

The Questions God Asks

The Keezletown United Methodist Church
2018 Lent Devotional

The Questions God Asks: The Keezletown UMC 2018 Lent Devotional
Copyright © 2018 Keezletown United Methodist Church

This work may be reproduced and shared freely in the love of Christ provided there is no charge and the above acknowledgement is included.

Bible Translations

Scripture taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission.

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Abbreviations

ESV	English Standard Version
KJV	King James Version of the Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version of the Bible
NKJV	New King James Version of the Bible
NLT	New Living Translation of the Bible
v.	verse
*	Prayer contributed by the editor

Acknowledgements

Hudson, Trevor. *Questions God Asks Us*. (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2009).

Lucado, Max. *The Inspirational Study Bible*. Copyright © 1995 Word Publishing. All rights reserved.

Saint Francis of Assisi. A prayer of St. Francis of Assisi.

Contributors

Ginny Bowman	p. 47
Grace Brown	p. 45
Jim Brown	p. 7
Mac Coffman	p. 20
Chris Cole	p. 15
Diana Davis	pp. 8, 52
Dale Dodrill	p. 30
Michele Dodrill	pp. 41, 51
Scott Dodrill	p. 10
Jenny Dillard	pp. 5, 36, 46
Tanya Dawn Eppard	pp. 11, 42
Faye Hoover-Thomas	p. 25
Joe Liskey	p. 40
Linda Liskey	p. 40
Beth Morris	p. 50
Steve Morris	p. 26
Rev. David Nankivell	pp. 12, 35
Rev. Joel Robinette	pp. 3, 17-18, 23, 27, 38, 51
Becky Ryman	p. 43
Neil Sacra	p. 31
B.J. Smith	pp. 20, 32
Kelly Smith	p. 48
Kelli Sprague	p. 21
Scott Sprague	p. 25
Steve Suter	pp. 13, 37
Ken Thomas	p. 16
Diane Williams	p. 6
Len Williams	p. 30

Introduction

The inspiration for this year's Lent devotional from Keezletown United Methodist Church comes from Trevor Hudson's book *Questions God Asks Us*. In that book, Hudson singles out 5 questions God asks in the Old Testament and 5 questions Jesus asks in the gospels for people to respond to in faith. Hudson suggests that rather than coming to God with our questions, it would be good to consider the questions God is asking.

God asks questions in the Bible. Have you ever thought about what God wants to ask you? If you could learn about 10 questions God would ask you, do you think you would be willing to respond to what God wants to know?

This devotional is not a book of answers. It will raise the questions and share insights from how some folks at Keezletown UMC have begun understanding or answering the questions.

There are 40 days in the Christian season of Lent. The first day of Lent in 2018 is February 14. Lent does not include Sundays. This devotional has four entries for each of the 10 questions God asks. That gives you a few days to ponder each question. Each day has a scripture to read from the Bible, a devotional, and a prayer.

The Sundays in Lent are small breaks from the 40 days of Lent and invite time to break fasts and enjoy the blessings of the Lord, creation, and community. Sunday would be a great day to join other Christians in worship, take time for Sabbath rest, pray, sing songs of praise, share God's forgiveness, give, read or hear scripture, serve God and others, or enjoy time for Christian fellowship.

Thanks to all of the writers this year, Lynn Siler for printing the devotionals, and the people of Keezletown UMC for making this project possible.

So, enjoy 40 days of exploring the questions God asks.

Joel Robinette

Where are you?

Ash Wednesday / 1st Day of Lent
February 14, 2018

Where are you?

“The Question We Ask God Is a Question God Asks Us”
Genesis 3:1-9

Where are you? It’s a question *we* often ask of God.

A hard decision needs to be made and we’ve prayed, and prayed, and prayed seeking God’s discernment and guidance. When no clear answer comes and God seems silent, we may ask, “God, are you there? Where are you?”

Health issues arise that prevent us from doing the things we normally do, or going like we usually go, and we find ourselves laid up and possibly very frustrated with life wishing for an instant, miraculous recovery. When it takes more time than we would like it to, we may ask, “God, can’t you fix this now? Where are you?”

We see horrendous acts of violence carried out on innocent people: in their office buildings, at schools, at concerts, in their church and it causes us to question the sanity of the whole human race and we may ask, “God, how could you let this happen? Where are you?”

Has there ever been a time in your life when God seemed distant and hard to find?

In our scripture today it is God asking, “Where are you?” Adam and Eve have eaten the forbidden fruit and have now become lost in the sins of the world and God is looking for them in much the same way that He is looking for us. I looked for you in prayer time today. I wanted to share my word with you in scripture reading today. I wanted to fellowship with you today in some quiet time together. I had the perfect song picked to play for you to encourage you today on K-LOVE. I had a warm hug to give you and a listening ear for you in that friend that I provided to you. I looked for you but I couldn’t find you. Where are you?

Prayer

Father God,

I pray that we would make ourselves available to you.

I pray that in our day to day lives we make every effort to look for you
and that we make ourselves easily found by you.

Amen.

Jenny Dillard

2nd Day of Lent
February 15, 2018

Where are you?

“Where Are You?”
Genesis 3:8-10

“Where are you?” This is the first question asked by God in the Bible. He asked it of Adam, as Adam was hiding in the bushes in the Garden of Eden after he had committed the first sin. Adam was hiding because he knew he had sinned and was ashamed.

God did not ask this question because He did not know where Adam was. He is all-knowing. He knew where Adam was and He knew what he had done.

This is a question God asks of us today. To be sure, God knows where each of us are, also. He knows if we are in the right place or somewhere we shouldn't be. We cannot hide from God. He knows where we have been and what we have done.

Where are you in your daily walk with God? Are you reading scripture and spending time with Him in prayer? Are you trusting Him to act in His time and to show you His plan for your life?

The good news is that because Jesus gave his life for us on the cross, we can be assured that wherever we are, He is there to meet us and save us! He is always just a whisper away. We just need to answer, “I am here. Show me the way.”

Prayer

Loving Father,

thank you for showing us the way.

Help us to always be open to your leading when you ask us, “Where are you?”

Let us follow your leading in all that we do today and every day.

In Jesus' name we make our prayer. Amen.

Diane Williams

3rd Day of Lent
February 16, 2018

Where are you?

“God Reminds Us When Tempted”
Genesis 3:8-10

They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” He said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.” (Genesis 3:8-10, NASB)

Adam and Eve had just partaken of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden and were trying to hide their sin because God was emphatic in telling them they could enjoy every fruit or vegetable in the garden but not that fruit. God asked, “Where are you?” Adam said “I was naked; so I hid myself.”

We are tempted every day on this earth. It is very hard to be “sin free” and live a life that makes God proud of us. He has to remind us when we are tempted to stray from our belief in the Bible and God’s word through Jesus. We are naked to God on so many occasions because we fall short in pleasing him when we stray from our belief. We can’t hide either. So, “Where are you?”

