

Daily Reflections

LENT
2011



Gathered from throughout the
Episcopal Community
of South Dakota

Second annual edition

Invitation to a Holy Lent

The Book of Common Prayer invites us into an observation of a holy Lent. As we read and meditate on God's holy Word, we are privileged within these pages to share in how the Spirit touches people whose lives are connected to ours. During our daily journey through Lent, we will have the opportunity to learn from one another how God moves within us and shapes us.

The Scripture readings listed for each day are from the Daily Lectionary Year Two.

May we read these words with open hearts and with a willingness to listen for the Spirit speaking to us through our brothers and sisters in Christ.

To those who wrote the following meditations, thank you for opening yourselves to the idea of reflecting on God's Word and sharing your thoughts.

Wednesday, March 9th

Psalms 95 & 32, Jonah 3:1-4:11, Hebrews 12:1-14, Luke 18:9-14

"Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood." (Hebrews 12: vs 3&4)

These verses sort of put the "deprivations" of Lent into perspective. I'm not convinced I "struggle against sin" nearly often enough — even in Lent. In this modern era we live in — and probably especially in the country we live in — will any of us actually be required to shed our blood for Jesus? In all honesty, or perhaps more like "wishful thinking," I certainly hope not! The thing is, some of the "great cloud of witnesses" who paved our way *did* shed their blood for the sake of the Word. I dishonor their sacrifice when I become selfish with this God-given life. I dishonor Christ when I believe what I am doing for the spread of His Kingdom is "good enough." What should we "give up" for the sake of Christ's blood shed for us? What do we have that is really ours to give? We have today. Or perhaps we just have this hour. Make it worthy of Christ's sacrifice.

Shelli Vallis

St. Andrew's, Rapid City

Thursday, March 10th

Psalm 37:1-18, Deut 7:6-11, Titus 1:1-16, John 1:29-34

When Jesus appeared before John the Baptizer, John was taken aback. He knew who Jesus was and he was shocked and surprised. All he could think to say was, "here comes the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." Wouldn't it be nice to have a surprise like that in our world at the time of baptism or any other time?

About 25 years ago, I got up one lovely June morning and went out to the backyard with my dog, Sir Diamond Black Claw. I was sad that June day because I was going to bury one of my good friends, a man who died unexpectedly, too young. The dog and I were playing catch. After dozens of tosses by me, and returns by Sir in his own style of pitching back the ball, he threw the ball past me into the flower bed. I bent down to get the ball and there was an Easter lily - long dead after Holy Week -- come back to life, blooming away. It was beautiful. And I said to myself, "Isn't that a marvelous thing that God has done? The lily is reborn. It's like the resurrection of Jesus."

The Rev. Dennis Tippett, retired
St. Andrew's, Rapid City

Friday, March 11th

Psalms 95 & 31, Deut 7:12-16, Titus 2:1-15, John 1:35-42

Both Deuteronomy and Titus teach us how to be. We are not to have any false Gods and we are not to associate with anyone who does. God is much more forceful in Deuteronomy than in Titus; he's running the show. He had chosen his people and he had high expectations for them. In much of the Old Testament we hear about God's wrath, his power to destroy, and his demanding nature. He was not proud of what had occurred in his creation. He commands his people with an iron fist.

Disobedience means death and destruction. Paul's letter to Titus has a softer, less scary message. God sent his Son to be a light and a beacon of character for all of us, changing the world from one of savagery to hopefulness. He sent his Son to teach us how to live. He gave us hope and security in the knowledge that we would live with him into eternity because Jesus paid the price for our sin. It is not that we have to be perfect. It is that if we find that we have sinned, we need to recognize it, ask for forgiveness and try to do or be better. Just imagine how all the world would be if we all lived with integrity, gravity, and sound speech.

Jan Sanford

Grace Episcopal Church, Madison

Saturday, March 12th

Psalms 30 & 32, Deut 7:17-26, Titus 3:1-15, John 1:43-51

We put on our garments of sackcloth and we display our troubles instead of our joy. We allow ourselves to enter into the light; our troubles can then evolve into the joy we find in believing. How can we begin to leave the darkness and enter into the light? In John's Gospel, Jesus is going to Galilee and Phillip is with him. Phillip finds Nathanael and tells him they have found the one whom Moses and the prophets wrote about, Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth. Nathanael said to Peter, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Phillip told Nathanael, "Come and see." Phillip is offered a personal invitation to come and see what this Jesus is all about. The day before, Jesus offered the same invitation to his disciples, "Come and see." Jesus invites all of us to come and see. Come and see what it is like to feel hope when everything around us is falling apart. Come and see the light that shines in the world to chase away the darkness.

