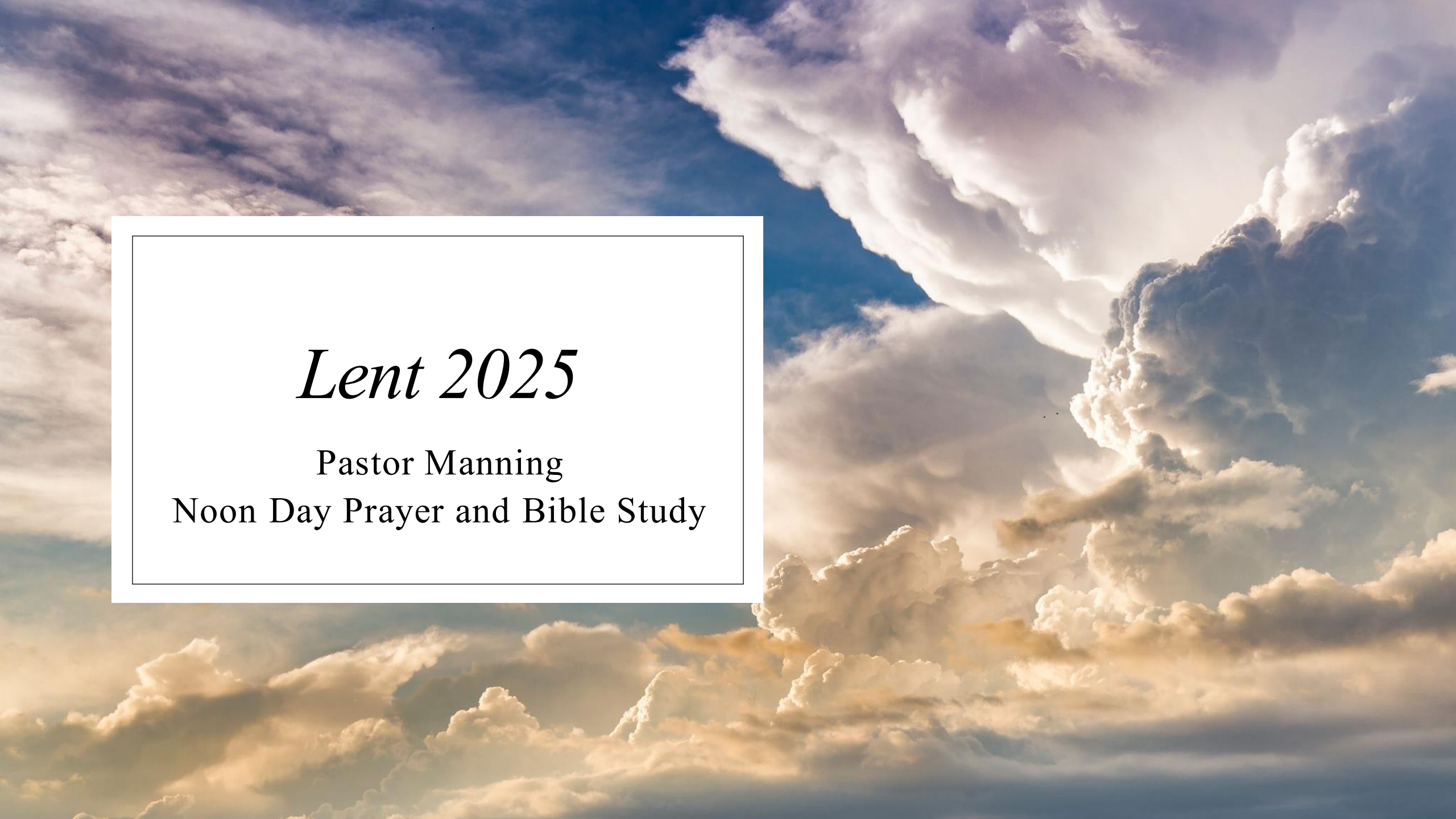




Lent 2025

Pastor Manning
Noon Day Prayer and Bible Study



Week One Scriptures

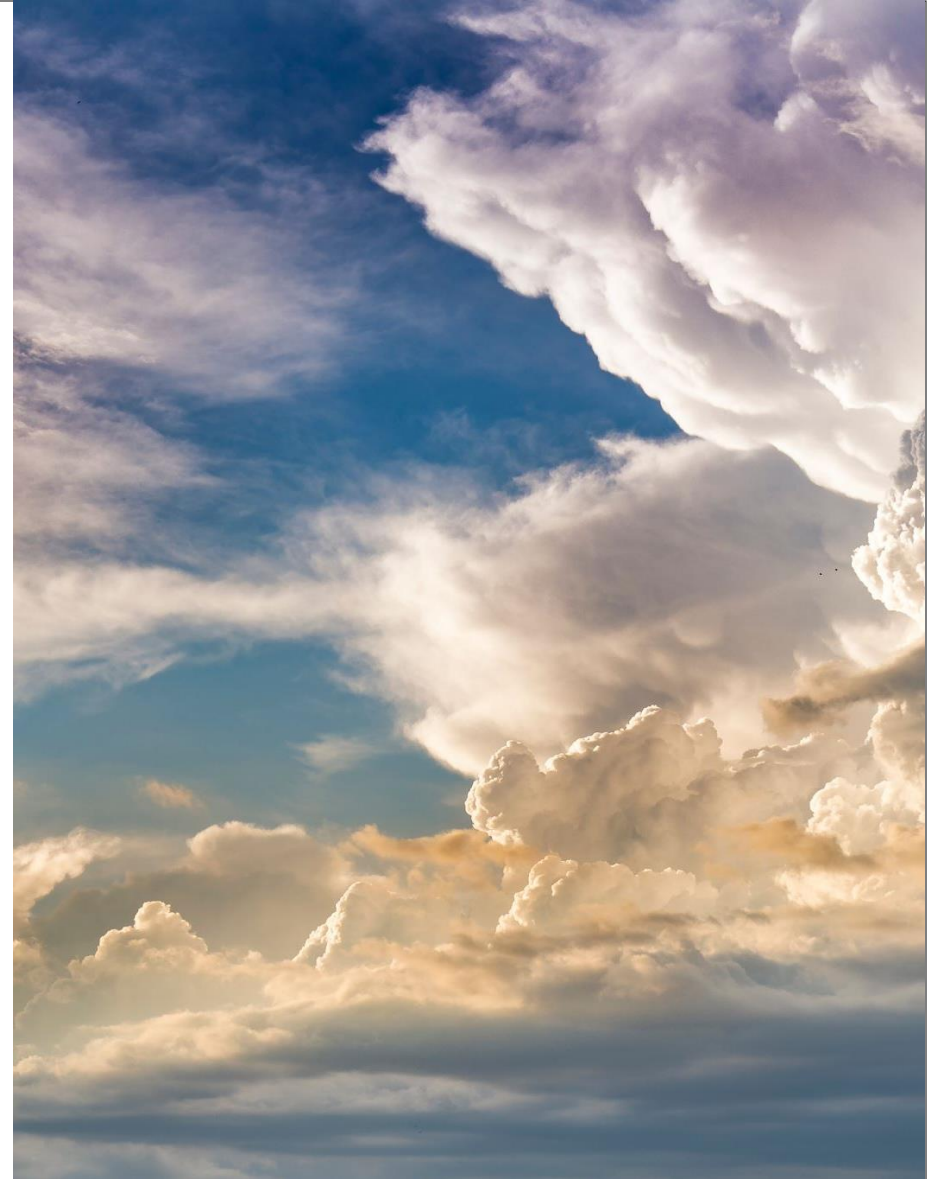
Ash Wednesday

Old Testament – Isaiah 58:1-12

Psalms - Psalm 51:1-17

New Testament - 2 Corinthians 5:20 – 6:10

Gospel – Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21



*Old Testament –
Isaiah 58:1-12*





Isaiah 58:1-12 is a powerful passage that critiques empty religious practices and emphasizes true righteousness through justice, compassion, and care for the needy.