I am reminded by my faith in the Bible and Jesus’ teaching when I even think about straying from his guidance. I can’t hide. Thank Goodness. Where would I be if I could not recognize evil thoughts and actions and try not to stray?

Prayer

Thank you God in Jesus
for getting in the minds of so many of the world’s people
and helping us lead a life that follows your teaching
that our world will prosper and not turn to complete chaos.

Jim Brown

4th Day of Lent
February 17, 2018

Where are you?

“Talk to God”
Genesis 3:9

“But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’” (Genesis 3:9, NIV).

Do you ever feel like the Lord is asking you this question because you’ve been ignoring Him? Oh, not on purpose, but because you’ve become so caught up in and worried over “stuff” that is occurring around you, in your life, your family, your church, the nation, the world.

I become overwhelmed and I forget to stop and give it to Him, until I get to the point where I think I’m going to scream or explode. Usually I can write it out, or talk it out to Him (He really is a very good listener), or cry it out, and the problems don’t seem nearly so overwhelming as they did.

We have no need to hide from Him. He knows us, inside and out, and when we hurt, He hurts. Take some time each day to talk with Him. The big “stuff” will become little “stuff.”

Prayer

Father,
forgive my trying to do it myself,
and my delaying in giving everything to you.
Thank you
for always being in control. Amen.

Diana Davis

1st Sunday in Lent
February 18, 2018

Enjoy a Sunday in Lent Sabbath.

Where is your brother?

5th Day of Lent
February 19, 2018

Where is your brother?

“Accountable Brother”

Genesis 4:3-9

My initial response is to say Red Hart Lane in Alpharetta, Georgia (as long as he is home). However, I think this hints at the same reaction style Cain used. Shoot from the hip without thinking of the consequences of our words.

Obviously, we know that God is asking a rhetorical question. Was God giving him a chance to atone for his actions? Or was He just wanting to see his reaction?

Cain has obviously not given his best as an offering to the Lord. Remember, God sees the heart and knows your motivation. When Cain was confronted, he got angry (v. 5), and followed through to the point of deceit and murder. Have you ever not given your best and been upset when your effort was found to be short of someone else’s expectations? Too many times, we get upset with others when we are at fault. 1 John 3:12 says, “Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous” (NIV).

Interestingly enough, Jesus says, “Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:35, NIV). Kind of scary stuff. But it reaffirms my thoughts that joining an accountability group is great for me and my faith. I joined a group in the Spring of 2014. Five to eight men who are not afraid to support me, even if they have to tell me the hard truth. I never realized the benefit of such a group until I was asked to show up. Yes, I have missed a bunch of meetings with these brothers, but I am always accepted judgement free, even if I admit my shortcomings. I highly recommend that everyone join a confidential accountability group, even if you have to start one yourself. What a blessing they are to me!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, how blessed is your name.

Help us with our short fuses and help us to see our own shortcomings.

Thank you Father for my accountability group.

May we all be able to learn from our mistakes and be drawn tighter to you.

God, we love you and give you all the glory. Amen!

Scott Dodrill

6th Day of Lent
February 20, 2018

Where is your brother?

“Brother’s and Sister’s Keeper”
Genesis 4:8-16

God is asking Cain about Abel. Cain, trying to deflect talk of his brother, whom he murdered, asks if he, Cain, is his brother’s keeper. The answer is yes! We are to be keepers/helpers of those around us. My Emmaus walk reignited my happiness in helping others both locally and internationally. Part of walking with Jesus is being His hands and feet here on earth. This service to others is meant to be done from a grateful heart for all Jesus has done for us, not out of a sense of duty or obligation; but out of love, joy, and graciousness.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, part of the reason You call us to mission work
is so we can have the opportunity to lead others to You.
Give us the energy and enthusiasm we need! Amen.

Tanya Dawn Eppard

7th Day of Lent
February 21, 2018

Where is your brother?

“The Annual Exam of Lent”
Genesis 4:9

During Lent the people of God see Jesus Christ dying on the cross to take away the sins of the people. He rose from the dead and lives today. If we believe, we are forgiving.

In our reading from God’s Word, Cain had just killed his brother Abel. God asked Cain where his brother was. His answer was, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Max Lucado makes this observation,

Cain illustrates what happens to people who sin and then deny or justify their misbehavior. When we sin fear, guilt, grief, anger, resentment, humiliation, loss of integrity, and even self-loathing follow. We often choose to sin and try to ignore these consequences, but God mercifully offers us a way out. (6)

I see the Lenten season as the spiritual equivalent of an annual exam. It’s a time to take stock of our lives and our hearts. It is a time for us to give up sinning and allow God through his Son to lift us up and to realize that Christ died for us and has promised to give us eternal life if we only believe in him.

We are our brother’s and sister’s keepers. We need to set an example of goodness and righteousness that others might see that Jesus lives in us.

Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Amen. (Saint Francis of Assisi)

David Nankivell

8th Day of Lent
February 22, 2018

Where is your brother?

“When a Brother Stumbles”
Genesis 4:9

Paul, in his letters, speaks often about our attitudes and actions towards our brothers and sisters in Christ. For example, in his letter to the Corinthians he speaks about how there are things that he knows that he is free to do, yet by doing so he may cause others to stumble, and so as a result he refuses to engage in those things.

This principle was made very personal to me a number of years ago at a family wedding reception. A certain family member who, if they drank, often ended up in out-of-control drunkenness, had not had anything to drink. They had been watching me, though, to see if I was going to have any alcohol or not, and when I did, they began drinking too. I had a beer or two and no problems. This family member, however, ended up having way, way too much to drink, and created quite a scene at the wedding festivities. I have felt responsible for this incident for decades now, and it has left me trying to be careful to not be a stumbling block to someone who might be there, but may not have the ability to stop at a drink or two.

Prayer

Dear Jesus,
please let me be aware of those who are watching me
and to be aware of when I may be putting myself in situations
where I could cause them to stumble.
Help me to be a help,
and not a hindrance,
to my brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen.

Steve Suter

What's your name?

9th Day of Lent
February 23, 2018

What's your name?

"How Jacob Was Renamed Israel"
Genesis 32:22-32

After a twenty year absence, Jacob was returning to the land of his birth with his wives and children. One night, after he had sent his family and servants on ahead and Jacob was alone, a man appeared and wrestled all night with Jacob. That man was God, and he asked Jacob, "What is your name?" Two questions come to mind: why did God wrestle with Jacob and why did he ask him his name?