This season of Lent, come and see, and experience the love and faithfulness of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Reverend Evelyn Weaver and Deacon Mike Weaver
St. James', Belle Fourche

Sunday, March 13th

Psalms 63 & 98, Deut 8:1-10, 1 Cor 1:17-31, Mark 2:18-22

I relate to the disciples and friends of Jesus. They were not the most educated, intelligent, or the most accepted. Jesus did not care how much they knew, just that they cared.

Neither of my parents finished high school. Without a formal education my father became one of the most loved and respected business men in Rapid City. He ran his businesses and his life by the Golden Rule. My mother is one of the wisest people I know. She teaches Bible studies at her church, not because she has had the education to do so, but by how she lives her life.

I believe the Bible was not written to make me smarter, but to make my life better. So often I hear, "I want to be like Jesus." That is impossible. So, I ask "Is Jesus like me?" If not, then I need to find out why and change.

When I come to the end of my life, God is not going to care how much I knew, but how did I care for His people.

Linda Simmons

St. Andrew's. Rapid City

Monday, March 14th

Psalms 41 & 52, Deut 8:11-20, Hebrews 2:11-18, John 2:1-12

As I read the lessons for today, I learned three things to help me be what God wants me to be. The first lesson is to always remember it is only through God's power that I can accomplish anything. I should not be prideful. Without God I am nothing.

The second lesson is that God sent Jesus as a human to better understand my weaknesses and failings so that Jesus could exonerate me by His death upon the cross. May I always be thankful for this, God's loving and wonderful gift.

The third lesson I see is that God calls me to act and to give of myself even though I may not feel the timing is convenient. He wants me to be ready at any time and any place to do His work in the world. Nothing should ever be placed on a higher pedestal than answering God's call. I am nothing if I am not His instrument. May I forever be available to do God's will. This is my prayer.

Mary Olson
Emmanuel, Rapid City

Tuesday, March 15th

Psalm 45, Deut 9:4-12, Hebrews3:1-11, John 2:13-22

"O God, I cannot undo the past or make it never have happened! Neither can You. There are some things that are not possible even for You but not many!

I ask you, humbly, and from the bottom of my heart:
Please, God, would You write straight with my crooked lines? Out of the serious mistakes of my life will You make something beautiful for You?

Teach me to live at peace with You, to make peace with others and even with myself.

Give me fresh vision. Let me experience Your love so deeply that I am free to face the future with a steady eye, forgiven, and strong in hope."

"Celtic Daily Prayer

Prayers and Readings from the Northumbria Community"

Wednesday, March 16th

Psalm 119:49-72, Deut 9:13-21, Hebrews3:12-19, John 2:23-3:15

While reflecting on these passages, we were reminded of the motto of The Order of the Daughters of the King.

"For His Sake...

I am but one, but I am one.

I cannot do everything, but I can do something.

What I can do, I ought to do.

What I ought to do, by the grace of God I will do.

Lord, what will you have me do?"

(DOK National Handbook)

Thy will be done. Amen.

Black Hills Chapter, Daughters of the King

Thursday, March 17th

Psalms 50, 59, 60, Deut 9:23-10:5, Hebrews4:1-10, John 3:16-21

The great love of God towards the world is reflected in the Word of the Lord. We know judgment day is part of life and God has told us that believers will have eternal life. God made covenants with us. The Ten Commandments and other laws and has high expectations that we will demonstrate patience, humility, compassion, kindness and love for all.

I start the day with:

God, thank you for loving me and the whole world. Thank you for reaching out again and again to save me from myself. Move me, too, to love the world as you do. Amen,

Take some time, pause for a few moments now to present yourself to God and ask that you might gain some new insight into this challenge that has faced us from the beginning. Do what is true and remember, God's greatest gift is Love, and it is all about God!

Deacon Pat White Horse Carda
Yankton and Santee Missions

Friday, March 18th

Psalms 40 & 54, Deut 10:12-22, Hebrews 4:11-16, John 3:22-36

Sometimes the words of Scripture are confusing.

