give you this whole domain and the glory of all these kingdoms. It’s been entrusted to me and I can give it to anyone I want. Therefore, if you will worship me, it will all be yours.” Jesus answered, “It’s written, You will worship the Lord your God and serve only him.” The devil brought him into Jerusalem and stood him at the highest point of the temple. He said to him, “Since you are God’s Son, throw yourself down from here; for it’s written: He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you and they will take you up in their hands so that you won’t hit your foot on a stone.” Jesus answered, “It’s been said, Don’t test the Lord your God.” After finishing every temptation, the devil departed from him until the next opportunity.

WEEKLY LENTEN DISCIPLINE: FASTING

When you find yourself in a space such as Lent, where life seems thinner than usual and the journey more focused than normal, what do people of faith do to keep journeying on? In ancient times, rituals helped to remind the people of the promise, as yet unfulfilled, and gave reason to trust what seemed to be impossible.

In this week’s Scripture, we hear how Jesus was tempted by the devil. We know that Jesus was not alone; Scripture reminds us that he was “full of the Holy Spirit” and that he was “led by the Spirit into the wilderness.” And yet, the devil tries to persuade Jesus to worship him. This week, we ask the question:

“What temptations keep your attention and love from God?”

This week’s Lenten discipline, fasting, provides another practice that helps us respond to God’s love and grace and gives us a tool that we can use to stay in relationship with our loving creator.

When people first hear the word “fasting,” they often think of giving up food and/or drink. This week, your family is invited to fast from something that tempts you, something that has power

and influence over you, or something that keeps you and your family from spending time with the Holy One. This might be TV, video games, Facebook, iphone apps, etc. The options/choices are not limited by this short brainstorm.

Prepare: As your family prepares to practice the spiritual discipline of fasting, take time this week to discuss with your family the following wonder questions:

- I wonder where we spend most of our time each day?
- I wonder how this activity/item brings us closer to God?
- I wonder how this activity/item might make us feel further away from God?
- I wonder what it might feel like to give this activity/item up for 12 hours in order to spend more time with God and with one another?

Practice the Spiritual Discipline of Fasting:

Starting at 6:00 am on Ash Wednesday morning, you are invited to practice fasting from one of the items discovered in the wondering discussion listed above. You might choose to fast for the day or for the entire five days in this first week of Lent.

As you feel pulled by the space this time of fasting creates, take time to say the following prayer (or you can create your own). As your children feel pulled, frustrated by this practice, and/or wanting to pick up the item/activity that they are trying to fast from, say this prayer with them and/or help them create their own prayer that honors God's presence in their life and the dedication of this time with our Creator:

God, in this time I give up my use of _____. Help me focus on you and your presence in my life. Thank you for being with me during this time. Thank you for your presence and love. I give this time to you. Amen.

Follow this time of prayer with a discussion on what you and your family might do during this time of fasting that can honor God and recognize God's presence in your life. (Examples: Service project, artwork response- making a card for a family member, loved one, friend; journaling and/or writing a letter to God; calling a loved one/friend saying, "I was thinking of you and wanted to tell you I love you.")

Reflect: After your time of fasting has ended, take time to reflect with your family on this experience, using the following wondering questions as a guide:

WEEKLY WONDERING QUESTIONS:

- I wonder what you fasted from this week?
- I wonder why you chose to fast from this item/activity?
- I wonder how it felt to fast from this activity/item?
- I wonder when it was hard to fast from this activity/item?
- I wonder when it was easy to fast from this activity/item?
- I wonder when you felt far away from God during this time of fasting?
- I wonder when you felt close to God during this time of fasting?



- I wonder what you fasted from this week?
- I wonder what you felt during your time of fasting?
- I wonder when you talked to God this week?
- I wonder when you listened to God this week?
- I wonder what you heard God say?
- I wonder where you saw the color purple this week?
- I wonder when you felt close to God this week?
- I wonder who showed you God's love this week?
- I wonder how you showed God's love to others?