To look for answers I went back to Genesis 25 where I read of the birth of twin boys to Isaac and Rebekah. The first baby born was red and hairy, so they named him Esau. The second baby was born grasping his brother's heel, and he was called Jacob which means supplanter, one who schemes to replace another. Under the ancient law of primogeniture the older son, Esau, would ordinarily receive the greater share of any inheritance, and the younger son would be servient to his brother. However, Esau carelessly sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew because he was hungry. Included in this birthright were the covenantal promises that Abraham had received from God and passed to his son Isaac, and now would pass to Jacob. When Isaac was old and nearing death, Jacob also tricked his father into giving him the blessing that should have belonged to Esau. Fearing Esau's wrath, Rebekah sent Jacob away to live with her brother, Laban, where he stayed for twenty years.

I believe God wrestled with Jacob to test the mettle of the one who had acquired the covenantal relationship with God through treachery. During the struggle God caused injury to Jacob's hip that resulted in a limp which would serve as a constant reminder of his encounter with God and his responsibility to preserve the covenant and pass it on to his descendants. As morning approached, God blessed Jacob and gave him a new name. He was no longer Jacob, the deceiver, but Israel, the one who perseveres.

Prayer

Gracious God,
we thank you for the Patriarchs of the Old Testament
who showed us how to trust you;
we thank you for your Son, Jesus,
who showed us how to love our neighbors. Amen.

Chris Cole

10th Day of Lent
February 24, 2018

What's your name?

"My New Name"
Genesis 32:22-32

Jacob struggles with what to do both awake and asleep. One night God sent an angel to wrestle with Jacob. Neither were able to gain an advantage in the fight. The angel touched Jacob's hip and wrenched it out of its socket and told Jacob to let go. But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me" (v. 26, NLT).

"What is your name?" (v. 27) the angel asked. He replied, "Jacob."

"No," said the angel, not Jacob ("supplanter"). Now you will be called Israel ("Prince of God") and the angel blessed him.

When we truly commit ourselves to God, should we take a new name? It is the start of a new life, but like Jacob's limp reminds, our past will remain.

As part of her mourning, Naomi declared a name change for herself: "Don't call me Naomi ("pleasant"). Instead call me Mara ("bitter") for the Almighty has made life very bitter for me" (Ruth 1:20, NLT). By God's grace, pleasantness did return to Naomi's life and Naomi is the name we most associate with her.

What will your new name be in your new life with Christ?

My name is _____.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

you know and love me no matter what name I have.

You know my past and know my future and are still willing to love me.

Thank you for all this.

In the name of your Son, Christ. Amen.

Ken Thomas

2nd Sunday in Lent
February 25, 2018

Enjoy a Sunday in Lent Sabbath.

11th Day of Lent
February 26, 2018

What's your name?

"Old Names"
Genesis 32:27

One day at Casa Grande Junior High School, this then seventh-grader had some work to do in the computer lab and the lab was filled with eighth-graders. I was a little intimidated but found an empty work station, sat up tall, and began clacking the keys for my assignment. A few minutes later, I heard one of those eighth graders say, "Hey, you!" I continued clacking uncertain just which "you" was being addressed. Then the voice said, "You, with the long neck!" I stopped clacking. My head tried to shrink my neck down toward my shoulders, unsuccessfully reducing described "long neck," and with much embarrassment I turned and asked, "Yes?"

That eighth-grader did not know my name, or who I was, so used something distinctive about me to get my attention. I have been called worse(!) and some of those worse names or descriptions may have been even truer about me than "long neck." I cannot control how others will describe or name me, but I can decide which names to live toward, reject, or fulfill. By repentance and God's grace, mercy, call, forgiveness, and transformation I have left many old names behind that I don't wish to shape my life. And I don't think God wants those old names to shape me either.

Jacob did not hide his name or who he was from God. God did not leave Jacob for how others would name or endanger him. God gave Jacob a new name which reflected his wrestling and walk with God.

Share your old names or behaviors with God from which you would seek God's grace, or forgiveness, or healing, or clarification for if it is how God would name you. Then listen to God through scripture, worship, and Christian fellowship for how God would name and identify you through the grace of Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Deliver us, Living God, from names that shame, objectify, or dehumanize.

Forgive us, Savior, for names we have embraced for ourselves that hide your purpose, presence, or view of us and your creation.

Open our ears, Word of God, and speak your recreation and new name for us to receive and live.

Guard our hearts and thoughts, Spirit of Truth, from accepting names that are lies or contrary to your will.

Give us faith, Faithful and True, to believe and act according the name you call us. Amen.

Joel Robinette

12th Day of Lent
February 27, 2018

What's your name?

"New Names"
Genesis 32:28-30

There are a few times I have been given names by others and although I had heard these names or thought I understood what they would mean, they took on a new meaning when hearing them from people who cared about, supported, or loved me.

I played high school soccer and our team played boom ball. From my position on defense when I got the ball I would kick it as hard and far as I could to the other side of the field where I hoped our offense, especially one of our fastest players, Santiago "Augie" Ortiz, could get to the ball and do something with it. Whenever Augie got the ball I would hear everyone cheer, "Go Bandito!" I would cheer for Augie, too. After a few years I was in a game and came out for a break and someone said to me while clapping me on the back, "Way to go Bandito!" I corrected them, "I'm not Bandito, Augie is Bandito." Then several on the team helped me out. "No, you are Bandito." I was very confused. They had been calling my name for years but I didn't know my name. I had no idea. I asked in disbelief, "I'm Bandito?"

I was licensed to be a local pastor in 2005 and went to serve the three congregations of the Fulk Run Charge. I was a "pastor." People called me pastor and introduced me as the pastor of their church. One day when someone introduced me they said, "This is my pastor," and I think it was the first time I had heard that name in that way, "my pastor." That is probably the highest ministerial honor I receive when I hear someone call me pastor in that way.

I have two kids and I have been a dad since 2007. When those kids call me "dad" or "daddy" it fills my heart. It reminds me of one of the highest privileges and responsibilities God has graced me with in being a dad.

Those names are like the wonder I feel when I see the Bible naming people as Christ's people, beloved, brother, sister, disciple, servant, or Christian and the Holy Spirit tells me those are the names God has for us, too.

Prayer

Your name is wonderful to me God.

Your name reminds me of who you are and what you do.

Thank you for offering a name to me that shows me your grace and purpose.

Give me grace to live into the grace of your name and the name you give me.

Joel Robinette

What's that in your hand?

13th Day of Lent
February 28, 2018

What's that in your hand?

Exodus 3:16—4:5
“Believing in the Unseen”

When God asked Moses what was in his hand, Moses told him a rod. This was the very rod that God turned into a snake. God did this to help Moses to have faith. Faith is believing in what cannot be seen or touched. Our faith teaches us to trust God even when we cannot see or touch. We know there is a God in heaven we cannot see; but we can see all his wondrous creations. When we rely on our faith, we can go on the assurance that God has everything under control. We just need to let go and let God.

Prayer

Heavenly Father,
help me to have more faith
to believe in what cannot be seen.
Let your Spirit be my guide. Amen.