On the one hand, you get words like Love and Joy. You get the idea that what God most desires is to be in love with us, and we with God; that our hearts and bodies and souls will be united and one, perfect in the eyes of the one who made us, if we can lose our smallness in the ocean of Love that is for God, and of God. On the other hand, and even in the same reading, you get words like wrath and sin and dividing sword. And you get the idea that religion is an endless series of demands on your behavior, that you'll never be good enough for God, and that God is growling at us.

My guess is that whichever "set" of words we hear most loudly will tell us how we feel about ourselves. Of course, we feel, and are both extremes- disobedient and beloved. Anyone who has spent any time with a child knows this is possible. Children are disobedient and beloved. Perfect and monsters!

But God, the Father and Mother of us all, the Source of our being, has a love for us that is bigger than either our God's feelings about us at a given moment. The Love of God is the very ground of life itself. The Love of God is not an emotion but a truth. It is the Truth upon which we live and breathe.

The Rev. Rita Powell
St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Vermillion

Saturday, March 19th

Psalm 55, Deut 11:18-28, Hebrews 5:1-10, John 4:1-26

Sin is anything that separates us from God or from one another.

Is there any more obvious example of the separation caused by sin than this woman? Her sexual sins have driven her away from the people of her village and as a direct consequence, she does her heaviest lifting in the hottest part of the day rather than suffer the taunts and barbs of the other women of the village who haul their water in the cool of the morning. Yet God does not leave her in her sin, nor does God punish her. Look again at what John shows us.

They meet and Jesus initiates contact by saying, "Give me a drink." This startles her (she is alone with a strange man and he is talking to her) so she questions his intentions. ("A Jew asking a Samaritan for anything?") Jesus offers to restore her relationship with God. ("If you knew, you would ask, and I would give you living water¹.") She fails to understand, but after a confused exchange she eventually asks, "Sir, give me this water." It is only then that Jesus confronts her sin; only after she has responded to his offer of a connection.

If sin is that which separates us from God and from one another, then the cure for sin is not punishment. The cure for separation is restoration and Jesus truly restores her. In this reading, he restores her relationship with God in himself. And in the verses that follow we see her restored to a relationship with her community and acting as evangelist to that community (Verse 29: "Come and see . . ." Verse 39 "Many . . . believed in him because of the woman's testimony . . .").

The Very Rev. Ward Simpson

Calvary Cathedral, Sioux Falls

Sunday, March 20

¹ "Living water" is a wonderful cross-cultural pun. Jacob's Well is famous in this part of Palestine because it isn't a cistern filled with months old rain water, but it is a deep well (depending upon the time of year the water would be between 60' and 120' below ground level) fed by ground water and underground streams, thus the water in it is constantly moving or "living" and always fresh. In Greek mythology (which the people of Palestine would have heard about by this time because of their proximity to Hellenistic culture) "living water" was often poured into the mouths of the dead to restore them to life. Both Jewish and Samaritan cities contained pools for ritual cleansing. If the water in them was rainwater, it had to be changed after each use. But, if the pool was directly connected to "living water" (a stream or spring), then you didn't have to drain it after each use. Thus where rainwater pool would struggle to cleanse 100 people in a day, a pool with living water could cleanse thousands of people and would use much less water in the process.

Psalms 24 & 29, Jeremiah 1:1-10, 1 Cor 3:11-23, Mark 3:31-4:9

Reading Mark 4:9: *And He said to them, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* brought to mind when our daughter was a toddler. Her babysitter said she needed to find elephant ears for the children because they seemed not able to hear with the ears they were born with. In light of recent events at home and abroad, many appear to be in need of elephant ears. We the children of God have become extremely divided because some are so intolerant they refuse to listen to anyone who does not agree 100% with their viewpoints. They refuse to sit respectfully at the same table and calmly discuss issues with an open mind or compromise in any way so a truly beneficial consensus can be built. Winning at all costs seems to be the objective of these individuals--even when winning hurts the people. They apparently have never heard the concepts of "Love your neighbor as you love yourself" or "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Let us as people of God strive to sincerely listen with our ears, mind, heart and soul. Let us always treat others respectfully and never become deaf simply because they may have differing opinions or beliefs. Let us break bread, not heads.

Don & Karen Eagle
Church of Jesus, Rosebud

Monday, March 21st

Psalms 56, 57, 58, Jeremiah 1:11-19, Romans 1:1-15, John 4:27-42

Listen for a word or phrase in today's readings that stands out for you.

Read the passage again, perhaps using a different translation.

What is *God* saying to you?

What is *God* calling you to do?