WEEKLY FAMILY PRAYER:

Loving God, You are always with us, guiding us and loving us. Sometimes we get so focused on our lives that we forget to spend time with you. This week, help us find new ways to focus on you. Getting ready for the mystery of Easter is big work. During this first week of our Lenten journey, help us learn how to trust you, love you, and share your love with others. Thank you for being with our family as we travel together, preparing our hearts and minds to enter into the mystery of Easter. Bless us in our work. It's in your holy name, we pray, Amen.

February 24, 2021

Family Lent Devotion: Week 2*

WEEKLY SCRIPTURE: LUKE 13:31-35 (CEB)

At that time, some Pharisees approached Jesus and said, “Go! Get away from here, because Herod wants to kill you.” Jesus said to them, “Go, tell that fox, ‘Look, I’m throwing out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will complete my work. However, it’s necessary for me to travel today, tomorrow, and the next day because it’s impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’ “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who were sent to you! How often I have wanted to gather your people just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you didn’t want that. Look, your house is abandoned. I tell you, you won’t see me until the time comes when you say, “Blessings on the one who comes in the Lord’s name.”

WEEKLY LENTEN DISCIPLINE: RITUAL OF PROMISE



When you find yourself in a space such as Lent, where life seems thinner than usual and the journey more focused than normal, what do people of faith do to keep journeying on? In ancient times, rituals helped to remind the people of the promise, as yet unfulfilled, and gave reason to trust what seemed to be impossible.

In this week’s Scripture, we hear Jesus lamenting (crying) over Jerusalem and the people who did not choose to follow Christ. Yet, we also hear Jesus affirm his commitment to them and to us, promising us that he will return. During this holy season, we remember that Christ is with us. We believe the good news and live into this promise: God is with us. In response, we pay attention, and we ask this question:

“How do I experience God’s presence and love in my life?”

When we pay attention, when we take time to stop and to look, we can see, feel, hear, and know God’s presence. Sometimes it might mean paying attention to the moments when we experience God’s love through the eyes or actions of another — when we feel joy, when we feel peace, when we are comforted by a caring friend, even in those times when we are surrounded by chaos. Sometimes it might mean remembering when we have experienced and known God’s presence. It might mean leaning on another person who reminds us in the darkest moments that “God is here.” Sometimes it’s sitting in the silence and the darkness of Good Friday, surrounded by death and sadness, and finding the strength to say, “I believe...” or “help me believe.” Christ does not say that faith is easy. In fact, in this week’s Scripture, he reminds us that it can be hard.

During the difficult times, our knowledge of God's presence and love becomes especially important.

By taking note and sharing the moments when we experience God with others, we document our memory and our learnings, acknowledging and identifying our experiences of the holy. These "stampers," as children I work with have called them, mark our hearts and minds, helping us see, feel, and remember God's promise to be with us. They remind us of God's gift of peace. These stampers, memories, experiences, give us hope that can carry us through the dark places

Practice the Spiritual Discipline of Promise:

- Take time at the end of each day to share the moment(s) you felt close to God, saying "Today I felt close to God when..."
- Options: You might choose to share "close to God" moments:
 - at the dinner table or another meal
 - in the car after school
 - at bedtime
 - in a dedicated space in your home (prayer corner, family table, family gathering spot outside)
- Individuals might choose to share their God moments quietly in a special place. Examples:
 - writing in a journal
 - typing on a computer
 - drawing images in an art pad
 - writing on a slip of paper and putting it into a "God Box"
- Take time to document these moments – the times when you feel God's presence and know that God is with you. This helps us remember that God IS with us, even in times when we cannot see, hear, or feel the divine's presence and/or love.

Options

- Create a family journal (where everyone can write/draw/etc.)
- Create a family wall for the season of Lent where everyone can add "close-to-God" moments each day
- Provide each person an individual space to share his or her "close-to-God" moments



WEEKLY WONDERING QUESTIONS:

- I wonder how you experienced God's love today?
- I wonder how you prepared for the mystery of Easter today?
- I wonder where you saw the color purple today?
- I wonder what the color purple reminds you of?
- I wonder when you felt close to God this week?