B.J. Smith

14th Day of Lent
March 1, 2018

What's that in your hand?

“God Equips those He Calls”
Exodus 4:1-17

Moses, after seeing a bush that burned but was not consumed, was asked to do the unthinkable and impossible. To go before the pharaoh himself and free God's people. Moses answered God by saying that they would not believe or listen to him. God asked him, “What is that in your hand?” It was a staff which was turned into a snake when he threw it on the ground. This stuttering Moses was already equipped with God's mighty power when he was asked to do the impossible.

Hold out your hands. Think. What if God asked you this question, “What is that in your hands?” You probably don't have a shepherd's staff. But all of us have fingerprints, unique and unlike anyone else's. God gave us different abilities, talents, and attributes. From the beginning to the end in a physical and spiritual sense we leave our fingerprints on all of our actions. A lot of criminals have been convicted of crimes by their finger prints.

If you were facing charges of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

When you help the downtrodden, give with a generous heart, or love the unlovable: you leave your unique fingerprints on those actions. God has equipped each one of us uniquely with our character. Moses overlooked the fact that what he needed was right in his hands all the time. Use what God has equipped you with. All we need is the faith to answer God with, "Here I am, send me."

Prayer

Lord, you have created us
equipping each one of us differently.
Give us the faith
to trust in you,
to use our abilities,
to answer the call,
to glorify your holy name. Amen.

Mac Coffman

15th Day of Lent
March 2, 2018

What's that in your hand?

"Pecan Snack"
Exodus 3:7-10, 4:1-5

When Moses encountered God at the burning bush, he was not the most eager servant. As God laid out His plan for the salvation of the children of Israel, Moses was quick to offer reasons why he should not be included in the grand preparations. Moses argued his case and even suggested that someone else might be better suited. But, God knew what He was doing and was fully prepared to provide for Moses' inadequacies. In Exodus 4:2, God asks, "What is that in your hand?" He was referring to Moses' ordinary staff—the tool of a shepherd. God tells Moses that this ordinary staff will turn to a snake, and back again, to convince the Israelites and Pharaoh that Moses is coming on behalf of the Lord. Later we find that Moses' staff drew water from a rock and even parted the Red Sea!

I'm sure we've all had our "Moses moments," when we've attempted to reason and rationalize our way out of God's plan to use to bless others. I've had that experience too many times. Recently, I was headed toward Kroger down University Blvd, where I regularly see someone asking for food or money. I had just finished shopping at Wal-Mart for supplies for camp and I had personally purchased a little

bag of pecans to snack on during the drive home. I do this often when I'm out shopping during lunch time. It was a little protein to keep me going until I get home to grab a sandwich – a perfectly ordinary bag of pecans.

As I approached the intersection, I saw a woman holding a sign asking for any kind of help. This woman seemed different from the people I usually observed at this corner. She was crying and barely looked up at the passing cars. I felt very strongly that she was absolutely horrified to be standing there and I wondered what had happened to put her in front of me, on the side of the road. I knew God wanted me to help. I could feel Him pushing and urging me. But, I didn't have any cash. Depending on when the light tripped, I might have to pass on through the intersection without stopping. I had a van full of groceries for camp (on a hot day) and didn't have time to pick up some food or pull out some cash to bring back to her.

As I write this, I realize what an impressive amount of Moses-style excuses I had managed to cook up in the 10 seconds between the time I initially saw the woman and when God stopped me, first in line, at that light – right next to her. So now what? No cash. No time. But wait – I still had that perfectly ordinary bag of pecans in my lap. God was reminding me of my simple snack for the drive home and promising to use it as my way to share His love with someone who needed it. I rolled down my window and handed the bag to the woman. I told her it was all to give her but I hoped, so much, that it would help. She was incredibly grateful! She smiled through the tears and I told her God loved her and that I would pray for her.

Like Moses, God asked me what I had in my hand (or my lap, as the case may be) and then turned the ordinary into the extraordinary for His purpose. I believe the woman was blessed by that little bag of pecans and saw the hand of God in its arrival!

Prayer

Dear Lord,

I pray that you would keep us mindful of your plan
and remind us that you will never call us to a task

for which you are not prepared to help us achieve your full purpose.

May our eyes be open

to how you use even the most ordinary things to your glory! Amen.

Kelli Sprague

16th Day of Lent
March 3, 2018

What's that in your hand?

"Best I Have"
Exodus 3:1, 4:1-5

Moses' staff, Shamgar's oxgoad, David's sling, the boy's lunch of loaves and fish, Mary's jar of pure nard – they were all ordinary items. They were not magic and did not possess special properties. What was remarkable about them is that God was able to use them to help free slaves, protect God's people, feed the 5,000, and prepare Jesus for his passion, death, and burial. The people who used or gave those items did not seem to have great faith in the items themselves. Their faith was in God. Their hearts were turned in compassion to serve the needs of others. God does the extraordinary through the ordinary when they are used for God's love, grace, justice, and mercy.

While I have called the items above "ordinary" it is important to note that they were not castoffs, junk, second-hand, excess, or useless. Those items were vital tools, savings, or even lunch (which is quite useful and important when it is lunchtime). The people offering those items were offering their familiar, trusted, necessary-to-them items for God.

What ordinary things has God put in your life that are meaningful and important to you? What might God do if you shared your best with God and those God is ready to give mercy? What extraordinary thing might God do when we yield our ordinary possessions, skills, talents, and time?

Prayer

Creator God, you can make humanity out of a bit of earth,
deliver slaves from a powerful nation with a staff, frogs, and sea,
make the "not a people" into "your people" and the dry bones live.
Work your creative salvation
for others through us
as we give you what we have.
Bless the world to see
the hungry fed,
the captive set free,
the dead raised to new life. Amen.

Joel Robinette

3rd Sunday in Lent
March 4, 2018

Enjoy a Sunday in Lent Sabbath.

Why are you here?

17th Day of Lent
March 5, 2018

Why are you here?

“God’s Expectations”
1 Kings 19:9, 13

In verses 9 and 13 of 1 Kings 19 the Lord asks Elijah the same question, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (NLT). Elijah’s negative response both times is the same. Some regard God’s question as reproof of Elijah’s behavior. But others do not.

Sometimes we stray from what God would have us do. But hopefully in a short period of time, we see our error and submit to God’s will – perhaps with a little nudging by God.

How many times in our lifetime have we been the recipient of the same question of the Lord’s by a person in authority, “What are you doing here?” Parents, teachers, coaches, and pastors are some that come to mind. All have expectations, and we must decide whether the answers are in our best interests and subject to the will of God. We must ask ourselves, “Is this what God would have us do?”

Prayer

Our Father in Heaven:

be with us in our endeavors to strive to meet the positive criteria

in our daily living of answering the question, “What are you doing here?”

We pray that the answers will be blessed by God.

