

**Monday, March 29, 2010**

*Written by Clare Robert*

Scripture: Luke 22: 24-27

“I come before you as one who serves.”

In this passage, Jesus is with his disciples, about to share the Holy Supper. Just at that moment, a fight breaks out among the disciples. How perfectly human, each one wanting to be the most important and the closest to the Lord, by doing the exact opposite of what Jesus has been teaching them for almost 3 years. It is silly and childish and typical of how people act in groups, and in a way, a relief to see how foolish they are – just like us. And Jesus tells them so, pointing out that his idea of leadership turns the whole idea on its head. The leader is the one who serves. The leader is the one who doesn't care about status but leads from the deepest place of self giving love. This leader is about to show them even more clearly how it is in the kingdom—that the One who is broken, is the one who mends our relationship with God. But it will take generations for them –and for us–to understand. For the moment, the task is more simple, stop squabbling and pay attention, and remember that leadership is not what you think it is, as are most things in the kingdom, different than our human expectations and yet true.

Prayer: Lord, quiet our silly fights over who gets to sit next to you and who loves you more, all the internal chatter of our self importance and pride. Help us to change our ways to follow you, the One who leads us to grace and inner peace, amen.

**Tuesday, March 30, 2010**

*Written by Marji Hughes*

Scripture: Luke 22:47-53

“No More of This!”

We don't read it often in the Gospels, but in the garden of Gethsemane, we see and feel Jesus' humanity. In the preceding passage, Jesus has finished his heart-wrenching “last-minute” prayer for God to release him from his destiny. Now Jesus comes back to his disciples, ready to finish what has been set in motion.

But what happens? Judas, followed by a crowd; hands Jesus over with a kiss. Most portrayals of this scene have Jesus very calmly and sadly responding. I look at this passage and feel Jesus' frustration as he answers the betrayal of one of his closest friends. “Judas, c'mon, did you *really* have to do this with a *kiss*?” In the heat of the moment, the disciples, forgetting everything Jesus had taught were looking to fight. One of them in his agitation cuts off the ear of a high priest's slave. But, Jesus having had enough shouts “*No more of this!*” I envision him stomping the ground, hands fisted at his sides, or maybe even covering his ears, “When will you all get the message?!” To the police and the mob he moans “*Every day* I've been here teaching and you never lifted so much as a *finger* against me. And *NOW* you come with clubs and swords?” Jesus' utter disappointment is palpable. “NO MORE OF THIS!”

Jesus the man is made more real to me in this passage because of his completely human responses to a situation that would have been pretty unimaginable to him 3 years prior. If possible, it makes the hours that follow even more extraordinary as Jesus digs deep inside himself to stand before the authorities, to withstand the treatment from the soldiers, to be nailed to the cross.

Prayer: Jesus, knowing that you sometimes responded in all too human ways helps me manage when I over-react, make mistakes and say the wrong thing. Help me find my way to God's outstretched arms when frustration and disappointment overwhelm, accepted and loved for who I am, no matter my shortcomings and weaknesses. Amen

**Wednesday, March 31, 2010**

*Written by Pete Jurgaitis*

Scripture: Luke 22: 54-62

Peter denies Jesus three times in this scripture. He was quite upset and full of shame because Jesus had warned him and Peter failed anyway...three times. The crowing of the rooster roused Peter from his confused stupor and immediately into the bitter and undeniable reality of his sinful desertion of his friend and Lord.

I have had more than a few of these experiences in my lifetime so far. I'm sure there will be many more. It is that moment when you realize that you slipped and let the Lord down again. You promised God and yourself that you would never be weak again but, again, you were.

This story is a reminder that Jesus died on the cross to redeem us from our sins. Because he did this, our failures do not abolish us from the Lord's good graces. He can take our mistakes and restore us back into his plan. We must remember not to give up when we fail the Lord, instead, openly confess that sin to the Lord and be restored.

Prayer: Lord, forgive me for my weakness and sin. Forgive me for my arrogance in trying to battle my weakness and Satan's power on my own strength. I trust in your powerful and transforming forgiveness. Help me believe that you can take my failures and my past and use them to encourage and bless others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**Thursday, April 1, 2010 (Maundy Thursday)**

*Written by Kim Hughes*

Scripture: Luke 22:14-23

We are all comfortable with the Lord's Supper. We have read the story countless times and participated in communion, eating the bread and drinking the wine. It is a normal part of our Lenten journey and a monthly sacrament in our church. This makes us forget how jarring the Lord's Supper was to the disciples.

Jesus presented the bread and wine to his disciples during the Passover celebration. Passover is a night remembering the Hebrew Exodus from slavery in Egypt. It is a family celebration and a treasured night filled with traditional foods and stories of ancestors – very similar to any of our family holidays. Instead of the normal festivities Jesus told his disciples this would be his last Passover meal on earth and that one of people at that Passover table would betray him. What a downer! What a depressing thing to say at a family holiday. Just imagine your cherished holiday festivities brought to a screeching halt because of such a heavy comment.