1. False vs. True Fasting (Isaiah 58:1-5)

- God, through Isaiah, rebukes the people for their hypocritical fasting. They engage in external rituals while continuing to oppress and act unjustly.
- Their religious practices do not reflect their treatment of others, rendering their worship ineffective in God's eyes.
- True fasting goes beyond simply abstaining from food; it involves a heart that genuinely seeks righteousness and justice.



2. The Fast That God Desires (Isaiah 58:6-7)

- God defines true fasting as acts of mercy and justice, which include:

- Loosening the chains of injustice
- Setting the oppressed free
- Sharing food with the hungry
- Providing for the poor and homeless
- Clothing the naked

This illustrates that true worship involves love and practical care for others, especially those who are vulnerable.



3. The Blessings of True Righteousness (Isaiah 58:8-12)

- When people practice justice and show mercy, God promises restoration, guidance, and protection.
- “Your light will break forth like the dawn”—this means that righteousness leads to blessings, healing, and a closer relationship with God.
- God will guide, satisfy, and strengthen those who care for others.
- They will be like a “well-watered garden,” thriving and nourished by God.
- They will be known as “repairers of the breach,” indicating that they will restore broken communities and bring healing.



Application

- This passage calls believers to move beyond ritualistic religion and embrace a faith that is active in love and justice.
- True worship involves aligning one's life with God's heart for the oppressed and marginalized.
- When people live righteously, they experience God's presence, guidance, and blessings.