In Jesus Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

Faye Hoover-Thomas

18th Day of Lent
March 6, 2018

Why are you here?

“God Had Overcome”

And the word of the LORD came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (1 Kings 19:9, NIV)

Elijah had had enough of the world. He was fleeing for his mortal life and the wicked world around him. Running away from his problems. Sticking his head in the sand – or more accurately – hiding in a cave.

He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." (1 Kings 19:10, NIV)

Wow. Fast forward about 2,900 years, and the children of God *still* run and hide from the world. We *fear* God, but when the "chips are down," do we really *trust* Him? Sure, some of us aren't in mortal danger for sharing our faith, but a good many are. However, it seems that there is always an excuse to run and hide from such a broken world. We don't necessarily hide in caves. But sometimes, we do hide in friends, family, and church who think and act like we do.

I look at the turmoil of the world today, and it terrifies me. I really worry about where humanity is headed. And that concern is made so much more profound in the light of my children! What kind of world will they have to deal with? Their children?

Stop! Breathe! And *know* this:

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33, NIV)

Wow. He has *overcome* the world! We don't have to do this alone! Hallelujah!

Prayer

Lord, help us remember, every moment,
that You have overcome the world!
Give us the strength, moment by moment,
to put our hand in Yours,
and face the world with Your peace, love, and salvation! Amen.

Scott Sprague

19th Day of Lent
March 7, 2018

Why are you here?

"Wherever God Has You, Give Your Best"
1 Kings 19:9-13

It wasn't so long ago I began to get frustrated about where I thought I was in my career. Things were not progressing the way I thought they would. I was

anticipating promotional opportunities but due to a scoring error in the promotional process that opportunity seemed not as likely. My focus was on where I wanted to be and all I did was an attempt to attain that goal.

In 1 Kings 19:9-13, Elijah was in the cave when he heard the voice of the Lord ask, "What are you doing here?" He answered in a general way. God again asked him "What are you doing here?" He again responded with the generic response. God was calling him to listen to his voice and to do great things.

This is where I was with my career when asked, "Why are you here?" I was giving that generic answer, "I am trying to help others, to be a good leader, and set an example." But those were all focused on our human nature. I felt I could do more with the promotion. I finally prayed about the situation, deep down wanting God to make the promotion happen. However, what I heard was, "Be the best you can be in the place I have put you right now." I was so focused on where I wanted to be, I was not giving God my best now. Once I changed my focus to giving God my best wherever he places me, God provided his grace and mercy. I not only got promoted but was promoted to a position two steps higher than my current position.

When God ask you, "What are you doing here?" listen to his quiet still voice and where it may be leading you and in whatever or wherever that may be. Give God your best.

Prayer

Dear Lord,

thank you for providing the blessings and mercies you have given me,
allow me to be thankful wherever that is,
and let me give you glory by giving my best. Amen.

Stephen Morris

20th Day of Lent
March 8, 2018

Why are you here?

"Putting on the Robe"
1 Kings 19:1-13

One of my rituals before I preach is putting on my robe. I decide which stole would be most fitting for the season, day, or occasion. I select a cross I have been given to wear around my neck (all my crosses are gifts). Going through these tasks reminds me of what I am here to do in that moment.

The time of proclamation is not to share my ideas, come up with something no one has ever heard before, or push for my own way. Preaching is the time to

speaking God's words, share the good news of Jesus Christ, turn hearts to what God is doing, and extending God's invitation to walk in the Spirit. Just putting on that robe reminds me of what God has called me to do. Putting on that robe, considering the season, and pulling the cross over my head cover me with reminders that the preaching task is not about me and I need the Spirit's grace, inspiration, and strength to attempt to share the words of life.

What rituals, holy habits, or spiritual disciplines do you have to remind you of why you are here? If you have some, continue in them. If you have let some helpful ones lapse, get back into rhythm. If you do not have any, try some out until you find one or a few that help remind you of why God has put you here.

Prayer

God of Elijah,
thank you for not leaving us in fear
but reminding us of our purpose and hope in you.
Tell us again why you have put us here
and let us live in the joy of your salvation. Amen.

Joel Robinette

What are you looking for?

21st Day of Lent
March 9, 2018

What are you looking for?

“Do You Know Where to Look?”

Amos 5:4-6; Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 6:33-34; Proverbs 8:17-21; John 1:38

In our present society many people go around complaining, always looking at what’s wrong. They see a negative situation and wonder why they aren’t enjoying their lives. Really, it’s because they have an ungrateful, unthankful attitude. Quit taking inventory of everything that’s wrong and start thanking God for what’s right.

On the other hand, society has become materialistic – looking for attractive offers of wealth, relational happiness and personal fulfillment. People are willing to make any sacrifice for the almighty dollar. Despite conventional wisdom, all the money, sex, power, and pleasure in the world will not bring happiness and meaning to life. Thus, we must set our hearts on what is above and beyond this life: God’s priorities and eternal life with him. Seek first the kingdom of the Lord. That is what we should be looking for.

Prayer

Heavenly Father,
help us to seek you
that we may live our lives in accordance with thy will. Amen.

Len Williams

22nd Day of Lent
March 10, 2018

What are you looking for?

“What Andrew Found”

John 1:35-42

“What are you looking for?” is a common phrase in our household. The question refers to an item or items, which we possess, but is now lost.

The question in John’s Gospel is different in that the two disciples of John the Baptist are looking for something they hadn’t owned. They only had knowledge of the prophets’ prediction of a Messiah. Plus, they had listened, as John the Baptist spoke, about Christ’s coming to take away the sins of the world.

Now, as John the Baptist and two of his disciples are standing, Jesus walks by. John the Baptist said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" (v. 36, NIV). The two disciples began to follow Jesus and He turned and spoke, "What do you seek?" (v. 38, NKJV). They replied, "Rabbi" (which is translated Teacher). They wanted to be taught by the Master Teacher. The disciples then asked Jesus where He was staying. They wanted more from Him than just this one encounter.

As we strive to follow Jesus in 2018, how will we answer that question, "What do you seek from Him?" What do we desire from Him? Hopefully, we will respond like Andrew and go tell someone, "We have found the Messiah!" (v. 41).

Prayer

Lord,
may we put Your principles of truth and love
into action every day this year. Amen.

Dale Dodrill

4th Sunday in Lent
March 11, 2018

Enjoy a Sunday in Lent Sabbath.

23rd Day of Lent
March 12, 2018

What are you looking for?

"The Salesclerk"
John 1:38

When I think about this question, I immediately relate it to going to the store or shopping for an item. You see, many, many times have I gone into a store knowing what I was looking for; but when the salesclerk would ask if I needed help, my response tended to be, "Just looking," or "I'm fine." True, I knew what I was looking for, but was I looking in the correct place or was there a better option to the item I was looking for? Why I do this is anyone's guess. It could be explained in several ways, maybe male pride or ego (you know the old saying about men asking for directions), or maybe I felt convinced I was correct and truly didn't need help. The questions I ask myself today are: "How do I respond in my faith journey?" and, "Do I respond the same way of not needing help?" In taking that same approach, I could be missing out and making my faith journey more difficult with the

distractions and world we live in today. The salesclerk was not there to bug and harass me, but rather to make my shopping experience easier, more enjoyable, and fulfilling.