Adapted from Gospel-based Discipleship

Tuesday, March 22nd

Psalms 61 & 62, Jeremiah 2:1-13, Romans 1:16-25, John 4:43-54

"Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen."

Proper 28

Book of Common Prayer

Wednesday, March 23rd

Psalm 72, Jeremiah 3:6-18, Romans 1:28-2:11, John 5:1-18

Anyone who has spent time with children and young people recognizes "That's not fair!" as a familiar and common refrain. Kids notice when things aren't fair and they are quick to complain about it. Adults almost automatically respond with "Well, that's life - get used to it" or "Nobody ever said life is fair". Today's scripture readings remind us that, unlike our children and youth, God isn't very concerned with "fair."

In Jeremiah we read that God has been spurned by faithless Israel, who has played the harlot and not returned to the Lord. God calls for Israel's return- not to face anger, but mercy. Israel is promised "shepherds of God's own heart who will feed them with knowledge and understanding." Our reading from Romans speaks of the evil that we all do, in our thoughts, words and deeds. Yet we judge one another, presuming against the riches of God's kindness, forbearance and patience. Paul exhorts, "Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you into repentance?" In the gospel reading we read of Jesus healing a sick man on the Sabbath. This man had been ill for 38 years, yet Jesus was criticized for working on the Sabbath by the religious authorities.

Like Israel, we spurn God's graciousness again and again. As the Romans, we sin, yet point out one another's sins as though we were blameless. We fail to respond to God's kindness with repentance and we often act the part of the critical, legalistic religious authorities. Yet we are forgiven, loved, redeemed. Fair? Absolutely not! Thankfully, our God does not respond to us with a mind for fairness, but with a heart for mercy and love.

Jane Hill

All Angel's. Spearfish

Thursday, March 24th

Psalms 70 & 71, Jeremiah 4:9-10, 19-28, Romans 2:12-24, John 5:19-29

"Now quit your care and anxious fear and worry,
for schemes are vain and fretting brings no gain. Lent calls to prayer, to trust and
dedication; God brings new beauty
nigh; reply, reply, reply with love to love most high;
reply, reply, reply with love to love most high.

"Bow the head in sack-cloth and in ashes, or
rend the soul, such grief is not Lent's goal; but to be
led to where God's glory flashes, his beauty to come
near. Make clear, make clear, make clear where truth and light appear; make clear,
make clear, make clear where truth and light appear."

Hymn 145

"The Hymnal 1982"

Words: Percy Dearmer

Friday, March 25th

Psalm 69, Jeremiah 5:1-9, Romans 2:25-3:18, John 5:30-47

"Heavenly Father, you see how your children hunger for food, and fellowship, and faith. Help us to meet one another's needs of body, mind, and spirit, in the love of Christ our Savior.

O God, giver of life and health,
your Son Jesus Christ has called us
to hunger and thirst to see right prevail;
refresh us with your grace
that we may not be weary of well-doing;
for the sake of him who meets all our needs,
our Savior Jesus Christ.

God of the hungry,
make us hunger and thirst for the right,
till our thirst for justice has been satisfied
and hunger has gone from the earth."

"A New Zealand Prayer Book"

Saturday, March 26th

Psalms 75 & 76, Jeremiah 5:20-31, Romans 3:19-31, John 7:1-13

""We give you thanks, O God, we give you thanks,"
calling upon your Name and declaring all your
wonderful deeds."

For what do you give thanks today?

What wonderful deeds has God done in your life?

Get out paper and pencil and make a list. Don't forget to include the small, often overlooked, blessings of life.

Sunday, March 27th

Psalms 93 & 96, Jeremiah 6:9-15, 1 Cor 6:12-20, Mark 5:1-20

Wow, as a sinner the words of the lessons for today sound like a warning! It is hard to hear of things in life you may be doing as seen unfavorable to another yet to you they bring comfort, pleasure, release from your troubles. We are told to take everything up with God, how many of us actually do that? I can honestly say that I myself don't. I rely on reaching out to those around me for the things I need. My needs are someone to share my grief with, to hold me when I am sad, to laugh with when something strikes me as funny, to share a meal with when I want to indulge, to show something I find to be beautiful. I have to believe that he put that person there to see, hear, taste, smell and feel those things that I do. I need others around me to explore all of my senses with and have to believe that God is ok with me sharing those experiences with someone.

Tara Engels

Grace Church, Huron

Monday, March 28th

Psalm 80, Jeremiah 7:1-15, Romans 4:1-12, John 7:14-36

Take some time for yourself today. Perhaps you might want to go for a walk or read a book. Give yourself the gift of silence for a small portion of your day. And as you do, listen for the voice of God in the stillness.