At a traditional Jewish Passover meal, the youngest child asks the question, "How is this night different?" It is a way to start the conversation about the past and to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt. Maybe we should do the same, ask ourselves "How is this night different?" as a way to jar ourselves out of the comfort of communion, to bring the gravity of that night to the forefront of our Lenten journey. If we are made more uncomfortable by the Lord's Supper, if we see it in this new light, the joy of Jesus' resurrection is all the more joyful and miraculous. By experiencing the discontent and uneasiness of that night, that Passover celebration makes the gladness-filled resurrection more meaningful.

Prayer: Jesus, we need to feel the uneasiness of Lent. Your sacrifice and the dedication of the disciples in the midst of Passover are meaningful only when we consider the troubled beginnings of our communion tradition. Let us know your struggles every time we eat the bread and drink the cup so our rejoicing over your resurrection is more joyful. Amen.

## **Friday, April 2, 2010 – GOOD FRIDAY**

*Written by Barbara DeBisschop*

Scripture: Luke 23: 26-49

As Christians, we come to Good Friday humbled by the story of the crucifixion and no matter how many times we hear it, the details still pierce us personally. What do we know for sure about this moment? That Jesus, guilty of nothing, bore the burdens of humanity on a cross he carried to the place he was to die. Jesus, who had the supernatural power to save himself, remained submissive to his tormentors to fulfill the will of his Father in heaven. As the nails were driven into his body and the blood poured from his wounds, his lips sought forgiveness for the ignorant perpetrators who taunted him.

Eternal salvation could not have been purchased through some gentle or passive act but only by this unthinkable sacrifice could we all be saved. All of humanity held its breath and simultaneously sighed with relief for the gift being imparted to each of us. As the life slipped out of Christ's body, the Body of Christ was born. On Good Friday, we come to the pinnacle moment of Lent, the moment where Jesus goes from prophet and messiah to Savior. On that cross, Jesus became to us what no other man could and did for us what we could never do for ourselves. His sacrifice is as vital and real today as at the moment he breathed his last breath and called out to his Father one last time.

What else but pure love could have motivated Jesus to willingly die so that we, the flawed and broken human race, could live in eternal paradise? There is no gift that compares to the sacrifice of Jesus on this cross and no act of love so poignantly revealed. It is the ultimate in blessed assurance.

### **Prayer:**

I am humbled at the thought of the sacrifice of my Savior, Jesus Christ. Knowing that in all I could ever do, I would never be worthy of this indescribable gift. Help me Father, to live each day with the staggering knowledge that I am loved beyond reason by the Living Christ. Amen.

**Saturday, April 3, 2010 (Holy Saturday)**

*Written by Fredd Ward*

Scripture: Luke 21: 25-33

In his book, *The Road Less Traveled*, author M. Scott Peck suggests that “life is difficult”. He goes on to suggest that as soon as we stop struggling against that truth, life ceases to be as difficult. I turn to that idea often, though the rest of the book never proved to be very useful. Jesus’ teaching about the coming of the Son of Man not only affirms for us that life is difficult; but assures us that every life comes to an end.

Death, however, does not have the last word for those who live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We need not live in fear and worry of what is going to happen at the end. Instead, we can devote ourselves to living well today – prayerfully and expectantly filling each day with actions and attitudes that fulfill God’s plan for human life -- knowing that there is a glorious reality beyond the here and now.

Prayer: Lord, I pray that today may be filled with meaningful activities and with a spirit of anticipation that your reign and my redemption is near. Amen

**Sunday, April 4, 2010 (Easter)**

*Written by Gordon Rankin*

Scripture: Luke 24: 1- 12

*Lost is found.*

Not “lost and found”. But *lost is found*. This is the story of resurrection.

The women go to the tomb early on the first day of the week to ritually prepare Jesus’ body for burial. But when they arrive the tomb is open...and empty. The body of their deceased friend is lost. Everything seems lost – their hopes, their beliefs, their connection to God...everything.

But then two “men” speak to them: “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.” With these few words those women found more than they could have possibly imagined. They found far more than they lost. They found their hope, their faith, their connection to God, a promise for the future, a triumph of life over death... They found a miracle. They found salvation.

Resurrection changed everything. For them and for us. We now know that *lost is found*. Even when we are feeling our most lost, we must only remember that we are looking for the living among the dead. If we merely look differently, we will see that there are gifts of new life all around us.

Prayer: Thank you God for the gift of Easter promise. Help us remember that Easter is for everyday. For in Christ’s resurrection, we have found the assurance of new life. Amen.