WEEKLY FAMILY PRAYER:

Covenant God, Sometimes, when we can't see, touch, or hear you, we wonder, "Are you really there?" Then we remember the many ways you have shown us your love and we see the many things that reveal your creative presence in our lives. We feel the love in a hug from our mom, dad, or friend; and we know that this is what your love must feel like. We see the stars shining in the sky above or watch the sunrise, and we are amazed by your beautiful work that makes these things possible.

Lord, during this week of our Lenten journey, help us find ways to remember that you are with us. We know that this is big work. Help us practice remembering as we get ready for the mystery of Easter. During this season, help us learn how to trust you, love you, and share your love with others. Lord, thank you for being with our family as we travel together, preparing our hearts and minds to enter into the mystery of Easter. Bless us in our work. It's in your holy name, we pray. Amen.

March 3, 2021

Family Lent Devotion: Week 3*

WEEKLY SCRIPTURE: LUKE 13:1-9 (CEB)

Some who were present on that occasion told Jesus about the Galileans whom Pilate had killed while they were offering sacrifices. He replied, “Do you think the suffering of these Galileans proves that they were more sinful than all the other Galileans? No, I tell you, but unless you change your hearts and lives, you will die just as they did. What about those eighteen people who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them? Do you think that they were more guilty of wrongdoing than everyone else who lives in Jerusalem? No, I tell you, but unless you change your hearts and lives, you will die just as they did.”

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WEEKLY LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER



When you find yourself in a space such as Lent, where life seems thinner than usual and the journey more focused than normal, what do people of faith do to keep journeying on? In ancient times, rituals helped to remind the people of the promise, as yet unfulfilled, and gave reason to trust what seemed to be impossible.

In this week’s Scripture, we hear the parable of the fig tree and the gardener. We hear God calling us to change and grow, reminding us that there is always time for repentance and response. One of the ways we respond to God’s call to change and grow in love is through prayer. In prayer, we ask the question:

“God, who are you calling me to become?”

This week’s Lenten discipline, prayer, provides another practice that helps us respond to God’s love and grace and gives us a tool that we can use to stay in relationship with our loving creator. God loves us and calls us into relationship. Prayer, talking to God, is one way we respond to this offer.

It is important to remember that prayer is not a tool used to change God, but instead is a discipline that helps change the one who’s praying.

It is important to remember that there are many ways to talk to God:

- We can sing a song.
- We can write a letter.
- We can draw a picture.
- We can sit quietly listening.
- We can listen to music.

Our prayers come in many different forms. This discipline keeps us connected to the one who created us, reminding us that we are loved and called into relationship with God and with others. We can pray at different times and for different reasons too:

- When we are sick
- When we are in trouble
- To confess sin
- To show faith
- For others
- When we are happy
- At all times

Discuss and Share:

- I wonder how you talk to God?
- I wonder what position you feel comfortable in when you talk to God? (Examples: lying on the ground, sitting with head bowed and hands folded, standing up straight with arms reaching to the sky)
- I wonder when you've heard God?
- I wonder what God said to you this week?
- I wonder what you want to tell God today?

Practice:

Learning How to Pray (The Hand Prayer):

This is one way of teaching children how to pray and gives them some ideas about what they might pray for. Begin by showing children your hand, saying:

- **Friends and Family:** Thumb (*people who are close to you*) — These are your close friends and family, often the first people you think about when you pray. Give thanks to God and ask his protection on your parents, siblings, friends, and classmates.
- **Leaders and Teachers:** Pointer (*people who point the way*) — These are leaders in your life, such as teachers and pastors. Offer God your thanksgiving for them and ask him to help them in their important work.
- **Government Leaders and Those in Authority:** Tall Finger (*people in authority*) — The big people in the world need prayer too. Ask God to give wisdom to our government, military, and police.
- **In Need of God's Help:** Ring Finger (*people who are weak*) — This is your weakest finger. We should remember others who are sick, live in poverty, or are treated badly. Pray that Jesus will give them new strength.
- **Myself:** Pinky or Little Finger (*your own needs*) — God wants to hear your needs too, especially when you put others first. Pray for your own growth in mind, body, and spirit. Again, this is just a helpful guide. It's important to remind children that it doesn't matter how, where, when, or what they pray. God is always with them, always loving them, and always listening. Take time every day to pray with each member of your family and to include family prayers at important times of the day, such as meals.