Thankfully, I know that I'm looking to continually grow in my faith and love of my God: always drawing near to the cross and helping others in their journey, as I proceed in mine. There are many avenues to get there and each one of us knows what's best for ourselves. I say listen to God, the great salesclerk, being open to His suggestions for they will help each of us in our faith journey. There are many things to assist us on our journey. It will have its ups and downs. We need things to cling to, things to keep us rooted and not above the will of God, or even backslide in our faith. Yes, there is the Bible and of course prayer (and they are huge). Also, our church and church family will offer us support and love to draw us closer to our goal. We see it in the scripture in letting our light shine for all to see and not hiding it under the bush.

So, what am I looking for? Ways that I can grow closer to God and share it with others this Lenten season.

Prayer*

Lord our Help and Direction,
you have shown the way to you in the burning bush, the prophets,
a star in the sky, and the apostles;
you show us the way to you in the Bible, prayer, worship,
love of God and neighbor, and following Jesus.
As we seek you,
let yourself be found,
and place your grace in us,
so we may help direct those near us to your great love.

Neil Sacra

24th Day of Lent
March 13, 2018

What are you looking for?

“In Search of Something”
John 1:38

When Jesus turned and saw the two disciples following him he asked, “What seek ye?” (KJV). Can you remember a time before you began your walk with Christ? Do you remember just rambling aimlessly through life with no spiritual direction? Can you remember when Christ asked you, “What are you looking for?” How did you feel when your path was clear? How did you feel when you knew Christ was directing your steps?

Remember, we have a spiritual compass in the Holy Bible and a wonderful navigator in Jesus himself. What a wonderful feeling it is to know that even when we stray off the path Christ is there to bring us back again. Seek out Jesus and a relationship with him and we will never worry about being lost again.

Prayer

Thank you Father
for guiding my steps;
for making my paths straight;
and helping me to find what I was looking for. Amen.

B.J. Smith

Who do you say that I am?

25th Day of Lent
March 14, 2018

Who do you say that I am?

“Look to See Who Jesus Is”
Mark 8:27-38

The purpose in Mark’s gospel is to encourage suffering believers to see Jesus Christ as Teacher and to come to the conclusion that Jesus is the suffering servant who came to die.

Jesus asked in Mark 8:27 who the people thought he was. The answers were: John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets. They were looking for a servant to destroy their most oppressive enemy – the Romans. They wanted a military leader, not a suffering savior.

Then he asked them who they thought he was. Peter, without any hesitation, declared, “You are the Christ” (v. 29, NKJV). He declared his belief that Jesus was the promised one from Genesis 3:15.

After this Jesus began to teach the disciples 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.

Now, Lent is a time to look at oneself and see whether we have given ourselves to Jesus and to accept his death on the cross to atone for our sins. Let us ask forgiveness and ask to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. He is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Prayer

Lord,
help us to be more like Jesus,
where there is hate, help us to love,
let us reach out to others in the name of Christ! Amen.

David Nankivell

26th Day of Lent
March 15, 2018

Who do you say that I am?

“How Do I Answer the Question?”
Mark 8:27-29

In this passage Jesus is talking to his disciples. He had first asked, “Who do people say I am?” (v. 27, NIV). Then he asked them directly “But what about you....Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ.” (v. 29).

We may often be curious about what those around us think about Jesus, or where they stand in their faith beliefs, or disbeliefs for that matter. Are we like minded? Are we following the same “moral compass?” Does your faith align with mine? Do you know the way of salvation? Are you saved? It’s natural for us to wonder about others, particularly those we care about, because we hope they know who Jesus is and believe in his message.

What ultimately matters though, isn’t other people’s opinions and beliefs about Jesus, but what we think, know, and believe about Jesus. We are held accountable to our own beliefs, faith, and answers to this question.

As noted in scripture, Jesus has many names and attributes that help define who he is and I am sure that each of us individually could answer this question in many different ways. When I first read the question the immediate thought that came into my mind was: Jesus is my Savior.

Jesus is the Savior of the world, the whole world.

Prayer

Father God,

thank You for giving us Your Son Jesus.

Thank You for providing us, sinners, with a Savior.

Thank You for the perfect example of love and compassion we see in Him and help us to strive to be formed in His character. Amen.

Jenny Dillard

27th Day of Lent
March 16, 2018

Who do you say that I am?

“It Wasn’t Enough”
Mark 8:29-35

As I shared on my Wednesday night testimony this past year, I was a prodigal son. After growing up going to church, being saved at Weekday Religious Education camp at a young age, being very involved in youth activities in this church, and much more, I came to the point where I wanted to make my own decisions about how I wanted to live my life. Yet, in spite of that, I never stopped believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the World. But that belief was separate from the choices I was making in my life: choices about sex, about drunkenness and drug use, and so much more.

That may be exactly the same situation that you find yourself in today. You not only say but also truly believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the World. Yet at the same time this belief has no real connection to the choices that you make each day. Maybe your choices involve sex, or drinking, or drugs, or lying, or cheating, or pornography, or abusing someone, or something else I’ve not thought of here.

In my life, there came a day when it wasn’t enough to just believe that Jesus is our Savior. What I needed desperately in my life was a willingness to let that belief be the basis for every decision that I made. Thankfully I came to the moment where that happened for me, and that has made all the difference in the world. Are you at that point today?

Prayer

Dear Jesus,

I’m finding in my life that it’s not enough
to just believe that You are who You claim to be.

I need more.

I need the willingness in my heart to let that belief
be the basis for every decision that I make in my life.

Please give me that willingness today. Amen.

Steve Suter

28th Day of Lent
March 17, 2018

Who do you say that I am?

“Don’t Give Up Yet, Keep Following”
Mark 8:27-38

You can always count on Peter to speak up in the gospels when everyone else is unsure about what Jesus is asking. Peter had a great initial answer (v. 29). Good for Peter! When Jesus explained more about what it meant for him to be the Christ, Peter did not like the sound of it at all and Peter tried setting Jesus straight. Not so smart Peter!

What I am so grateful about Peter is how he knew some things about Jesus after following him awhile, definitely misunderstood things about Jesus, too, but kept following. Peter could have settled for his part-right and part-wrong answer; but, instead, Peter continued to get behind Jesus and follow. Peter had his eyes opened more in knowing Jesus through Jesus’ rebuke, passion, resurrection, and seaside call to “Feed my sheep.”

Like Peter, I want to keep walking with Jesus, so I can know Christ not only in part, but in my walking in Jesus’ steps today.