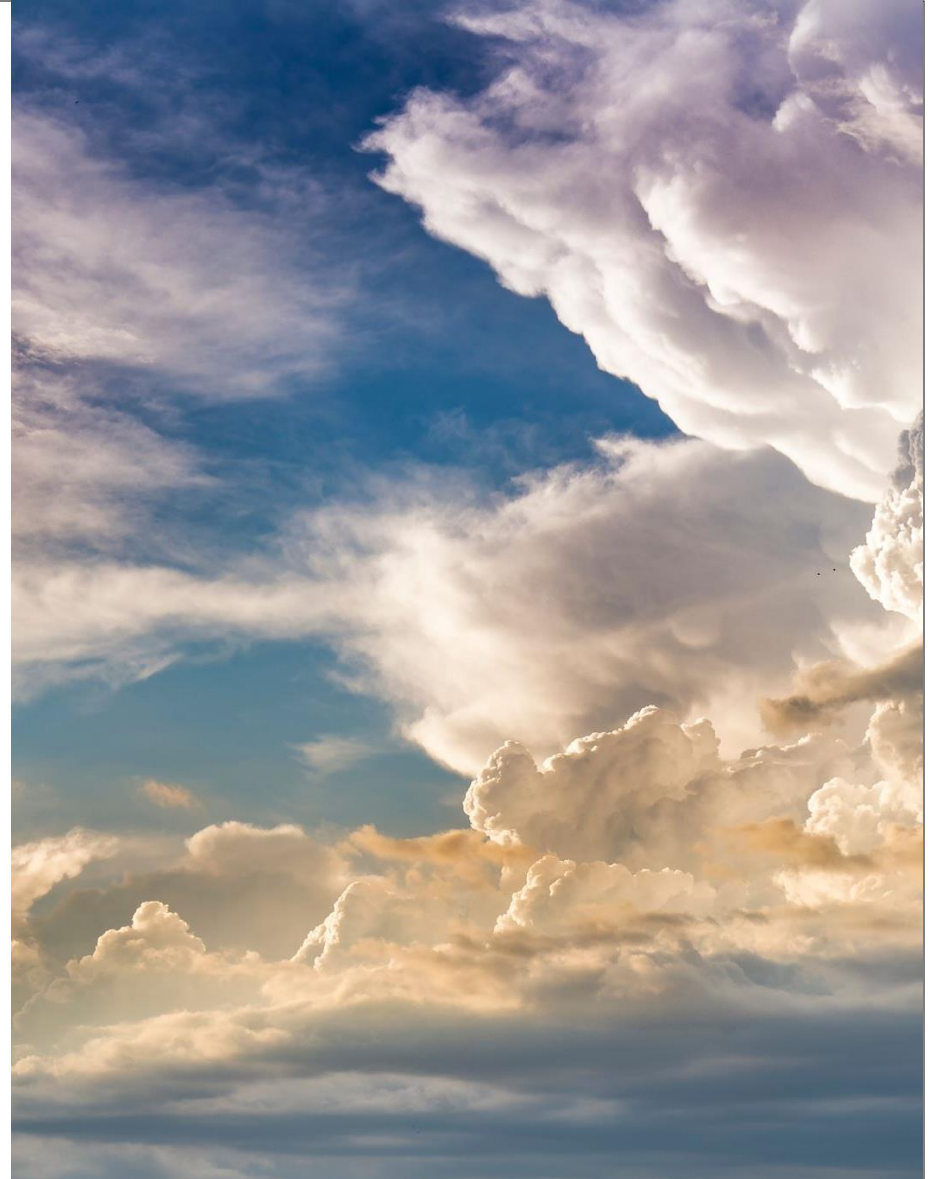
Week Two Scriptures

Old Testament – Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Psalms - Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

New Testament – Romans 10:8-13

Gospel – Luke 4:1-13



*Old Testament –
Deuteronomy 26:1-11*





Chapter 26 concludes the section on the stipulations of the covenant renewal document by requiring two rituals and offering a concluding exhortation (26:1–19). The presentation of the first fruits (vv. 1–11) appears to refer to all the first fruits associated with the various annual pilgrimage feasts mentioned in Deuteronomy 16. It does not indicate the establishment of a new religious institution in Israel.



The declaration in verse 3 is a personal testimony, signifying that the individual has entered the land. The baskets mentioned in verse 4 acknowledge the blessings from the Lord, the giver and sustainer of life. The recital of the creed (vv. 5–9) serves as a testimony that recognizes the individual's family roots, recounts the history of God's redemptive work, and acknowledges their present inheritance as a gift of God's grace in redemption—all in fulfillment of God's oath confirming the covenant promises.



The offering of first fruits held great significance in ancient Israelite society for several reasons:

1. Acknowledgment of God's Provision: The Israelites recognized that their prosperity came from God by offering the first and best portion of their harvest. This was a way to express gratitude for His blessings and to acknowledge His role as the provider.
2. Remembrance of Deliverance: The ritual of offering first fruits was closely tied to the Israelites' history of deliverance from slavery in Egypt. It served as a reminder of God's faithfulness and the fulfillment of His promise to bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey.



3. Covenant Relationship: Offering first fruits reaffirmed the covenant relationship between God and the Israelites. It symbolized their commitment to live according to His laws and commandments in the Promised Land.

4. Holiness and Dedication: By dedicating the first portion of their harvest to God, the Israelites demonstrated the principle of holiness, signifying that the best and the first belong to God. This dedication set the tone for the rest of the harvest and their lives.



5. Community and Sharing: Offering first fruits was not just an individual act; it was a communal one. It often included sharing with the Levites, who had no land inheritance, as well as with foreigners, orphans, and widows. This act of generosity fostered a sense of community and mutual support.

Overall, the offering of first fruits was a powerful expression of faith, gratitude, and obedience, reinforcing the Israelites' dependence on God and their responsibility to care for one another.



Application During Lenten Season

Embracing Deuteronomy 26:1-11 during the season of Lent can profoundly enrich your spiritual practice and reflection. Here are some inspiring ways to weave themes of gratitude, remembrance, and community into your Lenten journey:

1. Gratitude and First Fruits Offering: Just as the Israelites offered the first fruits of their harvest to God, dedicate the beginning of your day to prayer, reflection, and gratitude. Give your best time and energy to God, acknowledging His abundant provision in your life.



Application During Lenten Season

2. Remembering God's Faithfulness: Reflect on God's unwavering faithfulness and how He has guided and blessed you throughout your journey. Journal your thoughts and memories, and share your testimony with others to uplift and encourage them.



