

A large, rustic wooden cross stands on a rocky hill. The sun is positioned directly behind the cross, creating a bright, glowing effect with rays of light. The sky is filled with vibrant, colorful clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and purple, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is serene and spiritual.

CMCA Devotion Booklet for Lent 2024

Board of Worship and Music

CMCA Annual Conference

CMCA Devotion Booklet for Lent 2024

Revive Us, O Lord!

Board of Worship and Music

Chinese Methodist Church in Australia Annual Conference.

February 2024

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Exhortation from Bishop..... | 4 |
| Message from the Chairperson..... | 6 |
| Editor's Words..... | 7 |
| Lent Devotion | 8 |
| 1. 14 Feb 1 st Day of Lent Ash Wednesday | 9 |
| 2. 15 Feb Thursday after Ash Wednesday | 11 |
| 3. 16 Feb Friday after Ash Wednesday | 13 |
| 4. 17 Feb Saturday after Ash Wednesday..... | 15 |
| 1 st Week of Lent | 17 |
| 5. 19 Feb 1 st Week of Lent Monday | 18 |
| 6. 20 Feb 1 st Week of Lent Tuesday | 20 |
| 7. 21 Feb 1 st Week of Lent Wednesday | 22 |
| 8. 22 Feb 1 st Week of Lent Thursday | 23 |
| 9. 23 Feb 1 st Week of Lent Friday | 24 |
| 10. 24 Feb 1 st Week of Lent Saturday | 25 |
| 2 nd Week of Lent | 26 |
| 11. 26 Feb 2 nd Week of Lent Monday | 27 |
| 12. 27 Feb 2 nd Week of Lent Tuesday | 29 |
| 13. 28 Feb 2 nd Week of Lent Wednesday | 31 |
| 14. 29 Feb 2 nd Week of Lent Thursday..... | 32 |
| 15. 1 Mar 2 nd Week of Lent Friday | 33 |
| 16. 2 Mar 2 nd Week of Lent Saturday..... | 35 |
| 3 rd Week of Lent..... | 38 |
| 17. 4 Mar 3 rd Week of Lent Monday | 39 |
| 18. 5 Mar 3 rd Week of Lent Tuesday | 42 |
| 19. 6 Mar 3 rd Week of Lent Wednesday | 44 |
| 20. 7 Mar 3 rd Week of Lent Thursday | 46 |
| 21. 8 Mar 3 rd Week of Lent Friday..... | 48 |
| 22. 9 Mar 3 rd Week of Lent Saturday | 50 |
| 4 th Week of Lent..... | 51 |
| 23. 11 Mar 4 th Week of Lent Monday | 52 |
| 24. 12 Mar 4 th Week of Lent Tuesday | 53 |
| 25. 13 Mar 4 th Week of Lent Wednesday | 54 |
| 26. 14 Mar 4 th Week of Lent Thursday | 55 |

| | | | |
|-----|--------|--|----|
| 27. | 15 Mar | 4 th Week of Lent Friday | 57 |
| 28. | 16 Mar | 4 th Week of Lent Saturday | 59 |
| | | 5 th Week of Lent | 61 |
| 29. | 18 Mar | 5 th Week of Lent Monday | 62 |
| 30. | 19 Mar | 5 th Week of Lent Tuesday | 64 |
| 31. | 20 Mar | 5 th Week of Lent Wednesday | 66 |
| 32. | 21 Mar | 5 th Week of Lent Thursday | 68 |
| 33. | 22 Mar | 5 th Week of Lent Friday | 69 |
| 34. | 23 Mar | 5 th Week of Lent Saturday | 70 |
| | | Holy Week..... | 72 |
| 35. | 25 Mar | Holy Week Monday..... | 73 |
| 36. | 26 Mar | Holy Week Tuesday..... | 74 |
| 37. | 27 Mar | Holy Week Wednesday..... | 76 |
| 38. | 28 Mar | Holy Week Thursday (Maundy Thursday) | 78 |
| 39. | 29 Mar | Holy Week Friday (Good Friday)..... | 80 |
| 40. | 30 Mar | Holy Week Saturday..... | 82 |

Exhortation from Bishop

Revive us. Oh Lord!

Bishop Milton Nee

The period of pre-suffering (in mandarin) is also known as Lent. It is a period of forty days starting from Ash Wednesday to Easter, not counting the six Sundays in between. ***We follow the example of Jesus Christ's forty days of fasting and prayer.*** At the beginning of His Kingdom ministry, Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights, fasting, praying, and drawing near to God the Father. After His forty days and nights of fasting, Satan and the Devil tempted Him with all their ingenuity, but repeatedly failed and retreated. We clearly see that victory and revival come from the lesson of drawing near to God. Therefore, if we are willing to make good use of these forty days, ***to be quiet before the Lord, to reflect on ourselves, to confess our sins, to practice abstinence, to be vigilant in prayer, to fast and call out, and to do more good works,*** we will certainly experience a great revival in our lives.

Let us consider this forty-day period of Lent as ***a journey of spiritual revival.*** We will surely enjoy the renewal and power of quietness before the Lord. Through this program of daily devotions, we will set aside a period of time each day for Bible reading, meditation and prayer, and write down our daily reflections. In the readings and meditations, it is especially important to confront the lessons in one's own life. We encourage our CMCA congregations to enter into this journey of revival together, so you can try to find one or two brothers or sisters in your own congregation to be spiritual partners, to remind each other, to share their insights, to make a covenant with each other, and to watch out for each other. In this way, ***our spiritual journey will not be a solitary one, but a journey of revival with each other.***

Remember to do a lot of self-examination during these 40 days, especially ***focusing on your relationship with the Lord. Meditate on God's attributes through Bible reading,*** and let the Holy Spirit guide your heart to God. ***Count the works of God through thanksgiving,*** that is, the works He has accomplished in us and how God has guided us through these days. There is ***also prayer and intercession in your personal devotions.*** Intercede for the needy in the world, pray urgently for the church to be vigilant and pray for the prosperity of the gospel, and also ask the Lord to heal the breaches in our own lives, and ask the Lord's precious blood to cleanse us from the filthiness of our lives. Pray that our hearts will be centered on the Kingdom of God, serving the needy and proclaiming ***servicing the Lord Jesus Christ as the ultimate goal of our lives.*** Finally, in your daily devotional meditations, list some actions that you can take to do good ***to those around you.*** For example, help the sick, the hungry, the depressed, the sad, and the suffering.

If you can write down your Bible reading, or your meditation, thanksgiving, prayer items, and your acts of charity during these 40 days, you will surely find that God has ***carried out the good things of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth in you*** during these 40 days. Your life is no longer that of a mediocre Christian, but you are closely connected to God with your life, and you are able to experience God's heart, know how to live for God, and become a servant of others in this world like the Lord Jesus.

Finally, I would like to encourage you with James 4:7-10, " ⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-

minded. ⁹ Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”(ESV)

Message from the Chairperson

The season of Lent is a time for reflection and listening to God. For the first time, the Board of Worship and Music has compiled a Lenten devotional material for members. This material consists of scripture and reflections written by our CMCA pastors. We thank all the authors who have contributed to this devotional.

As we pause and listen to God in our journey through Lent, I hope that these readings may encourage and challenge us, and that through them God will speak to us.

Rev Shirley Ling

Chairperson

Board of Worship and Music, CMCA Annual Conference

2nd February 2024

Editor's Words.

I would like to thank God the Father for His grace in being able to present this devotional material to the brothers and sisters before the commence of Lent 2024. This is the first attempt of the Board of Worship and Music, and we look forward to experiencing spiritual revival together with our brothers and sisters through meditating on the Word of God during this important season. We are grateful for the support and encouragement from Bishop Nee and Rev Shirley Ling, the chairman of Board of Worship and Music. We also thank the following pastors and co-workers for their combined efforts in contributing their insights. In the order in which the devotional materials are arranged, the Bishop Emeritus Rev James Kwang, Rev James Ha, Pastor Esther Kwang, Rev Michael Tan, Rev James Kong, Rev Pin Hien Lam, Pastor Ting An Gao and Rev Gloria Ling, who were willing to take time out of their busy schedules to contribute their own reflections and devotionals. We thank God for the teamwork and support of the pastors of the Methodist family in presenting this material to you.

In order to accommodate both Chinese and English readers, this booklet has been divided into two volumes, one in Chinese and one in English. The contents are the same and will be sent to all congregations. Ministers in charge can choose the parts they want to share electronically or print and distribute to their congregations. As this is the work of the pastors of the Annual Conference, please acknowledge that the copyright belongs to the Worship and Music Department of the Annual Conference of the Chinese Methodist Church in Australia. In addition, in order to keep the content short enough for brothers and sisters to grasp the main points in a short period of time, the pastors have tried to use the fewest words possible to briefly prompt brothers and sisters to think, apply and respond to the prayers. Brothers and sisters are encouraged to prepare notebooks to record their thoughts and thoughts with the Lord during this season.

Due to the limitations of the editor's ability, errors and omissions are inevitable in the editing of this booklet. I welcome all pastors to give me their comments and corrections for future editing and revision.

This booklet utilizes ESV (English Standard Version) as our English Bible text and Chinese Union Bible (中文和合本) as our Chinese Bible text.

We hope that God's Word will be our light and guide in our spiritual journey during the period of Lent.

Editor

Samuel Chiu

Sherwood Methodist Church

4th February 2024

Lent Devotion

1. 14 Feb 1st Day of Lent Ash Wednesday

Bishop Emeritus Rev James Kwang

Immanuel Methodist Church

Scripture: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

1. Blow a trumpet in Zion;
 sound an alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
 for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near,
2. a day of darkness and gloom,
 a day of clouds and thick darkness!
Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains
 a great and powerful people;
their like has never been before,
 nor will be again after them
 through the years of all generations.
12. “Yet even now,” declares the LORD,
 “return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
13 and rend your hearts and not your garments.”
Return to the LORD your God,
 for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
 and he relents over disaster.
- 14 Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,
 and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain offering and a drink offering
 for the LORD your God?
- 15 Blow the trumpet in Zion;
 consecrate a fast;
call a solemn assembly;
16 gather the people.
Consecrate the congregation;
 assemble the elders;
gather the children,
 even nursing infants.
Let the bridegroom leave his room,
 and the bride her chamber.
- 17 Between the vestibule and the altar
 let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep
and say, “Spare your people, O LORD,
 and make not your heritage a reproach,
 a byword among the nations.^[a]
Why should they say among the peoples,
 ‘Where is their God?’”

1. Reflections on the Scripture

Prophet Joel speaks of the blessing that is possible for Israel, if only they would repent. Considering the blessings that come with repentance, one might think that people would eagerly run to God's open invitation to penitence. Unfortunately, people throughout the ages fare no different to the people of ancient Israel, resist repentance.