Deacon Bitsey Ciesel

Sisseton Mission

Tuesday, March 29th

Psalm 78:1-39, Jeremiah 7:21-34, Romans 4:13-25, John 7:37-52

John 7:37 "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink."

Wow, what an invitation! An invitation straight from the mouth of Jesus, "If ANYONE is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink." Jesus said ANYONE. He didn't invite those who were baptized. He didn't invite those who were confirmed. He didn't invite those who belonged to a certain denomination. He didn't invite those who belonged to a certain religion. He didn't invite those who pray on a regular basis, are of a specific sexual orientation, or tithe to the church. He didn't invite those with a certain color of skin, a specific ministry, or particular lifestyle. He didn't invite those who sing in the choir, teach Sunday school, or wash the alter linens.

Jesus put no prerequisites on his invitation except to be thirsty. "If ANYONE is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink." The invitation has already been sent. Are you willing to welcome ANYONE?

Dawn Hurney
Trinity Church, Pierre

Wednesday, March 30th

Psalm 119:97-120, Jeremiah 8:18-9:6, Romans 5:1-11, John 8:12-20

To realize that Jesus is the light of the world and if I follow him, I will not walk in darkness, but have the light of life is very comforting.

Bible school was always a favorite summer activity of mine since an early age. I liked memorizing Bible verses and the books of the Bible. I knew God could see me and all I was doing as looked down from heaven above. I vividly remember getting in the cookie jar and then hiding under the table while eating the cookie I was not suppose to have; but I knew God couldn't see me cuz I was under the table.

As I grow and try to grasp more of my Lord and Savior I find myself at times still wanting to "hide under the table" in the darkness. But oh the joy of feeling and knowing He is all around me, cares for me, and the light is shining brightly showing me the way.

Dear Jesus cast your light and help me to feel your presence.

Lois Howe,
St. Andrew's, Rapid City

Thursday, March 31st

Psalms 83, 42, 43, Jeremiah 10:11-24, Romans 5:12-21, John 8:21-32

"The Feast"

"Jesus' death presents itself as food
life giving bread, inebriating wine;
more than essential nourishment - a festive mood
for downcast people come to dine.
He, the joyful host of his demise
Brings those He loves to His most lively feast
He, the everlasting food, His tender self, the prize,
His life, eternal aid; His help unceased.
To be like Christ, no easy feat,
To be the new creation he would have;
But at His table, we become that which we eat,
The Christ; for every sin the sting, for every wound the salve.
Happy folk renewed by wine and bread!
Alive with Him, victorious from the dead!"

"Poems from the Eighth Decade"

by Harold Macdonald

Friday, April 1st

Psalm 88, Jeremiah 11:1-8, 14-20, Romans 6:1-11, John 8:33-47

"Let me be at peace within myself.

Let me accept that I am profoundly loved and
need never be afraid.

Let me be aware of the Source of Being that is common to us all
and to all living creatures.

Let me be filled with the presence of the Great Compassion
toward myself and toward
all living beings.

Let me always be an instrument of my own liberation and
not of my own oppression.

Let me see the face of Jesus in others.

Let me be the face of Jesus for others.

Let me be a peace within myself."

Amen.

The Rev. Canon Elizabeth Kaeton

"Women's Uncommon Prayers"

Saturday, April 2nd

Psalms 87 & 90, Jeremiah 13:1-11, Romans 6:12-23, John 8:47-59

Free gift with purchase! Buy one get one free!

We are bombarded with these claims daily. Some of us believe the offer; others believe there is no such thing as a "free lunch". In the world today if something sounds too good to be true - we may need to use caution.

However, in God's world we are promised the truly free gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus. The price was paid by Jesus Christ on our behalf. We can accept it or not accept it. When we choose to accept the gift, there are responsibilities:

- ❖ Living lives that reveal our faith in God
- ❖ Spreading the Good News
- ❖ Sharing the joy of Christian fellowship
- ❖ Serving others
- ❖ Honoring our baptismal covenant - with God's help
- ❖ Praying daily - allowing our prayers to be a two way conversation
- ❖ Giving thanks in all ways for all things

Black Hills Chapter Daughters of the King

Sunday, April 3rd

Psalms 66 & 67, Jeremiah 14:1-9, 17-22, Gal 4:21-5:1, Mark 8:11-21

In today's epistle, what does the law have to do with the story that follows it?