Prayer

Jesus,
let me know you
and follow you
today and always. Amen.

Joel Robinette

5th Sunday in Lent
March 18, 2018

Enjoy a Sunday in Lent Sabbath.

Do you want to get well?

29th Day of Lent
March 19, 2018

Do you want to get well?

“God Knows Our Story”
John 5:1-15

Many times, throughout my nursing career, when caring for a noncompliant patient, I have wanted to say out loud in frustration, “Do you really want to get well?” A nurse never knows a patient’s whole story, and many times we do not understand what motivates a patient or doesn’t move a patient to be compliant with treatment recommendations.

In the opening verses of John 5, Jesus asks out loud, “Do you want to get well?” Why wouldn’t the man, who had been an invalid for 38 years, answer “Of course, I want to be well.” The disabled man didn’t say, “Well of course, I do,” but he responded with reasons why he wasn’t well. We do not know the man’s whole story. My NIV footnotes suggest that perhaps he had lost all hope and felt powerless, or perhaps he was fearful of losing his income if he was well. Or perhaps it was simply the invalid’s conviction, that to be cured, he must have help from others.

When Jesus asked him the question, the man did not know that he was talking to the Great Physician. He did not realize that standing before him was the ultimate medicine man and divine healer. The disabled man only voiced belief in the healing powers of a pool of water. Yet, while there is no scriptural evidence that the man had faith in Jesus’ divine power, Jesus made him well.

Jesus knew the man’s whole story. Jesus knows our story too. We cannot always envision how God is working out the details of our story. Faith or no faith, God loves us and cares about the details of our story.

Prayer

Jesus, do I want to be well?

Yes, Lord I want to be totally well – mentally, physically, and spiritually.

Increase my faith and help me to see you working out the details of my well-being.

Jesus, I believe you know my whole story.

Thank you for taking care of the details. Amen.

(Mostly) Linda and (Little Bit) Joe Liskey

30th Day of Lent
March 20, 2018

Do you want to get well?

“Listen to your Aches and Pains”
John 5:1-11

It was an exact week before Christmas. I was at work when the pain set in. I didn't think much about it and continued with what I was doing. As the evening went on, I felt more and more uncomfortable.

It will go away by morning, I told myself. Wrong. The pain and discomfort were still there on Thursday! I had no energy, and the thought of food just made me cringe. I had so much to do at home with Christmas right around the corner, and work was super busy.

I decided a trip to the doctor needed to happen because I didn't think I could suffer with that pain through Christmas. I confided in a good friend about how I was feeling because I needed a few extra prayers. Scott and I would go see a doctor that evening. It really didn't feel like a kidney stone pain, but I also knew it wasn't muscular. My visit came with a diagnosis of a possible kidney infection. I could either try an antibiotic to see if I felt any relief, or I could go to the hospital for a CT scan to rule out a kidney stone. Hmmm, what should I do? Should I try the antibiotic or go to the emergency room? I wanted to feel better, not just because I had so much to do, but because I was tired of not feeling good. I opted for the antibiotic, and I did feel better the next day, but I still am not fully energized and need to take things a little easy. It's hard to do things when you're not feeling well, so sometimes you just need to listen to what your body is telling you and do something about it!

Prayer

Dear Lord,

I thank you for medical personnel that work to help us feel better.

Give us gentle nudges to remind us to not take our aches and pains for granted.

Amen.

Michele Dodrill

31st Day of Lent
March 21, 2018

Do you want to get well?

“Hand Surgery”
John 5:6

Jesus asks this of a 38 year invalid. The man’s answer is yes. My first thought is, “Who wouldn’t?” Yet sometimes we get comfortable in our ruts and don’t want to change our familiar routine out of fear of the unknown.

This past autumn I had surgery on each of my hands due to finger numbness. This is a serious concern anytime but especially for a massage therapist. The doctor said it was so severe that I may not get any feeling back but surgery would at least halt the muscle atrophy. He said it may take six months to a year before I could tell any difference. I’m delighted to report at two months sensation was already returning and it continues to improve. I thank Him daily for this healing.

Prayer

Jesus,
thank you for physical healing but more importantly, **when we ask**,
thank you for healing and forgiving us of our sins. Amen.

Tanya Dawn Eppard

32nd Day of Lent
March 22, 2018

Do you want to get well?

"I Say Yes"

When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" (John 5:6, ESV)

When I ask myself this I say yes.
Then I get afraid.
Letting go and opening up isn't a strong point of mine.
I do not cry.
That is weakness.
I cry alone.
This year I had to give control to God.
Almost losing Wayne has let me give up control but I still battle it every day.
It's been a hard year but also a very blessed year.
Wayne,
Jazz and the tick,
and me.
But I am getting there.
I know God wants me to continue with the ministry as well.
He has told me.
I am working on knowing it's him
and not the devil trying to get me to give up.
I have been praying more,
reading my Bible more.
Even in a group of ladies where I do online Bible study.
It is so awesome.
I will continue moving forward in my relationship with God.
I am gonna soar this year
I hope.

Prayer

He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." (Mark 5:34, NIV)

Becky Ryman

*Do you know
what I've done for you?*

33rd Day of Lent
March 23, 2018

Do you know what I've done for you?

"What Hasn't Jesus Done for Me?"
John 13:1-18

When Jesus washed the feet of his disciples he cleansed their bodies so they could be part of him with the exception of one who was still unclean. Jesus died on the cross so that I could live!

My blessings from Jesus started when I was born and grew up in a warm and loving family with my parents and siblings. Those blessings continued when he partnered me with a wonderful Christian husband of 48 years, and a thoughtful and loving son, and now his family. Jesus walks beside me every day and his love for me, even when I slip up, is unconditional and he still loves me the same as he did the day before.

I shared with Joel and my Bible study group once that when I was immersed into Christ, as I was coming out of the water, I felt the softest and lightest touch on my shoulder and I always maintained that it was God's hand on me at that time. During the darkest period of my life when Jim was having heart issues, Jesus gave me the courage and strength to do whatever it took from me to go through the daily routine and to stay positive. Jim and I have so many blessings to be thankful for and none are taken for granted. When asked, "What has Jesus done for me?" I can truthfully say, "What hasn't he done for me?"

Prayer

Heavenly Father

when I am on my morning walk and talking with you
I always know that you are right there beside me
and listening to my praises of you
and all that I have to be thankful for
and all of my cares and concerns.

Lord help us to be mindful of just how blessed we really are.

Grace Brown

34th Day of Lent
March 24, 2018

Do you know what I've done for you?