In 2:12-17, Joel returns to the call to repentance issued in chapter 1 verses 13-20. However, this time the sense of hopelessness is replaced by hope in God, who is "*gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love*" (2:13b).

Why are people so reluctant to repent even when they know that blessings are waiting?" Because repentance necessitates recognition and admission of guilt, of having done wrong, of being sorry for the hurt one caused another. Individually or collectively people would rather live in denial than have a contrite spirit, admit their mistakes, and say "I'm sorry. I was wrong. Please forgive me."

The good news is that the vision of restoration surpasses devastation. If you read on, in Joel 2:25 is a powerful confirmation that our worst days contain the seed for our best days. For this reason, we can always find hope in God.

2. Application

In this season of Lent, as we reflect on this passage, and in particular on this Ash Wednesday we ask, is not Israel's plea our plea too? Should we not earnestly fast and cry out to God? Should we not recognize that any reprieve God gives is neither earned nor a privilege? Rather, God's forgiveness is a manifestation of God's grace, of God's love and care for humanity. Therefore, each one of us need to do our part to not live in denial and admit our sinfulness—to humbly repent and seek God's forgiveness.

3. Responsive Prayer

O God, through the prophets You called the nations to repent. Through Christ You call us—each one to repent and turn to follow Your will. Lord, sustain us and lead us home to You. And in Your love and wisdom You relent when we repent. You do not punish us but that we should know eternal joy. By Your strong and gentle hand, Lord, lead us back to Your fold. In Jesus' name. Amen.

2. 15 Feb Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Bishop Emeritus Rev James Kwang

Immanuel Methodist Church

Scripture - Psalm 51:1-17

1. Have mercy on me,^[a] O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!
- 3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
- 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.
- 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- 6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.
- 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.
- 9 Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
- 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right^[b] spirit within me.
- 11 Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.
- 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
- 14 Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.
- 15 O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- 16 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.
- 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

1. Reflections on the Scripture

Lent is really a journey that takes all of us to a hope filled destination—resurrection morning. But before we can get there, we have to journey with our sin, the sin that eventually

caused Christ shame, torture, and death. Psalm 51 is a familiar picture of dust, disaster, and deceit. The Psalmist here is voicing a lament to God over his own sin—not someone else.

This Psalm is about the grace of God. It brings together the painful reality and depth of sin and the wonder of divine mercy. It is a Psalm of repentance, of confession. David confesses his sins to God, holding back nothing. These words display absolute humility and anguish over sin. David appeals to God's mercy and love, knowing that he can be forgiven.

This Psalm is for you, and for me, and helps us to understand what true and genuine repentance is. Repentance is not something we do once and then we are done. It is ongoing. Repentance is turning from and forsaking sin and turning to Christ. Martin Luther said: *“When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said ‘Repent’, he wanted the entire life of the believers to be one of repentance.”*

2.Application

It is likely that we have all been in that place at some point in our lives. Lent invites us into vulnerability, to acknowledge the reality of our mistakes and of our pain, and of causing other people pain. Lent invites us to bring that pain to Jesus Christ, to accept the free gift of forgiveness that is undeserved. Lent invites us to start over with a clean heart and a right spirit. May God give us that courage to confront our weaknesses, sinfulness and frailty and eventually experience the joy of reconciliation with God.

3.Responsive Prayer

Have mercy on us, O Lord, according to Your incomparable, extraordinary love. You know about our weaknesses, our wrongs, our mistakes and our brokenness. Cleanse us through and through, renew us, and revive us.

Lord, we know You created us good, perfect, and in Your image, although sometimes we seem to forget. So, Lord we ask that You re-create in us a pure heart and a right spirit, so we may face this world with hope, peace, and joy. In Jesus' name. Amen.

3. 16 Feb Friday after Ash Wednesday
Bishop Emeritus Rev Kwang Immanuel Methodist Church

Scripture: Isaiah 58:1-12

58 “Cry aloud; do not hold back;
lift up your voice like a trumpet;
declare to my people their transgression,
to the house of Jacob their sins.
2 Yet they seek me daily
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that did righteousness
and did not forsake the judgment of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments;
they delight to draw near to God.
3 ‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not?
Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?’
Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,^[a]
and oppress all your workers.
4 Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to hit with a wicked fist.
Fasting like yours this day
will not make your voice to be heard on high.
5 Is such the fast that I choose,
a day for a person to humble himself?
Is it to bow down his head like a reed,
and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?
Will you call this a fast,
and a day acceptable to the LORD?
6 “Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed^[b] go free,
and to break every yoke?
7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?
8 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up speedily;
your righteousness shall go before you;
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
9 Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’
If you take away the yoke from your midst,
the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,
10 if you pour yourself out for the hungry
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
then shall your light rise in the darkness
and your gloom be as the noonday.
11 And the LORD will guide you continually

and satisfy your desire in scorched places
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters do not fail.
¹² And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to dwell in.

1.Reflections on the Scripture

This passage connects the practice of fasting, which Christians often observe during Lent, with the reality of what is happening in the world around us and how we are called by God to respond to it. During times of crisis, when the people of Israel felt God was far away, they would fast with mourning as a way to repent. The prophet tells the people why their fasting is not pleasing to God because they take it as a ritual. They didn't act in ways that please God or that will bring about a just and peaceful future.

People practice fasting during Lent. Let's be reminded that the self-denial of fasting is hypocritical if those who practice it are serving their own interests and oppressing others. Fasting, by itself, is not real repentance.

The prophet describes what happens when we really repent and our calls for God's help are matched with actions that participate in bringing about God's Kingdom (verses 8-9 and 10b-12). In our fasting, we are feeding others and ourselves "*like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail,*" (verse 11b).

2.Application

God wants us to serve Him out of our love for Him—be obedient to Him because we want to please Him. He will guide us into truth and His blessings will be poured out on our lives in abundance, and in turn, those blessings will then be channelled through us to others "*like a spring of water, whose waters never fails.*" May this season of Lent help us to examine ourselves to see whether we meet God's condition in seeking and serving Him with a true heart—if so, we should and we can be channel of blessings to others.

3.Responsive Prayer

Almighty God, I thank You for the grace of life in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Forgive me, Lord and have mercy on my soul in all areas I have come short of Your glory. Father guides my journey in life and satisfy my soul with the manifestation of your promises in Jesus' name. Oh Lord makes me and my household a watered garden that never run dry and that, we can be a channel of blessings to others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

4. 17 Feb Saturday after Ash Wednesday
Bishop Emeritus Rev Kwang Immanuel Methodist Church

Scripture: 2 Corinthian 5:20-6:10

^{5:20} Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6 Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For he says,

“In a favorable time I listened to you,
and in a day of salvation I have helped you.”

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. ³ We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴ but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶ by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; ⁷ by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸ through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹ as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

1.Reflections on the Scripture

The passage on Ash Wednesday in Joel 1:12, “*Even now, declares the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.*” We are not to misunderstand that repentance is for Ash Wednesday or even for the Lent season. It is about reminding us that now is the time for repentance for today and every day.

Confronting our sin honestly requires God-given courage—searching our hearts with sober, clear-eyed vision is a daunting, often discouraging task. As Christians, however, such searching needn't lead to despair. Why? Joel 2:13 reminds us that; “*God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.*” The Apostle Paul knew the wondrous truth of Joel's proclamation because he recognized its fullest expression in Christ's atoning sacrifice: “*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*” (2 Cor. 5:21). Today and every day, we can face our sin not only with urgency but also with hope because our forgiveness has already been purchased through the blood of Christ. In 2 Cor. 6:2, “*I tell you, now is the time of God's favour; now is the day of salvation.*”

2.Application

The question we need to ask ourselves in this season of Lent is not whether we will die, what you will give up or do for Lent, or how to improve yourself. The question is about your life before death. What do you want to do with your life? How do you want to live? Do you have life before death?

3.Responsive Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the incredible love and grace displayed in the great exchange on the cross. We stand in awe of the sacrifice Jesus made, taking our sin upon Himself so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Help us to embrace our new identity in Christ, living as grateful recipients of His righteousness and seeking to grow in holiness and love. May our lives be a testimony to the transformative power of Your grace, and may we share the message of the great exchange with those around us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1st Week of Lent

Scripture: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

6 “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

2 “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

5 “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

16 “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust^[a] destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

1. Reflections on the Scripture

Praying, almsgiving and fasting were the three actions expected of the pious Jew of Jesus' time. When we are doing all that—what motivates us, deep down? As Jesus had already said, He did not come to destroy the law, but to bring it to perfection, to raise it to a higher level. So, He insists on performing these good actions not to be seen and praised by others, but ‘in secret’—for the Father who sees the heart will reward us. Whatever we do during this Lenten Season should bring us ever closer to Jesus, and prepare us to celebrate His resurrection at Easter.

We must be content to be who we are. Our deepest identity for each one of us is not the one we create for ourselves but the identity given us by God. We are the beloved of God, and always will be. That is enough. The important person in my life and in your life must be not myself or yourself, nor others, but only God ‘who sees in secret’. God also knows this secret: that when everything is said and done, you and I, we are infinitely loved!

2. Application

Our attitudes should not be those of self-seeking hypocrites but should reflect a heart focused on the Kingdom of heaven. We need to ask ourselves these questions; Do I act solely to please God? The 'hypocrites' get a hard time from Jesus. They are people who pretend to be what they are not; they are actors, performing behind their masks. Is there any pretence about me? Do I ever catch myself telling small lies to give others a better impression of myself? How does our life reflect the hope and the treasure that we have in Jesus Christ?

3.Responsive Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully increase in us Your gifts of holy discipline, in prayer, almsgiving and fasting; that our lives may be directed to the fulfilling of Your most gracious will.

O God, we also ask that in this season of Lent, in which our hearts seek Your help and healing; and so, purify us by Your discipline that we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Scripture- Genesis 9:8-27

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹ “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” ¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³ I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷ God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

¹⁸ The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) ¹⁹ These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed.^[a]

²⁰ Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard.^[b] ²¹ He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. ²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. ²³ Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness. ²⁴ When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, ²⁵ he said,

“Cursed be Canaan;
a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.”

²⁶ He also said,

“Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem;
and let Canaan be his servant.

²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth,^[c]
and let him dwell in the tents of Shem,
and let Canaan be his servant.”

1.Reflections on the Scripture

Covenant made with the Living things.

This passage describes God's covenant with us, our descendants, and all living creatures, and expresses the sign of that covenant. It also shows that God will not permit

flood and destroy all living things on the earth to show that He is a faithful God and that He is responsible for what He does.

This passage mentions Shem, Ham, and Japheth, who were scattered throughout the earth, demonstrating God's covenant with the world.