Read Galatians 5 to understand: "Really, you want to subject yourselves to the Law again? But it is faith working through love that makes the difference!"

The Law is in Psalm 66: "Your enemies cringe before you," and in Jeremiah, where they plead for mercy. There's a sense of having to do the right thing in the right way. Yet Jesus warned that this is what the Pharisees excelled at - following the Law. The disciples take Jesus' words literally - "Oh, man, who forgot the bread?"

But it's not what we *do* that matters. In the psalms is the word "Selah" - one of my bibles translates it as "Pause." That's what we need to "do." When we rush around looking for what we "need" to do to placate/please God that is the time to pause.

Just as the yeast works (we neither see nor know), God is at work. Live in love, rest in God. *Selah*.

Holly Huisken

All Angel's Spearfish

Monday, April 4th

Psalm 89:1-18, Jeremiah 16:10-21, Romans 7:1-12, John 6:1-15

Every morning on my way to work I noticed a man crossing the intersection while I waited for the light. I had often wondered about him. I had assumed that he was homeless and on his way to the mission for breakfast. I had made this assumption based on his worn clothing and his slow shuffle. He was always carrying a backpack and looking down at his feet while he walked. Many mornings I wondered about his life, where he came from, how he got to where he is now, where does he sleep at night, does he have a family, and does he get enough to eat? Once I had considered waiting for him and introducing myself, and walking a while with him; but my assumptions and fears stopped me from taking this action. Then one morning I realized I hadn't seen him. I purposefully watch for him for several days, the days turned into weeks and finally I realized that he was gone.

I recently read that each of us influences over 10,000 other people during our lifetime. After I read that sentence my thoughts slowly drifted back to this man - suddenly realizing how profoundly he had influenced mine. My, A stranger I never met reminded me not to be crippled by fear, to embrace mankind, to give of myself, to never take for granted a minute of your life, and to believe in the little miracles. I hope someday to see him again to let him know how much he has touched my life.

Autumn Gregory

All Angel's. Spearfish

Tuesday, April 5th

Psalms 97, 99, 100, Jeremiah 17:19-27, Romans 7:13-25, John 6:16-27

What to write about? All the lessons or just one? How do they speak to me? How do they speak to each other or of each other?

Jeremiah 17: 19-27 Burdens on the Sabbath? Let them down and good things will come your way Jerusalem. What about for us? We don't have camels to load or beasts to burden. Most of us don't even load up our cars in that way. What about the burdens, the loads, we carry in our hearts and souls and minds? When do we lay those down? Will it help if we do? If we spill them out on God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit will good things come our way? Might we have just few moments of feeling free, unbound, and lighter? Not just on the Sabbath. We can do that any time, several times, even continuously. The Trinity is unbounded, immensely strong, and infinite. It can hold all the burdens of the world if need be so it can surely hold those of the People of God, certainly the burdens of a simple person living in South Dakota. I need to remember to unload my burdens more often.

Romans 7: 13-25 Paul always confuses me with these linguistic mutterings where he does all that if/then stuff. I never know what the conclusion is. So he wants to do good but if he thinks about doing good he does evil. If he thinks evil then he can't do good. Sounds like one of those logic problems that confounded me back in college. If Mary is 10 and has two brothers who are twice her age and they are not twins and Susie is not her mother and it never rains in Southern California then how far does Mary walk to school? Suffice to say always use our best intentions, listen to constructive criticism, and know that at some point every day we will miss the mark by a mile. God is there to hold us and even carry the burden of our sinfulness with us.

John 6: 16-27 I like this reading because I like John's Gospel. If I was there I also would be wondering how Jesus got over there. If I had enjoyed the food and entertainment the night before, I might be just curious enough to make the trip over the lake to see what else might happen. And I might just follow him to the next stop. Only through experience of being there over and over could I be sure that he was true. Then I would learn for myself what he tells the crowd of newbies, if we keep coming for food He'll do it one better and give us food that sustains our hearts and souls and minds as well as our stomachs. That food could help us to carry our burdens and make better choices more often.

Pat Woolley
Trinity, Winner

Wednesday, April 6th

Psalms 101 & 109, Jeremiah 18:1-11; Romans 8:1-11; John 6:27-40

Some of you may have grown up during the time "Wonder Bread" was a popular food item. By eating this soft, white bread you were supposed to "build strong bodies 12 ways" and be a healthy person. Eventually, the popularity of this product declined.

