

Journeying Through the Gospels in Lent



**Friday
March 7th 2014**

Daily Devotional

“Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise”

A blessed day to you, my fellow traveler. The Grace and Peace of the Lord be with you as we enter the third day on our journey with Jesus. I would like to welcome our brothers and sisters who are joining us on this journey throughout the District. It is amazing to see how the Lord works in very unusual ways. I have been asked and encouraged by a member who has been journeying with me to try this approach and I feel so blessed to know that so many have chosen to join this journey. Stand in Jesus and see what amazing blessing the Lord has in store for you. Hallelujah!

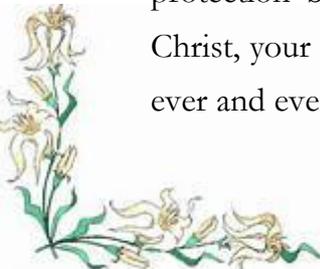
Yes! I know what you are saying, that adapting to a new discipline can be a struggle. But Psychologists tells us, if we can believe that, that it takes approximately six weeks to change a habit. Give yourself the privilege of renewing your spirit and mind this Lenten Season. I encourage you to stay on the pathway.

So we begin day three at a time specifically convenient to your schedule. Spending a minimum of 5 minutes on each ***segment*** or ***step below***:

- ✓ **Meditation** [5 minutes of quiet reflection]
- ✓ **Visualization** See what your day will be. With conviction, declare how you want your day to unfold and your intentions toward God, his creation and other people who you will be privileged to meet today. And who will be fortunate to encounter you.
- ✓ **Gratitude:** Thankful for the good happenings in your life. Appreciate where you are NOW from where you WERE then.
- ✓ **Inspirational Reading:** Read an article about a person or a situation that will inspire you today.

Collect:

Almighty ever-living God, look with compassion on our weakness and ensure us your protection by stretching forth the right hand of your majesty. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen





The Readings

Isaiah 58: 1-9

Your Prayers Won't Get Off the Ground

58¹⁻³ “Shout! A full-throated shout!
Hold nothing back—a trumpet-blast shout!
Tell my people what’s wrong with their lives,
face my family Jacob with their sins!
They’re busy, busy, busy at worship,
and love studying all about me.
To all appearances they’re a nation of right-
-living people - law-abiding, God-honoring.
They ask me, ‘What’s the right thing to do?’
and love having me on their side.
But they also complain, ‘Why do we fast and
you don’t look our way?
Why do we humble ourselves and you
don’t even notice?’³⁻⁵ “Well, here’s why:
“The bottom line on your ‘fast days’ is profit.
You drive your employees much too hard.
You fast, but at the same time you bicker and fight.
You fast, but you swing a mean fist.
The kind of fasting you do won’t get your
prayers off the ground. Do you think this is
the kind of fast day I’m after a day to show
off humility? To put on a pious long face
and parade around solemnly in black?
Do you call *that* fasting, a fast day that I,
GOD, would like?⁶⁻⁹ “This is the kind of
fast day I’m after: to break the chains of injustice,
get rid of exploitation in the workplace,
free the oppressed, dance debts.
What I’m interested in seeing you do is:
sharing your food with the hungry,
inviting the homeless poor into your homes,
putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad,
being available to your own families.
Do this and the lights will turn on,
and your lives will turn around at once.
Your righteousness will pave your way.
The GOD of glory will secure your passage.
Then when you pray, GOD will answer.
You’ll call out for help and I’ll say, ‘Here I am.’”

A Full Life in the Emptiest of Places

⁹⁻¹² “If you get rid of unfair practices, quit blaming
victims, quit gossiping about other people’s sins,
If you are generous with the hungry and start giving
yourselves to the down-and-out, Your lives will begin
to glow in the darkness, your shadowed lives will
be bathed in sunlight. I will always show you where to go.
I’ll give you a full life in the emptiest of places—
firm muscles, strong bones.”



Psalm 51:3-6

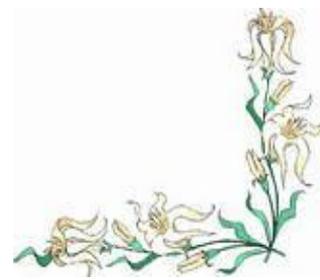
51¹⁻³ Generous in love—God, give grace!
Huge in mercy—wipe out my bad
record. Scrub away my guilt, soak out my
sins in your laundry. I know how bad I’ve
been; my sins are staring me down.

4-6 You’re the One I’ve violated, and
you’ve seen it all, seen the full extent of
my evil.
You have all the facts before you;
whatever you decide about me is fair.
I’ve been out of step with you for a long
time, in the wrong since before I was
born.
What you’re after is truth from the inside
out. Enter me, then; conceive a new, true
life.

Matthew 9:14-15(MSG)

¹⁴ A little later John’s followers
approached, asking, “Why is it that we
and the Pharisees rigorously discipline
body and spirit by fasting, but your
followers don’t?”

¹⁵ Jesus told them, “When you’re
celebrating a wedding, you don’t skimp
on the cake and wine. You feast. Later
you may need to pull in your belt, but not
now. No one throws cold water on a
friendly bonfire. This is Kingdom Come!”





Daily Meditation:

This is the first Friday of Lent and an introduction to "True Fasting." We are still in the first four days of Lent. Today and tomorrow I invite us to read the 58th Chapter of the book of the prophet Isaiah. These powerful words have such a strong message for us today. True fasting will lead us to act justly and to care for those who are most in need. On every Friday of Lent I am inviting us to abstain from eating meat as a sign of our common sacrifice. It represents our efforts to abstain from - do without - so many other patterns that get in the way of our happiness and wholeness. We will desire to remove the "ugly" thoughts and keep in prayer that the Holy Spirit of God will do the purifying as we center our thought on wholesome and positive thoughts. We are directed by our thoughts and if our thoughts are ugly then we cannot help but act the ugly. Praise be to God His Holy Spirit can burn up the dross of base desire and thoughts within us.

Today's Daily Reflection

Let us pray to Christ our Savior, who redeemed us by his death and resurrection: Lord, have mercy on us. You went up to Jerusalem to suffer and so enter into your glory, bring your Church to the Passover feast of heaven. You were lifted high on the cross and pierced by the soldier's lance, heal our wounds. You made the cross the tree of life, give its fruit to those reborn in baptism. On the cross you forgave the repentant thief, forgive us our sins.

Closing Prayer:

Lord, I know how much you love me. It is very hard for me to feel it sometimes, but I know that your love is always with me. Help me to use your love as a way to persevere in my intentions towards you this Lenten season. I am weak, but I know with your help, I can use these small sacrifices in my life to draw closer to you. Lord sometimes I feel the struggle that my brother, the apostle Paul felt when he agonized over his spiritual condition and action saying "the good I know that I should do I find myself deciding against and the wrong that I know I should not do I find myself embracing." Give me the strength of your Spirit to move to a place where it is you and you alone in my thoughts and life.

*May the Lord bless us,
protect us from all evil
and bring us to everlasting life.
Amen*