WEEKLY WONDERING QUESTIONS:



- I wonder when you talked to God this week?
- I wonder when you listened to God this week?
- I wonder what you heard God say?
- I wonder where you saw the color purple today?
- I wonder when you felt close to God this week?
- I wonder who showed you God's love this week?
- I wonder how you showed God's love to others?

WEEKLY FAMILY PRAYER:

Loving God, You are always with us, guiding us and loving us. We know you hear us when we pray, and you listen to us whenever we talk to you. Thank you. Help us remember to take time every day to talk to you. We know that getting ready for the mystery of Easter is big work. During this season, help us learn how to trust you, love you, and share your love with others! Thank you for being with our family as we travel together, preparing our hearts and minds to enter into the mystery of Easter. Bless us in our work. It's in your holy name, we pray, Amen..

March 10, 2021

Family Lent Devotion: Week 4*

WEEKLY SCRIPTURE: LUKE 15:1-3, 11B-32 (CEB)

All the tax collectors and sinners were gathering around Jesus to listen to him. The Pharisees and legal experts were grumbling, saying, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Jesus told them this parable:

Jesus said, “A certain man had two sons. The younger son said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the inheritance.’ Then the father divided his estate between them. Soon afterward, the younger son gathered everything together and took a trip to a land far away. There, he wasted his wealth through extravagant living.

“When he had used up his resources, a severe food shortage arose in that country and he began to be in need. He hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. He longed to eat his fill from what the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have more than enough food, but I’m starving to death! I will get up and go to my father, and say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son. Take me on as one of your hired hands.’ ’ So he got up and went to his father.

“While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion. His father ran to him, hugged him, and kissed him. Then his son said, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! Fetch the fattened calf and slaughter it. We must celebrate with feasting because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life! He was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

“Now his older son was in the field. Coming in from the field, he approached the house and heard music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what was going on. The servant replied, ‘Your brother has arrived, and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he received his son back safe and sound.’ Then the older son was furious and didn’t want to enter in, but his father came out and begged him. He answered his father, ‘Look, I’ve served you all these years, and I never disobeyed your instruction. Yet you’ve never given me as much as a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours returned, after gobbling up your estate on prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.’ Then his father said, ‘Son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found.’”

WEEKLY LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRACTICING GRATITUDE



When you find yourself in a space such as Lent, where life seems thinner than usual and the journey more focused than normal, what do people of faith do to keep journeying on? In ancient times, rituals helped to remind the people of the promise, as yet unfulfilled, and gave reason to trust what seemed to be impossible.

Each time I read this parable, I always ask the question:

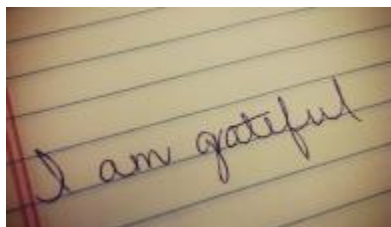
“God, who are you calling me to hear today?”

This question opens our hearts and minds to all the messages God brings to us in this parable. One message that is revealed over and over again is the father’s love for both of his sons and the father’s gratitude for the youngest son’s return. In this story, one of the lessons the father demonstrates is how to practice gratitude.

Just like the father tells his son, we too are called to pay attention and to give thanks for all that God has done for us. When we pay attention to all that is good in our lives, we can see and feel (even if for a brief moment) God’s presence in our lives. By taking note and sharing these moments with others, we document our memory and our learnings; we acknowledge and identify our experiences of the holy. These “stampers,” as children I work with have called them, mark our hearts and minds, helping us see, feel, and remember God’s promise to be with us. They remind us of God’s gift of peace. These stampers, memories, experiences, give us hope that can carry us through the dark places. This week, I invite you to practice the **spiritual discipline of gratitude** with your family and community:

- Take time at the end of each day to share three things that you are grateful for.
- This might be done alone (writing it in a journal, typing it on your computer, or drawing images in an art pad), or it might be done around the dinner table or perhaps in another dedicated space in your home.
- Make sure to document the things you are grateful for, so you and your family can always remember God’s many blessings, even in the midst of sorrow, pain, loss, and/or grief.
- You might do this through a family journal (where everyone can write/draw/etc.; or you might create a family wall for the season of Lent, where family members can add their words of gratitude each day).