Application During Lenten Season

3. Acts of Generosity: During Lent, embody generosity by sharing your resources with those in need. Consider donating to charitable organizations, volunteering your time, or supporting individuals in your community who are struggling. Embrace the communal spirit of the first fruits offering and bless others with what you have received. By integrating these heartfelt practices into your Lenten observance, you can fully embody the themes of Deuteronomy 26:1-11 and draw closer to God during this sacred season. May your Lent overflow with growth, reflection, and a renewed sense of God's faithfulness.

Psalms
Psalms 91:1-2, 9-16





In this psalm, we learn that God watches over the safety of His people and never lets them down in times of danger. They are encouraged to move forward through all challenges, confident in His protection. This message is highly valuable; while many speak about God's providence and claim to believe that He specifically guards His children, few are truly willing to entrust their safety to Him.



The major theme of Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16 is God's protection and deliverance for those who trust in Him. This passage emphasizes the security and refuge found in dwelling in God's presence.

Key Themes:

1. Divine Protection – God serves as a shelter and fortress for those who trust Him (vv. 1-2).
2. Deliverance from Danger – The Lord rescues His people from harm, including plagues, traps, and enemies (vv. 9-13).



3. God's Faithfulness – He is a trustworthy protector, guarding those who love and acknowledge Him (v. 14).

4. Answered Prayer and Salvation – God promises to be with His people in times of trouble, to deliver them, and to grant them long life and salvation (vv. 15-16).

Overall, this passage reassures believers that God is their refuge and that He actively watches over and rescues those who put their trust in Him.



Application During The Lenten Season

During the Lenten season, Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16 serves as a source of trust, reflection, and spiritual renewal in several meaningful ways:

1. ****Seeking Refuge in God****

Lent is a time for drawing closer to God through prayer, fasting, and repentance. Psalm 91 reminds us that when we dwell in God's presence, He becomes our refuge and strength. You can apply this by setting aside intentional time for prayer and reflection, seeking His shelter during moments of struggle or temptation.



Application During The Lenten Season

2. Trusting in God's Protection

Just as Jesus trusted the Father during His 40 days in the wilderness, we are called to trust in God's care, especially when facing spiritual challenges. When you feel weak or tempted, recite these verses to remind yourself that God is your fortress.

3. Overcoming Temptation with Scripture

Satan quoted Psalm 91 when he tempted Jesus (Matthew 4:6). However, Jesus resisted by relying on God's Word. During Lent, as we focus on repentance and spiritual discipline, we can use Scripture, like Psalm 91, to stand firm against distractions and temptations.



Application During The Lenten Season

4. Finding Comfort in God's Presence

Lent can be a season of sacrifice and self-denial, but Psalm 91 reassures us that God is present during times of difficulty. If you feel discouraged or weary, turn to these verses as a reminder of God's promise to be with you in trouble and to bring you through it.



Application During The Lenten Season

5. Living with Confidence in God's Salvation

Psalm 91 ends with a promise of deliverance, long life, and salvation—pointing to our ultimate hope in Christ's victory over sin and death. As Lent leads to Easter, we can reflect on how God's protection and salvation are fulfilled in Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection.



Application During The Lenten Season

Practical Application:

- Begin your Lenten mornings by praying Psalm 91:1-2, committing your day to God's protection.
- When facing spiritual struggles, read Psalm 91:9-16 as a reminder of God's faithfulness.
- Meditate on how this psalm connects to Jesus' journey in the wilderness and His victory over sin.
- Use these verses to encourage others who may be struggling during Lent.



Application During The Lenten Season

Ultimately, Psalm 91 reminds us that Lent is not just about sacrifice but also about trusting in God's sustaining presence and His promise of redemption.

New Testament
Romans 10:8-13





According to this section, several elements are necessary for salvation. First, there is the reality of Jesus Christ: he is historic, incarnate, crucified, risen, reigning as Lord, and accessible to all. Second, there is the apostolic gospel, which is the word of faith that reveals him. Third, those who hear must respond with simple trust, calling on the name of the Lord, which combines faith in the heart with confession made through the mouth. However, there is still one more essential element: the evangelist who proclaims Christ and encourages people to place their trust in him. Paul refers specifically to Christian evangelists in the following paragraph.