In today's reading Jesus promises us better bread, real "wonder bread." *Do not work for food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. (John 6:27)* We get this food by believing in the One whom God has sent. He says to us *if you are hungry for the food that satisfies, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. (John 6:35)* We have this promise! If we keep coming to Jesus (not once but continually), believing in Him, place our trust in Him, including those things we are anxious about, we will find our hunger satisfied and our thirst quenched.

How about you? Are you hungry today? How will you be fed?

Vicki Sweet

Emmanuel, Rapid City

Thursday, April 7th

Psalm 69, Jeremiah 22:13-23, Romans 8:12-27, John 6:41-51

I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE (John 6:48)

Bread -- what a wonderful food. The smell of freshly baked bread is heavenly. Put a slab of butter on that and you have the most tasty slice of food you could eat. Bread sustains the body. Bread helps the body to grow and maintain good health. Bread is a necessary staple of life.

Jesus says that he is "the Bread of Life". Jesus is necessary for the spiritual life to be sustained. Jesus helps us to grow spiritually and to maintain good spiritual health. Jesus is a necessary staple for spiritual life. He cares for and nurtures us. Without him we would die.

Lent is a good time to turn back to Jesus to feed us once more. We become so parched and starved for the goodness and peace of Jesus. Now is a time of remembrance for how much Jesus loves us and how much he did for us. He is waiting to feed us now. Come and be filled!

The Reverend Sandy Williams
St. James', Belle Fourche

Friday, April 8th

Psalm 107:1-32, Jeremiah 23:1-8, Romans 8:28-39, John 6:52-59

Saying goodbye is one of the hardest experiences anyone of us has ever been through: letting go of our child's hand when they go into their classroom to begin Kindergarten; leaving a loved one and not knowing when or if we will see them again; being present with someone dying who needs to say goodbye. Lent is a season of saying goodbye. When we hear the words from the Ash Wednesday liturgy, we are invited to observe this time by "self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word." We come face to face with that which keeps us from having a fuller and loving relationship with God. We know in our hearts then that it is time to let go of what gets in the way and say goodbye. Making that decision is not easy however we have a companion who will walk us through these partings. Paul wrote that nothing in this life will ever "be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Jesus gives us the strength to let go, helps us to reconcile and most of all he will never say "good bye". He only says, "hello, my beloved" and enfolds us in his arms of compassion and forgiveness.

The Rev. Mercy Hobbs
Trinity Church, Pierre

Saturday, April 9th

Psalms 107: 33-43 & 108, Jeremiah 23:9-15, Romans 9:1-18, John 6:60-71

"A Christian is one who points at Christ and says, "I can't prove a thing, but there's something about His eyes and His voice. There's something about the way He carries His head, His hands, the way He carries His cross - the way He carries me."

Frederick Buechner

Sunday, April 10th

Psalm 118, Jeremiah 23:16-32, 1 Cor 9:19-27, Mark 8:31-9:1

Today, God asks, rhetorically, through Jeremiah, "Is not my word like fire and like a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces?" Today's Gospel brings fire and hammer to our hearts, if we choose to hear it. Listen to Him, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Whoever hears these words of heart-breaking hammer and purifying fire may then have some questions to ask. Do I deny myself? How much? Is my heart saying that Christ is asking for more, for another and maybe bigger cross? Do I take up the next cross with the suffering that, by definition, will come with it? Do I have a choice? Do these words, these questions break my heart? If discernment shows this is so, let each of us pray that the fire of the cross will purify and remake our heart more Christ-like so that we can follow Him on our unique pilgrimage.

Scott Moseley

All Angels', Spearfish

Monday, April 11th

Psalm 31, Jeremiah 24:1-10, Romans 9:19-33, John 9:1-17

One really has to read all of John Chapter 9 to grasp the significance of this wonderful story of Jesus curing the man born blind. Jesus, who was already under suspicion for hanging too loose on matters of Jewish law, had the audacity to heal the physical blindness of a good man on the Sabbath. When the angry Pharisees question him the man who was healed says, "If this man (Jesus) were not from God he could do nothing. He believes in Jesus and worships him.

In some ways we can be like the Pharisees who are really the blind ones. Often we become blinded to the fact that Jesus is always with us and all we have to do is rely on him to show us those who can help us out of our blindness: a friend, a spouse, a clergy person, maybe a counselor. This Lent might be a good time to dare to open our eyes to our shadow side and really begin to see all that we see but overlook: the person who needs a kind word, the overabundance of possessions, the bad habits. Jesus will help us take the blinders off. Of that we can be sure.