WEEKLY WONDERING QUESTIONS:



- I wonder what you are grateful for?
- I wonder how these things help you see/feel/hear God?
- I wonder how you will prepare for the mystery of Easter?
- I wonder where you saw the color purple today?
- I wonder what the color purple reminds you of?

WEEKLY FAMILY PRAYER:

Traveling God, we know that Easter is a big mystery, and entering into it is big work. We thank you for Lent, the time when we get ready for the mystery of Easter. During this season, help us learn how to trust you, love you, and share your love with others. Lord, be with our family as we travel together, preparing our hearts and minds to enter into the mystery of Easter. Bless us in our work. It's in your holy name, we pray, Amen.

March 17, 2021

Family Lent Devotion: Week 5*

WEEKLY SCRIPTURE: JOHN 12-18 (CEB)

Six days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, home of Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Lazarus and his sisters hosted a dinner for him. Martha served and Lazarus was among those who joined him at the table. Then Mary took an extraordinary amount, almost three-quarters of a pound, of very expensive perfume made of pure nard. She anointed Jesus' feet with it, then wiped his feet dry with her hair. The house was filled with the aroma of the perfume. Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), complained, "This perfume was worth a year's wages! Why wasn't it sold and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He carried the money bag and would take what was in it.) Then Jesus said, "Leave her alone. This perfume was to be used in preparation for my burial, and this is how she has used it. You will always have the poor among you, but you won't always have me."

WEEKLY LENTEN DISCIPLINE: SERVICE



When you find yourself in a space such as Lent, where life seems thinner than usual and the journey more focused than normal, what do people of faith do to keep journeying on? In ancient times, rituals helped to remind the people of the promise, as yet unfulfilled, and gave reason to trust what seemed to be impossible.

Each time I read this parable, I always ask the question:

In this week's Scripture, Jesus reminds us of the importance of loving and caring for others. Here, Mary takes time and uses valuable resources to show her love for Christ. We read this Scripture and wonder:

"How can I show my love to God?"

Christ reminds us that we show our love for God by loving others. This week's Lenten discipline, service, provides an opportunity for us to practice this holy work.

One way we respond to God's love for us is by loving others. We do not do good acts or works in order to receive God's grace, favor, and/or love. But instead, out of gratitude for God's gift, our hearts yearn to give to others. When we experience this gift completely, God's grace and love pours out of our hearts and leads us to share Christ's light with others.

This week's **Lenten discipline** invites you and your family to **discover** how you:

1. **share Christ's light with others.**
2. **experience the light through others.**

Begin each day this week (either at breakfast or on the morning ride to work/school), inviting your family to participate in the discipline of service:

Say: "Today, I invite you to..."

- find a way to show Christ's light to others through your actions." (Encourage your family to think of creative ways to show Christ's love to others through acts of service.)
- pay attention to how you experience Christ's love through the actions of others." Close each day (either on the way home from school/work, at dinner, or bedtime) reflecting on and sharing your experiences from the day:

- I wonder how you shared Christ's light with others?
- I wonder how this made you feel?
- I wonder how it made the other person/people feel?
- I wonder how someone showed Christ's love to you?
- I wonder how this made you feel?
- I wonder how it made the other person/people feel?

Through service, we remember that we love because God first loved us. Through these weekly disciplines, you are building a toolbox for you and your family. These practices can strengthen your faith foundation, so that when the ground begins to shake, you can return to these disciplines as ways to ground yourself in your faith and what you KNOW deep down inside to be true. This is an important gift that you and your family can give to one another during this Lenten season.

WEEKLY WONDERING QUESTIONS:



- I wonder how you will prepare for the mystery of Easter today?
- I wonder where you saw the color purple this week?

- I wonder when you felt close to God this week?
- I wonder how you experienced God's love through the actions of other people?
- I wonder how you shared God's love with other people?

WEEKLY FAMILY PRAYER:

Loving God,

You are always with us, guiding us and loving us. Thank you. Help us find ways to share your love with others.