Romans 10:8–13 is essential for Christians to understand because it clearly presents the simplicity and universality of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Here are some reasons why this passage is so important:

1. Clarifies the Path to Salvation – This passage makes it clear that salvation is not based on works, heritage, or personal merit but on faith in Jesus Christ. The only requirements are confessing with the mouth and believing in the heart.
2. Emphasizes Faith Over Works – Many people struggle with the idea that they must earn salvation. This passage reinforces that righteousness comes through belief in Christ, not through religious rituals or good deeds.



3. It shows the Accessibility of the Gospel – Paul explains that the message of salvation is readily available; it is neither distant nor complicated. This assures believers that God has made Himself accessible to everyone.
4. Applies to Everyone – The passage eliminates any distinction between Jews and Gentiles, emphasizing that salvation is available to all who call upon the name of the Lord. This underscores the inclusivity of the gospel.
5. Encourages Boldness in Sharing the Gospel – Since salvation is available to everyone and is based on faith, believers are encouraged to confidently share this good news, knowing that anyone can receive it.



6. Provides Assurance – This passage offers believers confidence that their salvation is secure in Christ, as it is founded on God’s promise rather than their personal efforts.

Understanding Romans 10:8–13 helps Christians grasp the essence of the gospel message, enabling them to live with assurance, gratitude, and a passion for evangelism.



Application During the Lenten Season

During Lent—a season of reflection, repentance, and renewal—Romans 10:8–13 serves as a powerful reminder of the simplicity and inclusivity of God’s grace.

1. Deepen Your Awareness of God’s Nearness:

Romans 10:8 reminds us that God’s message is not distant or inaccessible; it is right here and now. Use Lent as an intentional time to draw near to God through prayer, meditation, and regular Bible reading. Let this truth transform your daily routine by reminding you that God’s love and salvation are always at hand.



Application During the Lenten Season

2. Renew Your Commitment to Faith:

Verse 9 calls for confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead. During Lent, engage in self-examination by identifying any areas in your life where you might be relying on works or traditions rather than a genuine relationship with Christ. Use confession and prayer to reaffirm your faith and reliance on God's grace.



Application During the Lenten Season

3. Embrace Humility and Repentance

Lent is traditionally a time to acknowledge our shortcomings and seek renewal. Reflect on the assurance offered in these verses that salvation is a gift received through faith, not something earned by deeds. This understanding can encourage you to humble yourself before God, repent of past mistakes, and experience the freedom that comes from fully trusting in His promise of forgiveness.



Application During the Lenten Season

4. Celebrate the Universality of the Gospel:

Verses 12 and 13 emphasize that salvation is available to everyone—there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles. Let this inspire you to see beyond any divisions and extend grace and compassion to others. Consider ways you might share the hope of the gospel with friends, family, or those in your community who may feel excluded or lost.



Application During the Lenten Season

5. Live with Assurance and Boldness:

Knowing that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (v. 13) should fill you with confidence. This assurance can empower you to live boldly for Christ during Lent, whether that means making difficult life changes, serving others, or stepping out in faith in areas where you’ve previously held back.

By meditating on these points, you can allow the message of Romans 10:8–13 to guide your Lenten journey, transforming it into a time of deep personal renewal, a clearer understanding of God’s accessible grace, and a renewed passion for sharing that grace with others.

Gospel
Luke 4:1-13





The central theme of Luke 4:1–13 is the temptation of Jesus and His triumph over Satan. This passage highlights several key themes:

1. Jesus' s Identity and Obedience – Satan tempts Jesus to doubt His identity as the Son of God and to act independently of God's will, but Jesus remains faithful to God.
2. Spiritual Warfare – Jesus faces a direct confrontation with the devil, showing that temptation is a real and personal struggle.
3. The Power of Scripture – Jesus counters each of Satan's temptations by quoting Scripture, demonstrating the authority and sufficiency of God's Word in resisting evil.



4. Dependence on God – The temptations target Jesus’ physical needs, power, and authority, yet He refuses to act outside of God’s plan, exemplifying complete reliance on Him.