For Ham saw his father naked, and did not help to cover, but told me his brothers. But Shem and Japheth immediately took their clothes and hitched up their father. When the father sobered up, he blessed Shem and Japheth. And Shem became their slave.

This is a great reminder of the faithfulness of God, who has made a covenant with us in a practical way. Let us keep our purity and not be contaminated by wine, and let us become a benefactor of the Gospel, so that we may receive God's great favour.

2.Application:

May the Lord bless you to keep your covenant with God all the days of your life, to be a follower who overcomes all kinds of temptations, and to live faithfully as a good vessel after God's own heart.

3.Responsive Prayer:

Oh Lord! Thank you for you are the creator from the beginning to the end, so that we may follow you and enjoy your care and protection. May we be willing to keep our covenant with you and follow you unswervingly throughout our lives, and we will overcome all temptations and follow you faithfully, in the name of the Lord, Amen!

Scripture – Psalm 25:1-10

- To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
²O my God, in you I trust;
let me not be put to shame;
let not my enemies exult over me.
³Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame;
they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.
⁴Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.
⁵Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all the day long.
⁶Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.
⁷Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!
⁸Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
⁹He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.
¹⁰All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

1.Reflections on the Scripture

This passage reveals that David was a believer who relied on God with all his heart, confident that the Lord had brought him over his shame and would show him the way ahead. Convinced of God's mercy and love, he asked God to forgive him for the sins he had committed in his ignorance. He knew that God was guiding him in the right way. But we must look upon Him with humility and a willingness to keep His laws. If we have the heart of David to trust in God, we will experience the Saviour he knew.

2.Application

In the problems we face, help me to trust in God's preservation, as David did, and to be convinced of His presence, and to take hold of His promises and follow Him to the end.

3. Responsive Prayer

Oh Lord! I thank You for making David an example to us. Help me to have such a heart so that Your power may be manifested in me, in the name of the Lord, Amen!

Scripture - 1 Peter 3:18-22

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered^[a] once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which^[b] he went and proclaimed^[c] to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ because^[d] they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

1. Reflections on the Scripture

This passage mentions that the Lord Jesus was willing to be crucified and die for the salvation of sinners. Even though He died, He was resurrected after three days. He went to prison to preach the gospel to the sinners during these three days so that the sinners would be given the last chance for salvation.

As in the days of Noah, God told Noah to build an ark to save sinners because the world was full of sin, and only his family of eight was willing to enter the ark and be saved.

We who trust in Him can stand before the Lord through baptism today. The Lord Jesus has entered heaven before us, and is judging at God's right-hand side, so we should believe and turn to Him.

2. Application

Live close to the Lord every day, relying on Him to overcome all temptations, living in the light of the Lord, and manifesting the glory of the Lord in your life, and acting as a witness in our times.

3. Responsive prayer

Thanks to the heavenly Father for sending the Son to save the world from its sins. I pray that the Lord will give me a heart of flesh, and that I will return to God with a sincere heart, and be a good son or daughter who returns to You. I pray in the name of the Lord, Amen!

Scripture - Mark 1:9-15

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son;^[a] with you I am well pleased.”

¹² The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand;^[b] repent and believe in the gospel.”

1. Reflections on the Scripture

The wilderness represents Israel's failure in temptation, but here Jesus represents mankind's victory over temptation. He represents the Father's defeat of Satan's temptations. Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and the help of angels to defeat Satan's schemes. How do I accept the salvation of the Lord. Repent and believe in the gospel. That is, be willing to allow the King to enter your throne and rule over us. That is believing the gospel. Jesus' baptism was a God to God commitment. The forty days in the wilderness is representing the forty years in the wilderness for the Israelites. Jesus was first incarnate and understood man's weakness. He was committed to God's mission. His going into the wilderness represents man's victory over the temptations of the devil.

The word "repentance" means: to accept something when you have thought about it and understood it, not in the heat of the moment. The choices you make will lead to a different life.

2. Application

Pray that we will live as a light, walk in the word of the Lord, not listen to the voice of the evil one, and be sure to be children pleasing to God.

3. Responsive Prayer

Oh Lord! Help me to overcome the temptations of the devil as Jesus did, and to be a child who pleases you as Jesus did. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture - Gen 17:1-7, 15-16

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty;^[a] walk before me, and be blameless,² that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.”³ Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him,⁴ “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram,^[b] but your name shall be Abraham,^[c] for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.⁷ And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

¹⁵ And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah^[a] shall be her name.¹⁶ I will bless her, and moreover, I will give^[b] you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

1. Reflections on Scripture

God's renaming of Abram here contains the following meaning:

According to the original text, God added one letter of His name to show that man can only achieve things through God Zech. 4:6).

God added to "Abram" and he became "Abraham"; believers should allow God to increase and himself to decrease (John 3:30).

Abram and Sarah changed their names. If believers are to produce spiritual children, they must first change themselves.

With the addition of God to the believer's being, the believer leaves the narrow-minded individualism of the past and is brought into the broad-minded, caring church (the new name means "many people").

Faith and promise go hand in hand: faith must be based on promise (God's word) to be effective; promise (God's word) must be received by faith to be realised.

2. Application

May the Lord renew my spirit and touch me so that my life will be so bright that I can influence many people to believe in the Lord.

3. Responsive Prayer

O Lord! Thank You for the new names You gave to Abraham and Sarah. The purpose is to change their lives, to become broad-minded and caring vessels, and I pray that You will give me this life, in the name of the Lord, Amen.

2nd Week of Lent

11. 26 Feb 2nd Week of Lent Monday
Ps Esther Kwang Grace Methodist Church

Scripture Psalm 22:23-31

22:23 You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him,
and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!
24 For he has not despised or abhorred
the affliction of the afflicted,
and he has not hidden his face from him,
but has heard, when he cried to him.
25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will perform before those who fear him.
26 The afflicted^[a] shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the LORD!
May your hearts live forever!
27 All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before you.
28 For kingship belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.
29 All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
even the one who could not keep himself alive.
30 Posterity shall serve him;
it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;
31 they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn,
that he has done it.

1. Reflections on the Scripture

Psalm 22 is a quintessential Lenten Psalm, the first verse of the Psalm is what Jesus himself quoted on the cross. As we look at the rest of the first half of Psalm 22, it is a cry for help of one going through hardship and suffering. The verses we are looking at today are, however; the outcome after Jesus has come to their aid, they are a prayer of praise. Looking at the Psalm, we can see that there is a distinct shift and these verses from 23 to 31 tell the story of hope! They tell of the hope that comes from Christ Jesus alone. In verses 23-26, the Psalmist is calling the congregation to join together in praise because God has answered his prayer and in the final verses of the Psalm (27-31), he broadens that call to include the whole world, that the world will know Christ, and praise and worship him. This half of the Psalm tells the beautiful picture of Jesus coming in hope; not just for the Psalmist but for the whole world. As we journey through this Lenten season we must never lose sight of the fact that Jesus has done it all, and because of that we have hope. Even in the midst of everything, we can still praise God.

2. Application

As Christians we are able to hold on to the eternal hope that we have in Christ Jesus. Even as we continue in this Lenten season may we be reminded that we can praise God for who he is and what he has done for us. Let us not get so caught up in our Lenten observances

and forget that God is the one who saves, who has saved us. Today let us praise the Lord for what he has done and continue to praise him no matter what may be going on in our lives right now.

3.Responsive Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we come to you today, may we make this prayer of the psalmist's our prayer. We want to praise you for who you are and what you have done in our lives, that no matter what we may be going through or what we may be facing we can continue to look to you as our hope. As we continue through this Lenten season may we not lose sight of the hope that Christ brings. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Scripture- Romans 4:13-25

¹³ For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸ In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” ¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness^[a] of Sarah's womb. ²⁰ No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²² That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” ²³ But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

1.Reflections on the Scripture

Abraham is often called the, “Father of faith”. This passage in Romans; however, is not often the one which we refer to when thinking about Abraham’s faith. Yet this passage clearly shows that God’s promise to Abraham to be the father of many nations was one that although seemed impossible, Abraham still believed. That despite Sarah and Abraham’s advanced age he knew that God’s promise would be fulfilled. This faith of Abraham’s is the reason he is called the “Father of faith.” Abraham may not have been perfect, yet he still ultimately believed in God’s faithfulness and promises. The same is true for us, that we are called to believe in Jesus and his death and resurrection. It is in this belief that we are able to be called ; only because we believe are we able to be saved. Only Jesus Christ himself can save us by his death on that cross. We could never have done it on our own, only Jesus could and all he calls us to, is to believe.

2.Application

As we continue to walk through this Lenten season let us not think that our Lenten observances, whether it is fasting or praying or whatever we have chosen to practice this Lenten season, will somehow make us more holy or closer to God. Rather let us remember that God is only asking that we believe in his son Jesus Christ and what he did for us on the cross. Let us continue to give God all the praise and glory knowing he is the one who has brought us from death to life.

3.Responsive Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for your son Jesus Christ's death and resurrection that has brought us salvation. We thank you that we cannot do anything on our own but that we can only respond by believing in what you have done for us. Help us to remember that all you ask is that we believe, help us to have faith in you knowing that you are the one who did it all for us already. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Scripture- Mark 8:31-38

³¹ And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

³⁴ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life^[a] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

1.Reflections on the Scripture

Today's passage is probably one of the more familiar passages to most of us. However, have we considered what these two passages together are saying - Jesus' rebuking Peter, “Get behind me, Satan!” and Jesus' teaching about the cost of being a disciple. Let us consider first Peter being rebuked, for Peter and his disciples had not yet grasped what Jesus' purpose was. They believed Jesus was the Son of God, yet their idea was that He would come in some way in his role to overthrow the powers that be. They could not understand how Jesus losing his life was able to make anyone's life better. Of course we know that Jesus' death on the cross was the key to our salvation. In the next verses 34-38 we hear Jesus teaching about the importance of dying to ourselves, of taking up the cross and following him. That we should not be grasping onto this life as is the human condition but rather that we should be willing to give it all up to gain Christ which is worth so much more.

2.Responsive Prayer

Heavenly Father, we so easily get caught up with the world and the life we live here on earth and easily forget you. Help us to realise that the most important thing in this life is you and what you have done for us on the cross. Help us to always look to you as the most important thing in our lives, that following you is worth more than anything else on this earth. Thank you for the example of Jesus who literally gave his life up for us, that we too can give up our life for you Lord. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

3.Application

As we continue in this Lenten season help us to think about what is the most important thing in our life. Is following Jesus the most important thing or have other things of the world snuck in to take number one spot? Take a moment to reassess and reprioritise our lives so that we can daily, truly deny ourselves and take up the cross and follow Christ.