Lord, during this week of our Lenten journey, help us serve others as your light shines through us. Help us pay attention to how other people show us your love.

We know that getting ready for the mystery of Easter is big work. During this season, help us learn how to trust you, love you, and share your love with others.

Thank you for being with our family as we travel together, preparing our hearts and minds to enter into the mystery of Easter. Bless us in our work.

It's in your holy name, we pray, Amen..

March 24, 2021

Family Lent Devotion: Week 6*

WEEKLY SCRIPTURE: LUKE 19:28-40 (CEB)

After Jesus said this, he continued on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As Jesus came to Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, he gave two disciples a task. He said, “Go into the village over there. When you enter it, you will find tied up there a colt that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If someone asks, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say, ‘Its master needs it.’” Those who had been sent found it exactly as he had said. As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the colt?” They replied, “Its master needs it.” They brought it to Jesus, threw their clothes on the colt, and lifted Jesus onto it. As Jesus rode along, they spread their clothes on the road. As Jesus approached the road leading down from the Mount of Olives, the whole throng of his disciples began rejoicing. They praised God with a loud voice because of all the mighty things they had seen. They said, “Blessings on the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens.” Some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, scold your disciples! Tell them to stop!” He answered, “I tell you, if they were silent, the stones would shout.”

WEEKLY LENTEN DISCIPLINE: GIVING



When you find yourself in a space such as Lent, where life seems thinner than usual and the journey more focused than normal, what do people of faith do to keep journeying on? In ancient times, rituals helped to remind the people of the promise, as yet unfulfilled, and gave reason to trust what seemed to be impossible.

In this week’s Scripture, we hear how the disciples went to get a donkey for Jesus to ride. We also hear how they put their clothes on the back of the donkey, so presumably Jesus could ride comfortably. Along the way to Jerusalem, people laid out their clothes in front of the donkey, praising Christ as he road along. On Palm Sunday, we remember this moment and we shout, “Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.” As we remember this day many years ago, we are also called to consider what might we have done on that day. Would we have laid out our clothes to greet the king? We also ask:

“What does God require of us this day?”

This week’s Lenten discipline, giving, provides another practice that helps us respond to God’s love and grace.

One way we respond to God's love for us is by giving back a small piece of what God has given us. It is important to remember that there are many ways to say thank you to God. Options include:

- Drawing God a picture.
- Writing God a letter
- Singing God a song.
- Giving clothing, food, money, or other items to help others.

Our gifts come in many different forms. God does not need us to give, but we choose to give a little piece of what we have to say thank you to God for all that our creator has given us.

Discuss and Share:

- *I wonder what gifts/blessings God has given me?*
- *I wonder how can I give/bless God and others?*

Practice:

Begin this week by setting out a basket in a special place in your home. Invite your family to practice giving back to God by visiting this special place each day, saying thank you to God for all the things you're grateful for, then if/when you choose, place a gift for God in the basket. Tell your family members that no one has to see them give and unless family members want to share, they will not be required to say what they gave. Our gifts are not for other people's judgment; they are a personal way we can say thank you. Then, at the end of the week, at a special family meal and/or gathering, present these gifts to God, say thank you for all the gifts your family received that week, and then offer your gifts to God.

You might choose to say a prayer over the offerings, concluding your prayer with these words: "And now we give you a piece of what you've given us, so that you can help others."

The season of Lent provides a time to stop, reflect, give thanks, and practice different spiritual disciplines. This week, we continue our Lenten journey by finding ways to share God's love with others through acts of giving. This discipline helps us:

1. remember all that God has given us.
2. find new ways to give back to God.

Through the discipline of giving, we give to/bless others as a way to say thank you to God for all God has done for us.

Through these weekly disciplines, you are building a toolbox for you and your family. These practices will strengthen your faith foundation, so that when the ground begins to shake, you can return to these disciplines as ways to ground yourself in your faith and what you KNOW deep down inside to be true. This is an important gift that you and your family can give to one another during this Lenten season.

WEEKLY WONDERING QUESTIONS:



- I wonder what gifts/blessings God has given you?