5. Victory Over Sin – Unlike Adam and Israel, who failed when tested, Jesus succeeds, proving He is the true and faithful Son of God.

This passage sets the stage for Jesus’ ministry, affirming that He is the sinless Messiah who will ultimately overcome Satan, sin, and death.



Application During the Lenten Season

Applying Luke 4:1–13 during the Lenten season can enhance your spiritual growth and strengthen your relationship with God. Here are several ways to embody this passage:

1. Resist Temptation with Scripture

- Just as Jesus used Scripture to counter Satan's temptations, take time to study and memorize God's Word.
- When you face struggles, respond with Scripture and trust in God's truth rather than relying solely on your own strength.



Application During the Lenten Season

2. Fasting and Spiritual Discipline

- Jesus fasted for 40 days, demonstrating complete dependence on God.

Use Lent as an opportunity to fast from distractions (such as food, social media, and entertainment) in order to focus more on prayer and experience God's presence.

3. Rely on God, Not Temporary Comforts

- Satan tempted Jesus with physical needs, power, and authority. Lent is a time to examine what we rely on for comfort or security instead of God (for example, material possessions, pride, or the need for control).

- Reflect on what competes for your trust and devotion, and surrender it to God.



Application During the Lenten Season

4. Stay Rooted in Prayer

- Jesus was led by the Spirit and remained dedicated to prayer. Use Lent to deepen your prayer life by seeking God's guidance in all areas of your life.

5. Prepare for Spiritual Battles

- Temptation is a part of life, but Jesus shows us that we can overcome it through faith. Reflect on your personal struggles and invite the Holy Spirit to strengthen you in those areas.

By focusing on Scripture, fasting, prayer, and reliance on God, you can navigate through Lent with the same spirit of faithfulness that Jesus demonstrated in the wilderness.