Scripture-Mark 9:2-9

² And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³ and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one^[a] on earth could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵ And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi,^[b] it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁶ For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷ And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son;^[c] listen to him.” ⁸ And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

⁹ And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

1.Reflections on the Scripture

This passage is more commonly known as the Mount of Transfiguration. The word transfiguration means when something transforms or changes into something else, one thing becomes something completely different. Jesus was transfigured before the disciples on that mountain, hence the title of the passage. He was changed and transformed in that moment, and in that moment the glory of God in the person of Jesus was revealed to the disciples. They were able to see for themselves that he truly was divine, the Son of living God. As they saw him talking to Moses and Elijah, they were able to understand on some level that Jesus was there to fulfil the law and the prophets. On that mountain where they saw Christ transfigured, they got to glimpse the true holiness of Christ and his true purpose. God was revealing to the disciples who Jesus was, as both human and divine.

2.Application

As we continue in our Lenten journey it is important for us to think about this, who is Jesus to you and me? Lent is meant to be a time of repentance. It is not about a feeling of shame at our failures but instead an awareness that sin separates us from God and realising what it cost Him to be reunited with us. At the Transfiguration Jesus showed who he truly is, that he is the only one who could come and die for our sins because he is both uniquely human and divine. If he was not indeed the Son of God then his death on the cross means nothing, but because he is the Son of God it means everything.

3.Responsive Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we come to you this day I just ask that you continue to reveal more of who you are to us. Help us to realise just how much you loved us that you were willing to send your Son on the cross to die for us. That indeed this season of Lent will help us to dwell on what it is that you were willing to give up so that we can have that relationship with you again. To realise what it means that you are the only one who is both uniquely human and divine. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Scripture- Exodus 20:1-17

20 And God spoke all these words, saying,

²“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

³“You shall have no other gods before^[a] me.

⁴“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands^[b] of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

⁸“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

¹²“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³“You shall not murder.^[c]

¹⁴“You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵“You shall not steal.

¹⁶“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷“You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.”

1.Reflections on the Scripture

The Ten Commandments are a passage of Scripture that we are very familiar with. No doubt you have heard them read and preached about multiple times. One thing to note when reading this passage is that these commandments were God’s direct address to Israel: “*And God spoke all these words*”. What we are reading in Exodus 20 was God’s covenant between

Israel and himself on Mount Sinai, a call to them to be set apart and holy. A call to them as people redeemed by God to follow these words, because of this close personal relationship they had with God, a relationship where God spoke to them. It was not about morality but rather about relationship, what it looked like for someone to be in a relationship with a holy God who had created and redeemed them. Rather than reading these commandments as a list of laws to be obeyed, it is important to think about them as guidelines on how to be in relationship with our holy God and with the community of his people.

2.Application

As we read this passage in Exodus 20, let us think about our relationship with God and his call to holiness. What does it mean for us to be in a relationship with a holy God? Are we living a life that is set apart that shows that we are in a covenant relationship with him. In this season of Lent let us consider where in our lives we may not be showing what it means to be one of God's chosen people.

3.Responsive Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have chosen us to be your people. That because of your Son we are able to have a relationship with you, through your Son, you redeemed us to be your own. Help us to live a life that is set apart and holy in view of your holiness God. May we realise how important our relationship with you is and what it means for us to be in this relationship with you, what it is you are calling us to. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Scripture- Psalm 19:1-14

1. The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above^[a] proclaims his handiwork.
- ² Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.
- ³ There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.
- ⁴ Their voice^[b] goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.
- In them he has set a tent for the sun,
⁵ which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.
- ⁶ Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them,
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.
- ⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect,^[c]
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure,
making wise the simple;
- ⁸ the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
- ⁹ the fear of the LORD is clean,
enduring forever;
the rules^[d] of the LORD are true,
and righteous altogether.
- ¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.
- ¹¹ Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
- ¹² Who can discern his errors?
Declare me innocent from hidden faults.
- ¹³ Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins;
let them not have dominion over me!
Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.
- ¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

1. Reflections on the Scripture

The Heavens Speak of the Glory of God

David, the psalmist, tells us that we can recognise God either directly or indirectly, because through creation in the universe, God has revealed His glory to us.

In Psalm 19:1-6, David says that when we look with our spiritual eyes at God's marvellous creations in the universe, we can certainly see that God has left the imprint of His hand in every corner of His creation. Then David the psalmist cried out, saying.

"The heavens declare the glory of God;

The heavens declare the works of His hands" (Psalm 19:1).

This agrees with the description given by the apostle Paul in the book of Romans:

"The things of God, which are known unto men, are manifest in the hearts of men, because God hath revealed them unto them. Since the creation of the heavens and the earth, the eternal power and divinity of God are clearly known, though invisible to the eye, yet understood and seen through the things that are made, so that no one can blame them" (Rom. 1:19-20).

The oxygen content of the atmosphere is 21 per cent. If the oxygen content increases to 25 per cent, the earth will be engulfed in fire; if it decreases to 15 per cent, all living things, including human beings, will not be able to breathe and will die. If the Earth rotates more than 24 hours per day, the difference between the day and night temperatures of the Earth will be greatly increased; if the Earth rotates less than 24 hours per day, the winds blowing from the atmosphere will be so strong that all life on the Earth will be unable to withstand them. The earth's tilt is 23.5 degrees, and with only a slight difference in movement, the earth's climate would be polarised, and mankind would not be able to survive.

Yes, the creation of the universe was not accidental, but planned and marvellously created by a great God. It was the Almighty who created the well-ordered and orderly universe. Theologically, we call this God's "Natural Revelation". More importantly, however, God also gives us "Special Revelation" through the words of the Bible and the grace in Jesus Christ. "(Ps. 19:8), and "the code of the LORD" (Ps. 19:19) are all references to the inspired words of God in the Old Testament.

However, we Christians living in the post-New Testament era have to be all the more thankful because apart from natural revelation and the revelation of the Old Testament, we also have the New Testament, the summit of God's revelation to mankind, which tells us about the all-sufficient blessing of the Lord Jesus and God's salvation in Jesus Christ.

2. Application

1. I ask the Lord to help me not only to see God's "natural revelations" in the universe, but also to help others so that they, like me, may see God's marvellous creations in the natural world.

2. I would also like to thank God for the "special revelation" of salvation in the Bible and in Christ. Give me the courage to share with others God's "special revelations", His laws, His statutes, His teachings and His commandments in the Bible. At the same time, through Lent, share with others the message of God's all-sufficient blessing in Jesus Christ, who died for me and rose again for me, triumphing over sin and death.

3. Responsive Prayer

Oh Lord, I thank You during this second week of Lent. I thank You for reminding me of the wonders of Your creation through this psalm written by king David. Help us to see the world with spiritual eyes every day. As I look upon this marvellous universe, the grass and the trees that Thou hast made, and the mankind that Thy hand has made, show me anew the handprints of Thy creation. Let me cry, as King David did, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims the works of His hands.

I thank You also, that in the creation of man, thou hast breathed upon him a breath of spirit, that we may be "living creatures of the Spirit," and may henceforth commune with thee, and know how to worship thee.

Thank you, Lord, for giving us "special instructions"-the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments-so that we may read them every day, and learn from Thy Word to know the Lord Jesus and the salvation which He brings to mankind for the remission of sins.

3rd Week of Lent

17. 4 Mar 3rd Week of Lent Monday
Rev Dr Michael Tan Sherwood MC

Scripture- 1 Cor 1:18-25

¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach^[a] to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

1. Reflections on the Scriptures

In 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, the Apostle Paul mentions two different world views on the doctrine of the cross, one for the wise and the other for the foolish.

"For the doctrine of the cross is foolishness to them that perish;

But to us who are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

Paul tells us that there are two kinds of men in the world: those who regard the doctrine of the cross as foolishness, and those who regard the doctrine of the cross as the power of God.

The first kind, which we call "Secular World View", sees the world through secular glasses. These people do not believe in the existence of God. The second kind of people look at the world through the Biblical World View. They believe in the existence of God and that there is a close personal relationship between God and them. They also believe that the Lord Jesus is their personal Saviour.

The secular worldview removes God from the world and from human life. These people live in a world without God. They believe that man will triumph over God; they reject God's place in their lives; they believe that they hold their lives in their own hands. They also believed that man could improve the world and make it a better place by education and with his own hands. They believed that through the wisdom of man all the problems of mankind could be solved, including conflicts between nations and peoples, wars and poverty. They do not believe in a creator in Zeus, nor do they believe in the sinfulness of mankind or in the coming judgement of God. For them there is no absolute right or wrong, but they believe that the opinion of the many is right. To these men, if we discuss with them the doctrines of the

Scriptures, and the blessings of the cross of Jesus Christ, they will shut us out, and look upon us as fools.

Paul challenged the worldly view of the world in 1 Corinthians 1:20, asking what the "wise" among them (including scribes, lawyers, scholars and apologists) had accomplished. Did their unbelief change the world? Did they solve the problems of the world? They solved the problems of the world, including morality, sin, evil, war, and conflicts between men. Paul did not give a definite answer, but from his tone, his answer was definitely no. All the scholars of the world, however, have not given a definite answer! All the scholars, lawyers, wise men, and philosophers of the world, put together, cannot solve the most fundamental problems of mankind, cannot change this world of sin for the better.

In 1 Corinthians 1:21, Paul tells us that there are two alternatives before us - the way of the world and the way of God. The ways of the world see the cross as foolishness, but the ways of God see the cross as the only sign of His salvation.

In 1 Corinthians 1:22-25, Paul tells us that the doctrine of the cross is foolish to the cultured Greeks and the religiously pious Jews. First of all, the Jews look for signs and wonders, for they regard them as manifestations of God's power. Jesus, who was crucified by the Romans, could never be the Messiah in the framework of their faith. The Jews regarded the crucified Jesus as a stumbling block in their faith, for they believed that the Messiah expected in history was an all-powerful conqueror, and never the crucified Jesus, for the body was "cursed by God, every one that hangeth upon a log" (Deut. 21:23).

What about the Greeks? Paul said that the Greeks (Hellenes) valued wisdom (Sophia). The God of the Greek religious beliefs was an insensitive God, who could therefore never love the world, let alone suffer for it. The God of Greek belief is a God who is completely isolated from the world. Therefore, the incarnate Jesus, who became a man of blood and tears, and Christ, who suffered on the cross, was an unthinkable event in the logic of the Greeks and a stumbling block to their faith.

2. Application

1. Reflecting on my own journey of faith, I asked myself, "To what kind of man do I belong? Was I wise or foolish? Do I believe in the salvation of the cross? Do I believe that the cross is the power of God to forgive me my sins, to save me from death, and to give me eternal life?"

Why did the Jews, the people of God, reject Jesus the Nazarene? Why did the Greeks (Hellenes), who were famous for their wisdom, reject the Saviour of the world? What are the reasons?