- I wonder how you can give/bless God and others?
- I wonder where you saw the color purple this week?
- I wonder when you felt close to God this week?
- I wonder who showed you God's love this week?
- I wonder how you showed God's love to others?

WEEKLY FAMILY PRAYER:

Loving God,

You are always with us, guiding us and loving us. You tell us not to worry about what we will eat, drink, or wear; and you promise to take care of us. Thank you.

Help us find ways to say thank you to you and to others.

Lord, during this week of our Lenten journey, we give a little piece of what we have back to you. Take our gifts, bless them, and use them to help others. We know that getting ready for the mystery of Easter is big work. During this season, help us learn how to trust you, love you, and share your love with others.

Thank you for being with our family as we travel together, preparing our hearts and minds to enter into the mystery of Easter. Bless us in our work. It's in your holy name, we pray, Amen.

March 31, 2021

Family Lent Devotion: Week 7*

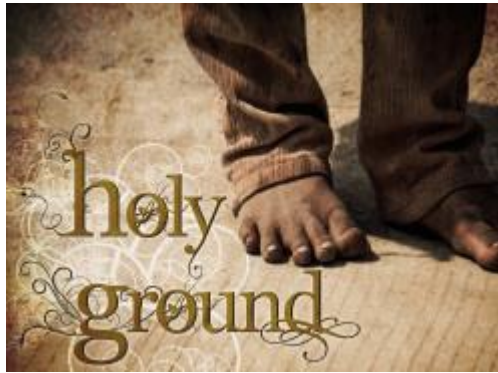
WEEKLY SCRIPTURE: JOHN 20:1-18 (CEB)

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

LUKE 24:1-2 (CEB)

Very early in the morning on the first day of the week, the women went to the tomb, bringing the fragrant spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they didn’t find the body of the Lord Jesus. They didn’t know what to make of this. Suddenly, two men were standing beside them in gleaming bright clothing. The women were frightened and bowed their faces toward the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He isn’t here, but has been raised. Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee, that the Human One must be handed over to sinners, be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” Then they remembered his words. When they returned from the tomb, they reported all these things to the eleven and all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles. Their words struck the apostles as nonsense, and they didn’t believe the women. But Peter ran to the tomb. When he bent over to look inside, he saw only the linen cloth. Then he returned home, wondering what had happened.

WEEKLY LENTEN DISCIPLINE: WORSHIP



When you find yourself in a space such as Lent, where life seems thinner than usual and the journey more focused than normal, what do people of faith do to keep journeying on? In ancient times, rituals helped to remind the people of the promise, as yet unfulfilled, and gave reason to trust what seemed to be impossible.

In this week's Scripture, we arrive at Easter. This week, we will move through Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday to arrive on Sunday morning at an empty tomb. We will celebrate with Mary Magdalene as we declare: "Christ is Risen!" We celebrate and we are full of joy and gratitude. Jesus' resurrection is a call for celebration and praise. We gather in our faith communities to praise God, give thanks, and to shout with joy together. It is in these moments that we ask:

"God, how can we even begin to say thank you for all you have given us?"

And we remember the words of Christ and the call to love God and love neighbor. We commit our lives again to Christ, and we seek to move forward in the hope of the Resurrection. We are not alone. Christ is Risen! We have nothing to fear. God is with us!

Weekly worship is the time when the entire body of Christ comes together to experience and respond to God's presence in our lives. During worship, we remember and celebrate what God has done through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Worship is one of the many ways we express our joy and gratitude. We offer our praise and thanksgiving for God's presence in our lives through the Holy Spirit, as we anticipate and celebrate what God promises to do in our lives and in our world. Sometimes our culture does not invite us to share our gratitude or to express our joy. It is important to encourage these emotions, as they keep us balanced and grounded when life's chaotic waters pull us in multiple directions. Other times, we come to worship to share our grief, our prayers, and our pain. Again, our culture does not always invite us to share our deepest emotions. Worship is a wonderful time to model the act of expressing our feelings and sharing our emotions as we lift up our prayers and concerns to God.

Remember: We pass on our appreciation and love for worship to our children through practice. Children learn to worship by worshipping.