"Jesus Set the Example"

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. (John 13:12-15, NIV)

Jesus lived his life as an example for us and while there is no possible way for us to live the perfect, sinless life that he did we do have the ability to make choices in following his example that are pleasing to him. Jesus displayed a servant's heart in this passage. One of the best ways that we can share the message and love of Jesus is in our acts of service to others. You have probably often heard it said that "actions speak louder than words." When we give of our time and talents to serve another one of God's children, then we are not only following the example he set for us but we are also demonstrating our desire to live as Jesus lived.

Are you willing to follow Jesus' example of serving? Who can you serve today?

Prayer*

Jesus,
you have set the example for serving,
direct me to who you would have me serve today.
Now help me get serving! Amen.

Jenny Dillard

Palm Sunday / 6th Sunday in Lent
March 25, 2018

Enjoy a Sunday in Lent Sabbath.

Monday of Holy Week / 35th Day of Lent
March 26, 2018

Do you know what I've done for you?

"Teaming with Jesus"
John 13:12-17, 34-35

Jesus asked the disciples, "Do you know what I have done to you?" (v. 12, NRSV). This is a really good question! Do we really understand what Christ has done for us?

What Jesus is telling us in this scripture is to serve as He had served and in doing this it requires teamwork which includes laity (us – the church) and clergy working together. It calls for our best! Jesus gave His best for us. In return, we are to give our best for Christ as disciples.

We are called to be the hands and feet of Christ, to stand in the gap.

That means we are to love, forgive, and to show God's grace in the things we say and do. Does this mean we will do this perfectly? No, but we can do our best to be Christ to those who need Him and to those who think they don't need Him.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father!

During this time when we reflect on your death and resurrection,

let us not forget to reflect on your life here

and how you loved and served your people:

not just the wealthy, intelligent, and healthy ones;

but those who were poor, broken, and sick. Amen.

Ginny Bowman

Tuesday of Holy Week / 36th Day of Lent
March 27, 2018

Do you know what I've done for you?

"Humble Thyself in the Sight of the Lord"
John 13:12

If Jesus can wash feet why can't we? In John 13:12, Jesus was trying to teach us to be humble – to not think we are any better than anyone else. Jesus was showing us that if he as our Lord, Savior, and the King of kings has enough humility to wash the feet of an ordinary man, then we should have the same humility. We need to step out of our comfort zone and experience the things we normally wouldn't do. If it was good enough for Jesus it is certainly good enough for us.

Prayer

Eternal Father,
teach me:
to be humble,
to do as you would,
and to walk in the path as you did. Amen.

Kelly Smith

Why are you crying?

Wednesday of Holy Week / 37th Day of Lent
March 28, 2018

Why are you crying?

"It's OK to Cry"
John 20:11-15

Why do we cry when someone dies? Because...

- ♥ miss that person and we want them to continue to be with us
- ♥ jealous they have gone on to heaven and are with Jesus and other loved ones
- ♥ glad they no longer suffer
- ♥ someone became human, who was a divine spirit, to give up his life; to suffer a painful death, just so we could spend our eternity with him.

It's OK to cry. It's part of the healing, remembering, and loving of that person.

Because "Jesus wept" (John 11:35)

If Jesus wept why do we think we shouldn't?

Prayer

Dear Lord,
we thank you for allowing crying
to be part of the healing process when we lose someone.
Help us to see you when we go through this difficult time.
We know you are with us and crying tears with us.
We also know you are there with loving arms to comfort us.
Help us to follow your lead and to cry when we need. Amen.

A beautiful song related to this is by Matt Hammitt called "Tears."

Beth Morris

Maunday Thursday / 38th Day of Lent
March 29, 2018

Why are you crying?

“Is Your Day Long Enough?”
John 20:15

I’m frustrated!!! I’m overwhelmed!!! I’m stressed!!!
Work is busy. The house is feeling neglected. My family needs me to help do this or that.

I want to scrapbook or make some cards.

My to-do list keeps growing.

Have you ever noticed that sometimes there just aren’t enough hours in the day? I admit that there are times that I just want to cry out that I can’t handle it anymore, but I’m reminded by a note I have in my office that God won’t give you more than you can handle. I’m not always so sure I agree with that statement. Sometimes the tears just come, and I find myself asking, “Why are you crying? You need to get over it! Philippians 4:6 tells us to not worry about anything but instead pray about everything. God is in control of each of our lives, and he is waiting for us to lean into his open arms.

Prayer

Dear Lord,
life is not always easy.
Thank you
for loving us,
and guiding us,
and reminding us
that you are with us
in all circumstances.

Michele Dodrill

Good Friday / 39th Day of Lent
March 30, 2018

Why are you crying?

“Recognizing the Tears”
John 20:1-16

On that first Easter Day there was no parade (like Palm Sunday), no church growth (like Pentecost), nothing good expected (especially from Mary). There were doors locked in fear, disciples leaving Jerusalem in confusion heading for Emmaus, and Mary Magdalene crying. Jesus came where there were tears.

Mary Magdalene was crying even though Jesus was alive. Mary did not realize that Jesus had risen from the grave, so her tears are very understandable. What surprises me is how Jesus recognized Mary's distress, inquired about her tears, and didn't reveal himself until Mary shared she was searching for him. Jesus did not dismiss her tears or tell her to get over it. Jesus met Mary in her tears and helped her recognize that he was with her.

If you are shedding tears today, know that the unexpected, hard-to-recognize, and compassionate Jesus is with you.

If this is not a day you are crying, look to where there are tears falling today. Jesus is going there. Will we go with him? Will we recognize the tears and give the gift of being there or supporting in prayer?

Prayer

Thank you Jesus for recognizing our tears and coming near.

Help us see we are never alone and that your grace is with us.

Be with those who are crying today

and bring them your unexpected resurrection.

Let our hearts not grow cold or indifferent to grief,

as we await that day when you will wipe every tear from our eyes. Amen.

Joel Robinette

Holy Saturday / 40th Day of Lent
March 31, 2018

Why are you crying?

John 20:11-18

"Why Are You Crying"

I came to see His face again,
But you have taken Him away.
Mary's heart was breaking so –
It was now the third day.

He promised He would rise again.
The tomb was dark and empty.

Only linens and angels there.
No Master could she see.

So she walked into the garden,
Crying, where did He go?
When a stranger came up to her,
She kept her head bowed low.

She pleaded for his body –
Where have you taken Him?
Her question went unanswered,
As her hope was growing dim.

And then as if all time stood still,
She softly heard her name,
And her heart leapt within her chest –
The gardener, My Lord, the same.

To hold him and to talk to Him
She desperately wanted to do,
But that was not an option
For His body was brand new.

Go and tell my brothers
I live, I kept my word.
Never a greater story told
Than Mary's that they heard.

We cry today for many things –
Trivial, important, or broken.
He sees our tears, He feels our tears,
And comforts with words unspoken.

Prayer

Sweet Jesus, who knows every emotion.
Feel our tears as we search for you in sickness, in health, in sorrow, in joy.
Fill our hearts with Easter grace and peace. Amen.

Diana Davis