2. God's request to me was not that I should imitate the wisdom of the Greeks, but that I should come to His throne of grace with a contrite heart and a humble spirit. Now I know that God has accepted me as His child, no longer a slave of sin, and that He will forgive me all my sins and make me whiter than snow.

3. Responsive prayer

Lord, help me not to be like the Jews or the Greeks (Hellenists), who prefer to look at Jesus with worldly eyes, so that He cannot be the Redeemer of mankind in their minds. Open my spiritual eyes to see the world, instead of looking at it through worldly glasses.

Remind me, Lord, that Thou didst love the world, and didst even give me Jesus Christ, who was crucified for my sins, and didst rise from the dead for me on the third day, and didst ascend into heaven, and didst sit down at the right hand of the Almighty God, and from thence Thou wilt descend to judge the living and the dead.

I thank the Lord for bearing my sins on the cross. During the third week of Lent, I will look back on your love and meditate on the grace of the cross. The Lord suffered for me in order to free me from my sins and to make me a child of God.

Lord, help me to make up my mind to live for Him! Amen!

Scripture- John 2:13-22

¹³ The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵ And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

¹⁸ So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple,^[a] and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

1. Reflection on Scripture

Jesus acted violently against a temple worship that had lost its focus and was only a formality. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was aware that the high priest was controlling the economic activities of the temple. Those who came to worship were only focused on the offerings and paying the temple tax. They thought only of money transactions. They thought only of buying sacrificial animals, exchanging them for silver, and paying the poll tax to the temple. People were misled into forgetting that the most important thing in the temple was to be a witness to the people, to lead them to worship God and to ask Him.

Jesus' righteous anger drove out the traders and expressed his urgency to restore the worship of God in truth. The people came to the temple with no heart and no passion to seek God. Jesus drove out the businessmen and brought the people back into the presence of God. This act of passion and urgency was a sign of the Son of God.

The radical action of Jesus, the Son of God, called people back to the centre of worship, to worship God Himself with all their hearts.

Worship is the worship of God the Father through Christ the Son. Jesus also prophesied here that he would rise again three days after his death. This brought the disciples back to the presence of God to think about the grace of Jesus' death for us.

2. Application

When we come to God to worship Him, we should look to Him, seek Him, and pray to Him with all our heart. We should put aside the mundane tasks and pursuits of the rest of the world. It is pleasing to God to offer ourselves as a sacrifice.

Jesus Christ died and rose again to establish the eternal dwelling place of God, who will live with us forever. By seeking God's presence every day through prayer and meditation on His Word, we satisfy His heart.

3. Responsive Prayer

Our Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Son of God, you saw the ignorance and corruption of the human heart, and you drove out the traders in the temple. Father God, you set up a place of worship for people to worship God freely. But because of the greed of the human heart, when we attend worship, we only see money and offerings, but we forget to offer ourselves. We only care about fulfilling your external laws of worship, but we forget that what you want is the spirit and the truth. Lord, it is Your passion that shows us our sin. It is Thy sacrifice that accomplishes the forgiveness of sins, and it is Thy sacrifice that accomplishes worship.

Lord, You came to earth to sacrifice Your life. Our dark and broken lives were not worth saving, yet you were willing to lay down your life for us. Lord, we want to worship you alone, please accept our worship.

Scripture- Numbers 21:4-9

⁴From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. ⁵And the people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food." ⁶Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. ⁷And the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." ⁹So Moses made a bronze^[a] serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

1. Reflection on the Scriptures

Looking upon Christ

The troubles of life often cause us to lose faith. We are heavenly travellers, and when we encounter troubles, setbacks and obstacles, we often lose our peace of mind.

God is not pleased with our sin. When we don't believe in God, we complain to God, we complain to our leaders, and we don't accept God's guidance and direction. We think it is our right to complain and we don't see any problem. It is not until we are punished by God for complaining that we realise our sin. God has not given up on us, He has prepared Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the New Testament, so that we can be saved. In the Old Testament, the bronze serpent that Moses made was a sign of Jesus Christ, the only way of salvation that God has prepared, and as long as people look to Christ, they will be saved.

2. Application

Christians are heavenly pilgrims who walk in God's way every day. When setbacks and trials come, we choose to give thanks and praise instead of complaining and getting angry. We need to experience God's presence and comfort.

We look to Christ daily for salvation. We choose to pray to Christ and look to Jesus in times of trouble, sickness, persecution, injury, contempt and pain. Jesus Christ is our salvation and will deliver us from death.

3. Responsive Prayer

Lord, you are the God who prepared salvation. You know our condition. We are prone to throw away our faith because of troubles and frustrations. We repent to you for grumbling to you and to our leaders because of our unbelief. Forgive us our sins.

We want to submit to your mighty hand, and ask you to guide us in the way that is pleasing to you. We will always look to Jesus, who is the author and finisher of our faith, and

ask you to guide us by your word every day, and direct us in the direction of our lives, in the name of the Lord, amen!

Scripture – Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

107 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever!

² Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
whom he has redeemed from trouble^[a]

³ and gathered in from the lands,
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.

¹⁷ Some were fools through their sinful ways,
and because of their iniquities suffered affliction;

¹⁸ they loathed any kind of food,
and they drew near to the gates of death.

¹⁹ Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.

²⁰ He sent out his word and healed them,
and delivered them from their destruction.

²¹ Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!

²² And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving,
and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!

1. Reflection on Scripture

Psalm 107 is a psalm of thanksgiving. God's people should always remember God's goodness. Thank God for His gift of salvation. We are precious in God's sight, and He has gathered us from the four corners of the earth and chosen us from among the nations to be His people. We are all equal before salvation, regardless of our colour, language, culture, country or dialect. Every one of God's saved people has God's favour.

Thank God for saving those who repent and cry out to Him. Many times people bring their own suffering on themselves by breaking God's laws, and then they fall into trouble and suffer in their physical and spiritual relationships. The deeper a person suffers, the more he realises his own limitations, the meaninglessness and despair of his life, and the more he hates his own life. When a person recognises his or her suffering and begs for God's help, God saves those who call on Him and delivers them from death.

Thanks be to God, if a man can perceive his need of salvation, he will be saved. Because of God's salvation, the people will worship and praise the Lord. Those who are blessed will have to tell of his works.

2. Application

God chose us out of all men and redeemed us from the devil. We no longer belong to the world, but to God. Our values, our outlook on life, and our lifelong pursuits no longer follow the herd, no longer follow the world. Today, under the light of the Holy Spirit, we ask

God to reveal the hidden feelings of our hearts. We ask God to adjust our motivation to become the true people of God's kingdom.

Are we willing to call out to God in the midst of suffering and frustration? God is willing to listen to our prayers, asking Him to save us from the pain of our sins. Call out to God and ask Him to save us, so that we can find a way out of all these sufferings.

3. Responsive Prayer

We thank you, God, who has chosen us. Because of your salvation, we have been chosen among all men to be God's people. Lord, we have often rebelled against You and disobeyed Your word, causing us to suffer hardship and pain. Hear our cry and lead us back to You, and deliver us from death.

O God, we will praise You every day, because You have mercy on us, and save us from eternal death, in the name of the Lord.

Scripture – Ephesians 2:1-10

2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body^[a] and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.^[b] ⁴ But^[c] God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

1. Reflections on Scripture

Our Past Before being saved and Our Present After being saved

Before we received grace, we lived without Christ in the light of spiritual death, which includes being in sinful transgressions, following the world, serving the devil, Satan, and indulging the lusts of the flesh. The world, Satan and the lusts of the flesh are our kings. We are living in the kingdom of darkness, and we cannot extricate ourselves from it. Our bodies are alive, but our souls are dead, like a virus that infects our souls. We are dull and insensitive to God, and the emotions, reason, and will of our souls are all shut off from God; we are spiritual zombies. We are spiritual zombies. In God's eyes, we are corpses with no spirit.

God did not leave us alone. Out of His great love for the world, God sent His only Son to save the world. He gave us salvation when we needed it most. God gave us a heavenly position, not only for us, but also for future generations.

All that we have received from God is grace. Grace can only be received by faith, not by works. This is the foundation of all that Christians do. By faith we receive the great work of redemption that Christ accomplished.

How marvellous it is that God regards us as precious. Each one of us is a work of God's hands. People may fail God and not believe in Him, but God always loves and cares for people and makes us into vessels of His love. 4.

2. Application

Find a quiet place and prepare a pen and paper before God. Ask God's Holy Spirit to illuminate us and write down our past sins and offences against God. Our evil desires, our wrong values, our worldly pursuits, and the direction of our life that is not to God's liking. After writing them down, pray before God and ask Him to forgive us for all the sins and wrong thoughts we have committed in the past. Tear up the paper and throw it away. God no longer remembers our sins. We can start again.

Thank God again for personally moulding us through our circumstances in order to make us a vessel fit for God. Give thanks for the difficulties, challenges, and setbacks we have encountered. Write down a prayer of thanks for all these encounters, and thank God for allowing everything to come to us.

3. Responsive Prayer

Lord, we thank you. We were dead in our sins and trespasses, but you saved us from all our evil desires, the enemy of the devil, and the blackmail of the world.

O Lord, we give thanks to you. Because of your great love, you saved us, regenerated us, and transferred me to the kingdom of your beloved Son. We no longer belong to the kingdom of the devil, but you have given us the identity of God's people, and we belong to you forever.

We thank you for your grace. We praise you. Thank you for making us into your good vessels, in the name of the Lord, amen!

Scripture - John 3:14-21

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.^[a]

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world,^[b] that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

1. Reflections on Scripture

The events of Numbers paint a vivid picture of man's salvation through Christ, just as the looking at the brazen serpent healed the Jews, confirming the sacrifice of Christ for their salvation. At that time, men suffered and died because of their own failures, and were healed only by faith in God's ways. In the same way, all men suffer and ultimately die because of their sins. The only hope is to believe in God's salvation by faith, and those who refuse will miss out on salvation.

John 3:16 is the heart of Christianity, the summary of the gospel and the theme of the whole Bible: God so loved the world that He sent Jesus into the world to die for us, so that whoever believes in Him may be saved from their sins and have eternal life.

2. Application

The truth sets me free from all control. Therefore, I can face God's judgement openly because Jesus has taken my place. I can face my circumstances because Christ's love has accepted me exactly as I am. I can face the unknown future because I have the light of truth daily illuminating and cleansing me.