This week, take time as a family to talk about worship. Give family members an opportunity to:

- share their favorite part of worship.
- share how worshipping God makes them feel.
- discuss how they can worship as a family throughout the week. This might be done by:
- attending a worship service together.
- singing a specific song each night as a family

- lighting a candle and saying a prayer of praise and thanksgiving
- reading a favorite Scripture. (Reading the Psalms together works really well for daily family worship)
- creating family rituals to do together. This an important way to grow together in the faith as you affirm that God is not just present and active in your lives on Sunday mornings (or whenever you go to church), but God is with you at all times and in all places.)
- share and express their joy, whether it be through jumping, clapping, singing, dancing, drawing, or simply saying “YAY God!” or “Thank you.”
- share and express their concerns and prayers by saying: “Lord, I am.... (insert emotion here). Thank you for listening.” Example: “Lord, I am sad because my dog died. Thank you for listening.” Or “Lord, I am happy because I made a new friend today. Thank you for listening.”

WEEKLY WONDERING QUESTIONS:



- I wonder how you prepared for the mystery of Easter today?
- I wonder where you saw the color purple this week?
- I wonder when you felt close to God this week?
- I wonder what brought you joy this week?
- I wonder how you like to express your joy?
- I wonder what your favorite part of worship is?
- I wonder what the hardest part of worship is?
- I wonder why we worship?

WEEKLY FAMILY PRAYER:

God,

You are always with us, guiding us and loving us. Thank you. Sometimes when we feel this love, we want to shout, “Thank you!” or whisper, “You’re the best, I love you!” Help us find ways to express our joy and to share our feelings with you and others. Lord, during this week of our Lenten journey, help us find ways to remember that you are with us. We know that this is big work. Help us practice remembering as we get ready for the mystery of Easter. During this season, help us learn how to trust you, love you, and share your love with others. Lord, thank you for being with our family as we travel together, preparing our hearts and minds to enter into the mystery of Easter. Bless us in our work. It’s in your holy name, we pray, Amen



LENT AND EASTER 2021

Ash Wednesday February 17th

12:00 p.m. Ashes To-Go in the Courtyard

5:00 p.m. Drive-Thru Imposition of Ashes

6:00 p.m. Worship Service In-Person in the Sanctuary and On-line

Lenten Organ and Poetry Series

Thursdays in Lent at 11:00 a.m.

February 18th (Chapel), February 25th

March 4th, March 11th, March 18th, March 25th

In-Person in the Sanctuary and On-Line

C₂ Re-Imagined Worship

6:30 p.m. In-Person in the Sanctuary

Thursday, February 18th, Thursday, March 18th

8:30 a.m. Live-stream Broadcast

Sunday, February 21st, Sunday, March 21st

Sunday, February 21st 4:00 p.m.

"Daily Bread Meal Prep Class"

with chef Matt Gulyas and Rev. Elizabeth B. Johnson

Registration \$25. Call: 772-469-2322

Zoom Lenten Book Studies

5:00 p.m. Wednesdays in Lent February 24th-March 24th

"Chocolate for Lent" with Rev. David W. Johnson

"The Gift of Years: Growing Old Gracefully" with Rev. Dr. Anna V. Copeland

"Lessons from the Table"

11:15 a.m. Communion Class

Begins Sunday, February 28th Ends March 28th

Weekly Lessons for Children and Parents with Lia Peters and a Guest Minister

Saturday, March 27th 3:00 p.m.

Drive-Thru Palms

Palm Sunday March 28th

8:30 a.m. C₂ Live-Stream

10:15 a.m. in the Sanctuary and On-line

Maundy Thursday April 1st

7:00 p.m. Worship Service In-Person in the Sanctuary and On-line

Good Friday April 2nd 7:00 p.m.

"Requiem for the Living" by Dan Forrest with

Chamber Orchestra and Chamber Choir

Attend In-Person or On-line Reservations: 772-469-2321

Saturday, April 3rd 10:00 a.m.

Easter Festival

Easter Sunday April 4th

8:30 a.m. C₂ On-Line Worship

9:00 a.m. Sanctuary Worship (In-Person Only)

11:00 a.m. Sanctuary Worship (In-Person and On-Line)

Reservations Required