Vaud Oberlander
St. Andrew's, Rapid City

Tuesday, April 12th

Psalms 120, 121, 122, 123, Jeremiah 25:8-17, Romans 10:1-13, John 9:18-41

"If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." John 9:33

The Pharisees were very proud of their heritage, their learning, their position. They thought they were the good guys; they knew the laws of Moses and were blinded by their pride in that knowledge. They wanted the man who had been blind to see as they saw. But his eyes had been opened in every sense of the word, and what he saw was Jesus. They thought they knew what was right and wrong, and who was he, trying to teach them? He knew he had been humbled by blindness all his life, but now he could see. And what he said made sense, even to the Pharisees. So they drove him out; but there was that little seed of doubt: Surely we are not blind...are we? And Jesus told them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see', your sin remains." And what they could not see was that their sin was pride.

Diana Mathisrud

Christ Church, Lead

Wednesday, April 13th

Psalm 119:145-176, Jeremiah 25:30-38, Romans 10:14-21, John 10:1-18

Today's psalm asks, "give me understanding, according to Your word." That 's not an easy thing because words are not always easy things to understand. I do love words: They are symbols of ideas. But the symbol is different for different people and over the years many words have had lives of their own. Words have their own historical associations, they have their own beginnings and sometimes the understanding of words changes over time. Last year's slang may be this year's colloquialism and next year's common language. And around it goes. The test is time.

In literature, including the Bible written thousands of years ago in different languages, the translation may turn the meaning. In English, we also have words that sound the same but are spelled differently and mean entirely different things. For example, "Henry VIII gave free rein to his appetites during his reign even on cloudy days with rain." What you hear could be a different meaning than what you read. The whole oral tradition of the Old Testament could leave us with holes of misunderstanding. It's a good thing we have the Holy Spirit.

Jan Tippett

St. Andrew's, Rapid City

Thursday, April 14th

Psalms 131, 132, 133, Jeremiah 26:1-16, Romans 11:1-12, John 10:19-40

"Where is the bread and wine?" This was the cry of desperation and desolation by the people of Zion who were hungry and thirsty for the God of their promise. In Christ Jesus, we have been given the bread and wine of life. We are fed and nourished with the food of God. When we are shoulder to shoulder with one another at the Eucharist, with our cupped hands outstretched waiting to receive the bread or to take the chalice of wine, it is easy to remember that in Christ we who are many are one. We remember this story in the words of the liturgy as we re-member the Body of Christ together.

But when we are away from the altar rail, it isn't always so easy to remember that we are all related in Christ. Whether it is when we sit in Vestry or Bishop Committee meetings, when we are cut off in traffic, or when we focused on skin color or heritage, it can be harder to remember that Christ is as present in the "other" as Christ is within us. We are sometimes like the people of Zion so long ago. We cry out in desperation and desolation for the Bread and Wine that satisfies our hunger and quenches our thirst - the Bread and Wine that connects us to one another.

But we must remember, that just as we often need reminding and reassuring, we are also called to reminder others that indeed.....

We are all related.

Mitakuye Oyasin

Deacon Marty Garwood
St. Andrew's, Rapid City

Friday, April 15th

Psalm 22, Jeremiah 29:1, 4-13, Romans 11:13-24, John 11:1-27

What is faith? The Psalmist begins with "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from helping me, and from the words of my groaning." "Be not far from me, for trouble is near and there is none to help." "My strength is dried up like a fragment of clay pottery...and you have brought me into the dust of death." We hear the desperation of the Psalmist, and recognize this pain in ourselves and in the groan of humanity around us. I have known people whose faith speaks to me most clearly. In their suffering, they continue to plant gardens of their lives. The fruit and the flowers of those gardens nourish all of us. When we worship together in a community of faith we know the pain of this life, but we also participate together in joyful celebration of God's gift of grace to us. As Jesus said to Martha, "I **am** the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in Me, although he may die, yet he shall live; and whoever continues to live and believes (and have faith) in Me shall never die." To me, faith is: "*Walking to the edge of all you have and taking one more step.*"

Donna Burnap
Emmanuel, Rapid City

Saturday, April 16th

Psalm 137 & 144, Jeremiah 31:27-34, Romans 11:25-36, John 11:28-44

"Christ Has No Body "

"Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours."

Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

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