3. Responsive Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us the way of eternal life, so that we can believe in Jesus and be saved by your abundant grace alone. May we walk in the truth and shine before men, and give us wisdom to number our days in this life, so that we may glorify You in all our lives. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

4th Week of Lent

23. 11 Mar 4th Week of Lent Monday

Rev James Kong

Camberwell Methodist Church

Scripture - Jer 31:31-34

³¹ “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

1. Reflections on Scripture

When we trust God, the dark and difficult days are not the end. God promises to make a new covenant with all who trust Him in a new way. God is looking for sinners and is full of grace and mercy for them. God will forgive all the sins of those who trust in Him, and will remember them no more, so that all who trust in Him, no matter who you are, no matter where you come from, you can know God. May we not only know God, but may we take His law to heart and write it on our hearts, so that we may walk with Him in an intimacy never before seen in the Old Testament. God will be our God and we will be His people. By God's grace, we can know God personally.

2. Application

May we walk closely with God all the days of our lives, in complete obedience to Him, through the power of the Holy Spirit and His Word written on your heart. Wherever we are, you and I are blessed to know God, not only to walk with Him, but also to be fully forgiven by Him. Help us to know You better and to experience Your faithful promises as we grow.

3. Responsive Prayer Response

Dear Heavenly Father, for the praise of You in my life, thank You for Your new covenant, so that we may have fellowship with You, know You better through Your precious words, written on our hearts, and believe firmly in Your promises. Help us to obey you, to enjoy you, to worship you, to glorify you, and to experience your presence. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Scripture - Psalm 32:1-7

- Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
- ² Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
- ³ For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
- ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up^[b] as by the heat of summer. *Selah*
- ⁵ I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. *Selah*
- ⁶ Therefore let everyone who is godly
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters,
they shall not reach him.
- ⁷ You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. *Selah*

1. Reflection on Scripture

The forgiveness and release that comes with the forgiveness of sins can only be experienced when a person genuinely seeks God, accepts that his actions are wrong, confesses his sins and repents. God's conviction of sin is painful, but it is also part of His mercy. Refusing to confess your sins brings intense emotional and physical pain, as well as leading a double life in order to hide them. The pressure of a double life and sin makes a person feel old, depressed and drained. Only being honest about our sins will lead to repentance, restoration and growth. Knowing that God has such great forgiveness and mercy, the godly person has a greater reason to seek God and enjoy a fellowship and protection from Him.

2. Application

God does not count us as sinful when we rely on Him with an honest heart and believe in faith in what He has prepared for us through the way of the cross of Jesus Christ. Though we have sinned and been in the power of darkness, when we honestly believe in the salvation that God has provided for us, God does not count us as sinners, but we are blessed.

3. Responsive Prayer

Dear heavenly Father, I confess to you my sins and offences, and do not conceal my evils. May you forgive and cleanse me from all my iniquities, and heal me from the scourge of Jesus Christ. You are my refuge, and the song of your salvation surrounds me on every side. May you fill me with the joy of your salvation. In the name of the Lord Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Scripture - Psalm 119:9-16

⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure?

By guarding it according to your word.

¹⁰ With my whole heart I seek you;

let me not wander from your commandments!

¹¹ I have stored up your word in my heart,

that I might not sin against you.

¹² Blessed are you, O LORD;

teach me your statutes!

¹³ With my lips I declare

all the rules^[a] of your mouth.

¹⁴ In the way of your testimonies I delight

as much as in all riches.

¹⁵ I will meditate on your precepts

and fix my eyes on your ways.

¹⁶ I will delight in your statutes;

I will not forget your word.

1. Reflection on Scripture

To live a clean life, we must seek God with all our heart, keep His word, and hide it in our hearts. God's word has the power to cleanse us from our sins and help us in our walk with God. May God allow me to rejoice in His Word more than any wealth, glory, comfort, fame, position or power the world has to offer. I want God's Word to be in my mind forever, to be obeyed all the days of my life, and to have great joy and comfort in His Word. Through faith in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, we can hear His word, live out His command to love God and man, live out His laws in the Bible, and finally abide in His commandments and experience His justice.

2. Application

To value God's word is to fear God, and to love God leads us to obey His word. May we teach our children to obey it, and may they be taught from childhood the Bible and God's holy moral standards, so that they may bear the blessings that will be passed on from generation to generation. May we be an outlet for God's Word and a blessing to this generation.

3. Responsive Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, Your word is the bread of life and the source of blessing. Only by following your word can we overcome all temptations. Keep your word in your heart, so that we may not sin against you. Help us to experience the truth and sweetness of your words, so that we may be determined to obey them and spread them. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

26. 14 Mar 4th Week of Lent Thursday
Rev James Kong Camberwell Methodist Church

Scripture - Heb 5:5-10

⁵ So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”;

⁶ as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever,
after the order of Melchizedek.”

⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus^[a] offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰ being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

1. Reflections on the Scripture

Christ did not glorify Himself, but was appointed by the Father to fully assume the role of our great and eternal High Priest. He was sinless so that He could offer Himself as a perfect sacrifice to God on the cross. He was the Son of God, but through suffering He learned obedience and became the perfect Kingly High Priest. He ascended to heaven, sat down at the right hand of God, and "lived forever to make intercession" for us before God the Father. His sufferings and subsequent resurrection fully fitted Him to be our Redeemer, a salvation that extends to all who obey Him. He was called by God to be a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, much more than the High Priests of the Aaronic line.

2. Application

Jesus not only accepted the punishment for our sins on the cross, but now He continues to care for us and pray for us as "our High Priest". He will help us in times of trouble. Through the Holy Spirit in us, we are empowered and will not succumb to external pressures or internal temptations. We are never alone!

3. Responsive Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you Jesus for being our eternal High Priest. May we all be your royal priesthood, your holy nation, to proclaim your virtues and witness your precious

salvation. With thankful hearts, we will serve you faithfully, rely on you in all things, and follow you all the days of our lives to glorify you. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we pray. Amen!

Scripture: John 12:20-33

²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” ²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

²³ Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

²⁷ “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” ²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

³⁰ Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up^[a] from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

1. Reflections on the Scripture.

We can’t be certain why the Greeks came looking for Jesus or why Jesus reacted the way He did. Perhaps the arrival of the Greeks reminded Jesus of His mission and His impending suffering and death on the cross. What the passage does show us is the humanness of Jesus and the utter sinfulness of sin. Nothing can atone for our sins except the blood of Jesus. He is “the kernel of wheat” that has to fall to the ground and die so that those who believe in Him may live. “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that, in Him, we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Cor. 5:21).

As a human being, Jesus anguished over his impending suffering and death, but perhaps more so, to have to take the sin of the world upon His sinless body and be separated from God the Father, even for a little while. In His moment of anguish, Jesus was lost for words, but thanks be to God, Jesus eventually said the most beautiful thing He could’ve said, “Father, glorify your name.”

His love for the Father and his compassion for people triumphed over all.

2. Application

Sin is so utterly sinful, it took Jesus’ blood to atone for it. Let us determine not to place ourselves in the path of temptation and sin.

Jesus calls His believers to follow Him. We don’t have to lay down our lives, since Jesus has already paid it all, but how can we love God and others sacrificially, like Him?

Following Jesus will not be easy. There may be times in our journey when we reach a point we do not know what to do, or say, or pray. Learn from Jesus what to pray when you do not know what to pray; “Father, glorify your name.”

3.Responsive Prayer.

Father God, thank you for the magnitude of your love for us that you sent your Son, Jesus Christ to die for us that we may be forgiven. Thank you for raising Him to life that we too might have eternal life. Lead us in paths of righteousness and keep us from sinning against you. Help us to be more and more like Jesus, to love you wholeheartedly, and be willing to love others sacrificially, as you have loved us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Scripture: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

- ¹ Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.
- ² Let Israel say:
“His love endures forever.”
- ¹⁹ Open for me the gates of the righteous;
I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.
- ²⁰ This is the gate of the Lord
through which the righteous may enter.
- ²¹ I will give you thanks, for you answered me;
you have become my salvation.
- ²² The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
- ²³ the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes.
- ²⁴ The Lord has done it this very day;
let us rejoice today and be glad.
- ²⁵ Lord, save us!
Lord, grant us success!
- ²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
From the house of the Lord we bless you.
- ²⁷ The Lord is God,
and he has made his light shine on us.
With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession
up to the horns of the altar.
- ²⁸ You are my God, and I will praise you;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.
- ²⁹ Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

1. Reflections on the Scripture.

Jesus quoted verses 22 and 23, and identified Himself as the stone that was rejected by His own people (Mt. 21:42; Mk. 12:10; Lk. 20:17). Peter testified before the Jewish rulers, elders, and teachers of the law, that Jesus *is* the stone mentioned in this psalm, and it was this stone, rejected by them, that healed the man, lame from birth, at the Temple gate (Acts 3:1-2; 4:11). The apostle would later write to the church of his day, telling them that Jesus *is* the living Stone, rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him and, quoting the prophet Isaiah, he wrote, “...the one who trusts in him, will never be put to shame.” (1 Pet. 2:4-7, Isa. 28:16).

Verses 25 and 26 were the words used by the people when they shouted, “Hosanna! (save, please!) Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” during Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mt. 21:9, 15; Mk. 11:9-10; Jn. 12:13).

God has answered the prayers of His people. Jesus has come to save. He has opened the gate for the righteous to enter and become His people. He has established the church, the household of God, with himself as the cornerstone.

2. Application.

Let us respond to the invitation of the psalmist. Let us give thanks to the Lord for he is good; his love endures forever. Let us give thanks, for He has answered us; He has become our salvation. Let us rejoice and be glad, for this is the day the Lord has made.

God has open the gate for the righteous to enter. The righteous are those who believe in Jesus as God's salvation. Let us also put our trust in Jesus, the chief cornerstone, for those who trust in Him will never be put to shame.

3. Prayer.

Loving heavenly Father, thank you that you have sent your Son, Jesus Christ, the stone the builders rejected, but who really is the living Stone, chosen by you and precious to you. Thank you for opening the gate so that we, having been made righteous by the blood of Jesus, may enter and become your people and members of your household. Help me to live my life as a responsible member of your household. Build me up, like a living stone, together with my fellow believers, into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to you through Jesus Christ. Amen.

5th Week of Lent

Scripture: Mark 11:1-11

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ² saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’”

⁴ They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵ some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” ⁶ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷ When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

“Hosanna!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”^[b]

¹⁰ “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

1. Reflections on the Scripture.

Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey is the fulfilment of the prophecy spoken of by the prophet Zechariah (Zech. 9:9) centuries earlier. This should remind us of the supremacy of the all-knowing, all-powerful, and forever-faithful God and Creator of the universe who keeps His promises. The passage also speaks of two un-named, but quietly obedient disciples of Jesus who did everything Jesus instructed – even something as mundane and seemingly as insignificant as fetching a donkey for Jesus. Contrast these two disciples with the noisy crowd that appeared, in every sense, to have gotten it right. They seemed to have read the Scriptures, they knew about the promised Messiah, and they even seem to have recognized Jesus to be the Messiah. Yet this would be the same crowd who would, in a matter of days, demand for Jesus to be crucified.

2. Application.

How do we respond to a God who’s all-knowing, all-powerful and forever-faithful? He alone is worthy of our worship, our trust, and obedience. Let us follow the example of the two quietly obedient disciples. Their unquestioning obedience to Jesus resulted in them playing a significant part in the fulfilment of God’s prophecy and plan of salvation for the world. We may never know how our obedience to the Lord, however insignificant it may seem, can result in something significant, even life-changing, for others. Let the crowd serve as a warning to us. They knew about the Messiah, but they did not really know Jesus, like the two disciples did. Let us draw closer to Jesus and really get to know Him – by studying the Scriptures and being obedient to Jesus, even in the seemingly insignificant things in life.

3. Prayer.

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for being who you are. You are the all-knowing, all-powerful Creator God of the universe, and you are our forever-faithful and loving Father. Help us to be obedient to you in the simple things in life, so that we might learn to trust you and become obedient to you with more important things – our family, our future, our life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Scripture: Isaiah 50:4-9

⁴The Sovereign Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue,
to know the word that sustains the weary.

He wakens me morning by morning,
wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed.

⁵The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears;
I have not been rebellious,
I have not turned away.

⁶I offered my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard;
I did not hide my face
from mocking and spitting.

⁷Because the Sovereign Lord helps me,
I will not be disgraced.
Therefore have I set my face like flint,
and I know I will not be put to shame.

⁸He who vindicates me is near.
Who then will bring charges against me?
Let us face each other!
Who is my accuser?
Let him confront me!

⁹It is the Sovereign Lord who helps me.
Who will condemn me?
They will all wear out like a garment;
the moths will eat them up.

1. Reflections on the Scripture.

As a prophet who confronted Judah with messages of warning so often difficult to hear, Isaiah became unpopular, especially in the later years of his ministry. In spite of great opposition, however, Isaiah remained faithful to God. He believed that God had given him a “well-instructed tongue to know the word that sustains the weary.” God woke him up “morning by morning” and “wakened [his] ear to listen like one being instructed.” Isaiah not only listened to God; he also obeyed God and spoke the words God instructed him to. He was not rebellious nor did he turn away from God’s instructions. As a result, he met much opposition – people who beat him, pulled his beard, mocked and spat on him. But he did not hide from them. The reason? He knew that God would help him and vindicate him and he would not be put to shame. Hence he would set his face like flint – he would remain resolute – and was prepared to confront the opposition, if necessary. As a result, Isaiah has gone down in history as one of Israel’s greatest prophets.

2. Application.

How can we have the courage to boldly and accurately share the good news of Jesus today? We can follow Isaiah's example. Wake up every morning to pray and study the Bible and see how God might open your ear to listen to Him as one being instructed. Then, be obedient to live by God's teaching and carry out His instructions. Our Lord Jesus has similarly set us an example that we should follow. He often got up early in the morning to pray and seek His Father's face. Consider the opposition Jesus face. If we follow Jesus' example, God will give us the words to speak, and He will help and vindicate us as we share the gospel with others.

3. Prayer.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the examples of the prophet Isaiah and our Lord Jesus Christ. Wake me up morning by morning to pray and study your Word. Open my ears to listen as one being instructed and help me to be obedient to your Word. Give me a well-instructed tongue that I may boldly and accurately tell of your great love for us – a love that brought Jesus into the world so that all who believe should not perish but have eternal life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Scripture - Psalm 31:9-16

- ⁹ Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;
my eye is wasted from grief;
my soul and my body also.
- ¹⁰ For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my iniquity,
and my bones waste away.
- ¹¹ Because of all my adversaries I have become a reproach,
especially to my neighbors,
and an object of dread to my acquaintances;
those who see me in the street flee from me.
- ¹² I have been forgotten like one who is dead;
I have become like a broken vessel.
- ¹³ For I hear the whispering of many—
terror on every side!—
as they scheme together against me,
as they plot to take my life.
- ¹⁴ But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, “You are my God.”
- ¹⁵ My times are in your hand;
rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!
- ¹⁶ Make your face shine on your servant;

1. Reflections on Scripture

King David cried out to God for mercy in the midst of his predicament, and he confessed his weaknesses and difficulties to God completely and unreservedly because he could no longer survive on his own in his predicament, and he needed God. But in the end, he emphasised God's merciful love even more. He clung to God's faithful love, placed all his hope in God, trusted God, and waited on God. We too often face pressures and difficulties in our lives, but just like David, we can entrust ourselves to the loving and merciful God through faith and prayer. In times of trouble, we are not alone, for we have a caring Heavenly Father whose lovingkindness never changes and who wants to save us.

2. Responsive Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for being with me in every moment of my life. When I am faced with stress and hardship, I want to learn to surrender everything to You. Your mercy and faithfulness are pillars in my life, so that I always remember to seek refuge in You. Help me to build a deeper relationship through prayer so that I can experience Your grace each and every day. In the name of the Lord Jesus, Amen!

3. Application

Purposefully take time to set aside an exclusive time of prayer in your schedule. Meditate on God's voice and present both the concerns and joys of your heart to Him. Let this time be a

time for you to grow closer to God and respond to His care for your life through gratitude and faith. Keep cultivating this practice of communion with God during this Lenten season to make your faith stronger.

Scripture – Phil 2:5-11

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,^[a] ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,^[b] ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,^[c] being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1. Reflections on the Scripture

The Apostle Paul calls Christians to imitate the humility and obedience of Jesus. Through this passage, Paul, in the form of a psalm of praise, emphasises the fact that Christ laid down His glory, descended to earth in the image of a minister, and willingly bore His cross, and was ultimately exalted to the highest place. Jesus' extreme humility and submission made our humility and submission possible. What a humble, singular love that Jesus, who was in the image of God, would die for me, a sinner! Charles Wesley sang, "Strange love, how it can be! My Lord and my God, that he should die for me." At the same time, Jesus set an example of humility and obedience. Through humility and obedience to God, we are able to manifest the character of Christ in our lives and walk with Him.

2. Application

Today, purposely choose one small thing to practice humility and obedience. It may be serving others, quietly completing a task, or showing concern for others in your daily life. By practicing this, allow the character of Christ to be reflected in your actions. At the same time, meditate consistently with a prayerful heart that it is through the humble heart of Jesus that God's salvation is accomplished. Practice becoming my heart with the humble heart of Christ.

3. Responsive Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, my Lord and my God! Thank You for humbling and emptying Yourself, laying down Your life for me, and for setting such a noble example. In my life, I need You to help me learn to imitate Your humility and obedience. May Your Holy Spirit mould my heart so that I can submit to Your will. I desire to be like You in all things, manifesting divine character. Amen!

Scripture - Mark 14:1-9

14 It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, ² for they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.”

³ And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,^[a] as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. ⁴ There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that? ⁵ For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii^[b] and given to the poor.” And they scolded her. ⁶ But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷ For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. ⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. ⁹ And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”

1. Reflections on Scripture

Bethany, was not a wealthy village, but we see a woman (Mary of Bethany) do a special thing to Jesus with great love and devotion. She took a very expensive bottle of ointment and came to Jesus and poured it on His head. Thirty talents of silver was about three hundred pieces of money, the equivalent of a year's wages for the average worker of the day. The others rebuked her because of the value of the balm, but Jesus recognised her action and commended her for the beauty of His burial. True worship and devotion comes from the love of the heart. Recognising that this Almighty King, who laid down His precious life for me, and am I willing to willingly offer my sincere worship and devotion for the Lord?

2. Application

Try to find an opportunity to express feelings of devotion to God. This doesn't have to be material; it can be from time, talent, or caring. Find someone in need or get involved in service in your church or community. Through this practice, experience the joy of giving and authentically communicate God's love to others. May the love of the anointed Messiah, Jesus Christ, who willingly gave Himself to be crucified, inspire our hearts of sincere worship and devotion to care for those in need.

3. Responsive Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for laying down Your life for our sins, Your love cannot be expressed in words. My heart was touched by seeing that woman give so much. May You open my eyes so that I can serve You with sincere love and devotion. Help me to let go of my ego and willingly offer my sincere worship and devotion in response to Your love for me.

Scripture - Mark 15:1-15

15 And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. ² And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” ³ And the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ And Pilate again asked him, “Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you.” ⁵ But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

⁶ Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. ⁷ And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. ⁸ And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. ⁹ And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” ¹⁰ For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. ¹² And Pilate again said to them, “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” ¹³ And they cried out again, “Crucify him.” ¹⁴ And Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him.” ¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged^[a] Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

1. Reflections on Scripture

He was oppressed and afflicted, and yet He opened not His mouth; as a lamb is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep is silent under its shearers, so He opened not His mouth (Isa 53:7). The Lord Jesus faced interrogation during that last period of His earthly life when He was sinless and had not committed atrocities. Barabbas, who had committed murder, was actually released by them. Jesus was willing to be the Passover Lamb, to be scourged for us and to bear our sins. He was sinless, yet He so did not defend Himself, but quietly and willingly bore it all, knowing that it was His inevitable fulfilment. For He loved us, and suffered and died for our sins.

2. Application

Learn humility and forgiveness in your dealings with others. Is there someone in my past or present whom I have difficulty in forgiving, and when I try to forgive with the heart of Jesus Christ, go to deeply experience the great love of Jesus Christ who unreservedly laid down His life for my sins and forgave me. Learning to be at peace with the heart of Christ in the midst of being wronged and attacked by others, settling my heart, and experiencing the pain of Jesus Christ's silent endurance of punishment and judgement because of His love for me.

3. Responsive Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for the humility and sacrificial love you demonstrated for us on the cross. You bore the penalty in silence and suffered for our sins so that we might be

forgiven and saved. Give me a keen spirit to deeply appreciate your love. In this Lenten season let me be more reverent and receive your marvellous work of salvation on the cross.

Holy Week

Scripture - Isa 7:10-14

¹⁰ Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: ¹¹ “Ask a sign of the LORD your^[a] God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹² But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” ¹³ And he^[b] said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.^[c]

1. Reflections on Scripture

In his false godliness, Ahaz refused to ask God for a sign, but was unwilling to give up his relationship and dependence on the Assyrian alliance. God Himself gave the people a sign - the virgin conceived and gave birth to a son named Immanuel. A reminder that God was with His people and had been helping them. The covenant between the LORD and His people, the promise given to them, was perfectly fulfilled in the birth of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. God always held to His covenant to be with His people, and even though the children of Israel kept failing, God still sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, to fulfil the covenant He had promised. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth (Jn 1:14).

2. Application

When I accept Emmanuel as Lord, what transformation will this bring to my life? In life, especially in the face of challenges and difficulties, try to cling to this promise of God, the God who is with us He is also in my predicament. He is my strength, my shield, my high ground. I rely on Him alone, the Lord of Immanuel, and not on any other resource.

3. Responsive Prayer

Lord of Emmanuel, thank you for the wonderful promises you hold. Thank you for showing us what it means to have God with us by coming to this earth, and for showing us God's wonderful plan of salvation in His love for the world. Open my heart to a deeper appreciation of this promise and the hope and peace that Jesus' birth brings.

Scripture - Psalm 45:1-17

- 45** My heart overflows with a pleasing theme;
I address my verses to the king;
my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.
- 2** You are the most handsome of the sons of men;
grace is poured upon your lips;
therefore God has blessed you forever.
- 3** Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one,
in your splendor and majesty!
- 4** In your majesty ride out victoriously
for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness;
let your right hand teach you awesome deeds!
- 5** Your arrows are sharp
in the heart of the king's enemies;
the peoples fall under you.
- 6** Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.
The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness;
- 7** you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;
- 8** your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia.
From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad;
- 9** daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor;
at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.
- 10** Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear:
forget your people and your father's house,
- 11** and the king will desire your beauty.
Since he is your lord, bow to him.
- 12** The people^[b] of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts,
the richest of the people.^[c]
- 13** All glorious is the princess in her chamber, with robes interwoven with gold.
- 14** In many-colored robes she is led to the king,
with her virgin companions following behind her.
- 15** With joy and gladness they are led along
as they enter the palace of the king.
- 16** In place of your fathers shall be your sons;
you will make them princes in all the earth.
- 17** I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations;
therefore nations will praise you forever and ever.

1.Reflections on Scripture

This is a psalm of a royal wedding, and it has a special significance to meditate on it during this Holy Week because it is more of a Messianic psalm. It is a Messianic psalm because it describes a wedding that can only take place in heaven and foreshadows the relationship between Christ and the Church.

The psalmist praises the King (vv. 1-9), exhorts (vv. 10-12) and describes the bride (vv. 13-15), and pronounces a blessing. (vv. 16, 17) The specific beauty of the church's

holiness is exceedingly precious and lovely in the eyes of Christ. Psalm 45:11 Then the king envies your beauty, for he is your Lord; worship him.

Entering Holy Week commemorates the last week on earth of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, the Anointed One. The Church is to honour and obey Him, and more than that, give Him all the glory that is due Him. He is the King of Glory who entered the city of Jerusalem on a donkey!

2. Application

Spend some time today thinking about the exalted identity of the Messiah, whose name is forever worthy of praise. He is so exalted and honourable that His salvation and mercy are eternal. He is the King of glory and eternity, and yet He humbled Himself and died on the cross! What is your response to such great grace and love? How can you proclaim Him among the people? How do you live out the life of character that He has given you?

3. Responsive Prayer

Loving Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity, thank You for the precious saving grace You have prepared for us before the foundation of the world, so that we may have the hope of salvation. Help us to live lives worthy of Your grace, to listen and obey Your teachings, to make wise choices, and to serve You, the King of eternal glory, with all our hearts. In the name of the Lord, Amen.

Scripture - Psalm 40:5-10

⁵ You have multiplied, O LORD my God,
your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us;
none can compare with you!
I will proclaim and tell of them,
yet they are more than can be told.
⁶ In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted,
but you have given me an open ear.^[a]
Burnt offering and sin offering
you have not required.
⁷ Then I said, "Behold, I have come;
in the scroll of the book it is written of me:
⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God;
your law is within my heart."
⁹ I have told the glad news of deliverance^[b]
in the great congregation;
behold, I have not restrained my lips,
as you know, O LORD.
¹⁰ I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart;
I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;
I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness
from the great congregation.

1.Reflections on Scripture

This psalm consists of two parts:

1. thanksgiving: offering to God (vv. 1-10)
2. supplication: praying for deliverance in the midst of distress. (vv. 11-17)

God will deliver His people from their distress and perform His marvellous works. This message is so inspiring that the saved will gladly give their lives to do God's will. Jesus came as the Lamb of God, the Saviour of mankind, who alone can save the world from sin and death. But, it was a costly price to pay! He became man in the flesh, and instead of being equal with God as a snatcher, He emptied Himself, submitted to death, and died on the cross! He died for you, exchanged His blood for your life, and saved you from your sins. Respond to His saving grace As the psalmist says, I shall have more than lips to proclaim the good tidings of Thy righteousness in the assembly.

2. Application

During this Holy Week, think about the ways in which God has rescued you from hardship. Where have you learnt to obey God fully? In what ways do you need to deal with the bondage of sin and the old self? How do you learn to be truly free and joyful by applying the truth to your heart, mind and philosophy of life, in the same way that you were obedient to the Lord Jesus?

3.Responsive Prayer

Loving Father, I implore You to help us to learn by the power of the Holy Spirit to walk in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus, to serve with love and life, and to lead people to You. We will be able to fulfil our mission when we give, edify our lives when we serve, strengthen our faith in difficult circumstances, and gain the authority from You to fight and win, to defeat all the attacks of the enemy, and to receive the most complete, free and abundant life in You. In the name of the Lord, Amen.

Scripture - Heb 10:4-10

⁴For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

⁵Consequently, when Christ^[a] came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,

but a body have you prepared for me;

⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings

you have taken no pleasure.

⁷Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,

as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”

⁸When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

1.Reflections on Scripture

This passage talks about Jesus being a more beautiful priest and completing a more beautiful sacrifice. The sacrifices of the Old Testament could not take away sins. For the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins. (v.4) The blood of bulls and goats is only a shadow of the blood of Jesus Christ, it does not achieve true atonement for sins, and the guilt of conscience cannot be removed. Today is also called Maundy Thursday because Jesus washed the feet of His disciples at the Last Supper during Holy Week. Jesus came to offer a once-for-all sacrifice for sins (10:12a). A once-for-all, eternal ransom. Not only did He humble Himself as a man, but with a servant's heart He washed the feet of His disciples, served the crowd, and walked with the people. Having received the Lord's graciousness, we should be courageous, patient, and confident to follow in His footsteps, and likewise go into the crowd with His love.

2.Application

Today is a day to remember the Last Supper of the Lord Jesus and to think about the significance of His cross. "For if we sin wilfully after we have learned the truth, the sacrifice for sins is no more." (10:26) What is the warning for you? Is it possible to be so lighthearted that you neglect to practice the true meaning of the cross? Do you earnestly pursue the truth in the path of faith? Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate and help us to confess our sins and repent.

3.Responses to Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for Your sacrificial love that accompanies us through spring, summer, autumn and winter. Your blood has enabled us to enter the Holy of Holies openly, and opened a new and living way for us to pass through the veil, which is Your Body. By thy name we may enter into the presence of God, to obtain favour and mercy, and to be a help at all times. I beseech Thee to give us faith and strength to go boldly into the midst of the crowd, to bear witness of Thee, and to exalt Thy name. Amen.

Scripture - Luke 23:33-49

³³ And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴ And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."^[a] And they cast lots to divide his garments. ³⁵ And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" ³⁶ The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine ³⁷ and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" ³⁸ There was also an inscription over him,^[b] "This is the King of the Jews."

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him,^[c] saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³ And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

⁴⁴ It was now about the sixth hour,^[d] and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour,^[e] ⁴⁵ while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. ⁴⁷ Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" ⁴⁸ And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. ⁴⁹ And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.

1.Reflections on Scripture

At the Passover meal, Jesus made a new covenant, the Eucharist, by the bread and the cup, remembering His breaking of His body and shedding of His blood for us to accomplish salvation. After the supper, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray, and His disciples followed Him. This passage records that in the Garden of Gethsemane, the disciples fell asleep, Judas betrayed the Lord, and Jesus experienced the loneliness of being separated from His family and facing the crucifixion alone and in silence. Immediately after He was tortured, condemned, humiliated, scourged, His skin was broken, the cross was too heavy for Him to carry, and He was tortured physically and spiritually to the limit of His body! At this moment He could have used His divinity to deliver Himself, but He did not, He came for this moment! He emptied Himself and shed every drop of His blood for the world!

2.Application

Today is the commemoration of Good Friday. Please meditate on the saving grace of the Lord's crucifixion, which He suffered to bring healing, salvation and life to the world. For His scourging, our healing; for His punishment, our peace. Look around at the needs of the people, what can I do for them on behalf of Jesus?

3.Responsive Prayer

Lord of grace, Thou didst take the way of the cross for us, and many followed Thee, and pitied Thee, and wept for Thee. Thou hast said, Weep not for me, but weep for thyself and thy

children. If we do not weep for ourselves, and do not recognise the light of our own lives, we do not understand Thy love! If we do not know that we are in need of salvation, in need of deliverance, in need of confession of our sins and repentance, we do not understand the true meaning of Thy cross in its entirety! I beseech the gracious Lord to speak to our hearts.
Amen.

Luke 22:50-56

⁵⁰ And one of them struck the servant^u of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹ But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him. ⁵² Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? ⁵³ When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”

⁵⁴ Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. ⁵⁵ And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. ⁵⁶ Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, “This man also was with him.”

1.Reflections on Scripture

When darkness reigned, heaven and earth were darkened. The crucified Jesus became the Lamb of God to die in the world's place, to bear the sins of the world and to take away the sins of the world. The most righteous Lord was condemned to death by the most unrighteous man! How ironic this is, and how it brings out the hopelessness of human sinfulness, the merciless insults of the masses, and the hatred of the people for no reason at all. Yet Jesus' intercession for them brought out the love of God in His plan of salvation, whether it was the crowds of soldiers who arrested Him, or the disciple Peter, who denied Him three times, or even Judas, for whom Jesus died! On Calvary, the hill of death, Jesus, the Son of God, brought life, light, forgiveness and hope! One can look for new life, and if one repents, he will receive it. Deliverance from the powers of darkness, freedom, from darkness into light!

2.Application

The prelude to the Lord's resurrection is today, and it is very important in waiting for the preparatory process. By our old nature we will be proud, weak, fail and fall, but with the Lord's resurrection life, it is mighty in us. His blood washes away the stains of our sins; His holy robe of righteousness covers our ugliness and corruption, so that we gradually become more and more in the glory and image of the Lord. Find an opportunity today to share your conversion testimony with someone or invite them to join you for a meal.

3.Responsive to Prayer

Almighty and everlasting Father God, thank you for your eternal plan of salvation for the world, through the sacrificial love of your beloved Son, Jesus, who gave himself up and shed his blood, so that all who are willing to trust and confess their sins and repent, may be born again and have new life. That they may be delivered from the bondage of sin, and enter into the kingdom of thy glory and light, and become children of light. In the name of the Lord, Amen.