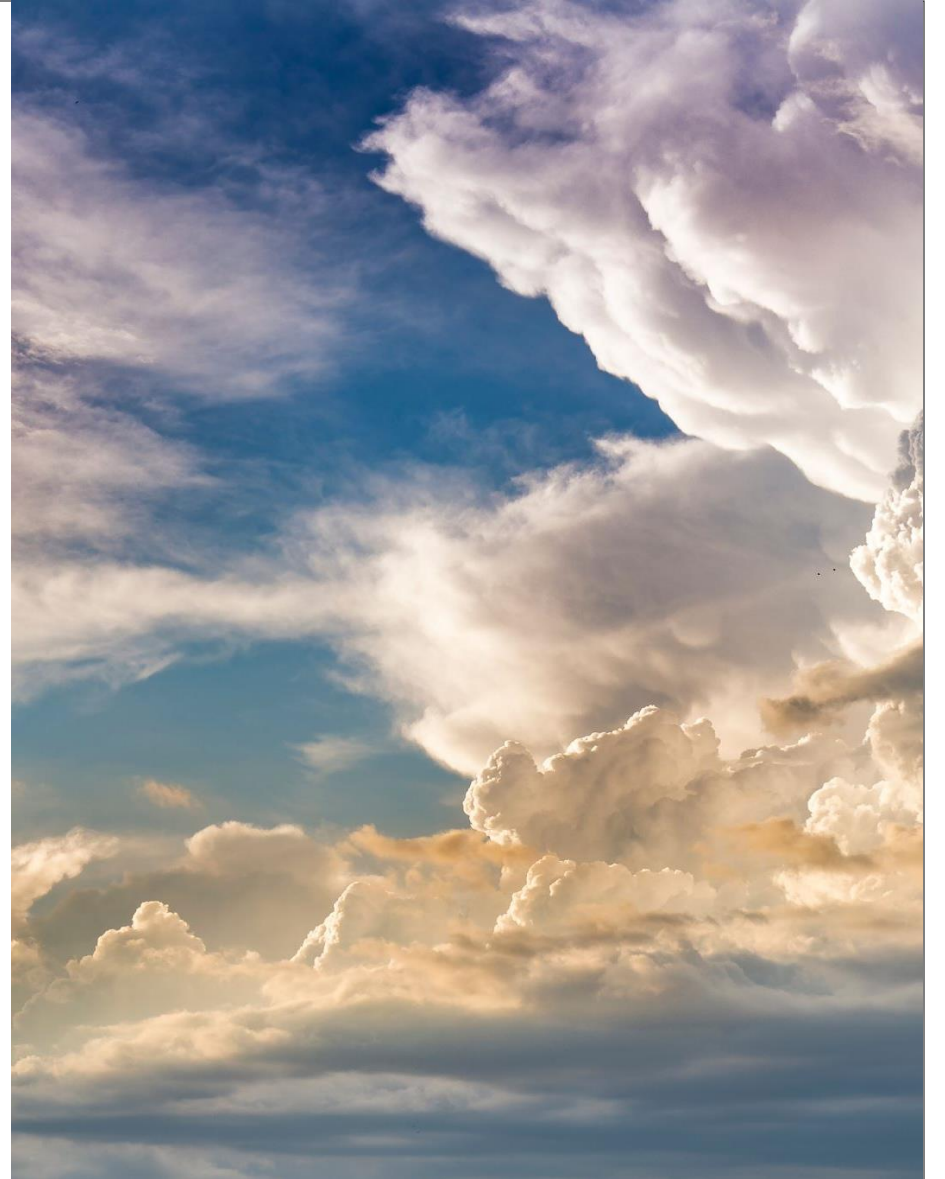
Week Three Scriptures

Old Testament – Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Psalms – Psalm 27

New Testament – Philippians 3:17-4:1

Gospel – Luke 13:31-35



*Old Testament –
Genesis 15:1-12,
17-18*





The main theme of Genesis 15:1–12, 17–18 is God's covenant with Abram (later named Abraham). This passage emphasizes God's promise to Abram regarding his descendants and the land they will inherit, highlighting faith, divine assurance, and the commitment of the covenant.

1. God's Assurance and Reward (v. 1) – God reassures Abram not to fear, promising to be his shield and a great reward.
2. Promise of Offspring (vv. 2–6) – Abram expresses concern about not having an heir, but God reaffirms that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars. Abram believed this promise, and his faith is credited to him as righteousness.



3. Land Promise and Covenant Ritual (vv. 7–12, 17–18) – God formalizes His promise through a covenant ceremony, where He passes between the sacrificial pieces in the form of a smoking firepot and a flaming torch, signifying His binding commitment.

4. Faith and Divine Commitment – Abram's role is to trust in God's promise, while God unconditionally commits to fulfilling His word.

This passage is foundational for understanding the biblical concept of faith (as stated in Romans 4:3) and God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promises.



Application During the Lenten Season

Genesis 15:1–12, 17–18 can be applied during Lent by emphasizing faith, trust in God's promises, and deepening our covenant relationship with Him.

Here's how:

1. Trusting in God's Promises (vv. 1–6) - Surrendering to God in Lent

- Just as Abram trusted God despite uncertainty, Lent is a time to renew our trust in God's plan, even when we don't see immediate answers.

- Application: Pray and reflect on the areas where you need to surrender control and trust in God's timing.



Application During the Lenten Season

2. Faith Counted as Righteousness (v. 6) - Strengthening Faith through Prayer and Fasting

- Abram's faith was credited as righteousness. Similarly, Lent is a season to strengthen our faith through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

- Application: Make faith-filled sacrifices not just out of obligation but as an act of trust in God's promises.

3. God's Covenant (vv. 7–12, 17–18) Renewing Our Covenant with God

- God sealed His promise with a covenant, just as we are called to renew our commitment to Him during Lent.

- Application: Use this season to renew your baptismal promises, repent of anything that has distanced you from God, and embrace His faithfulness.



Application During the Lenten Season

4. The Smoking Firepot and Torch (v. 17) - God's Presence in Our Journey

- God's presence passed through the sacrifice, symbolizing His commitment. During Lent, we journey toward Easter, remembering that God is with us through trials.

- Application: Meditate on God's presence in your life, especially in difficult moments, and trust that He is leading you toward resurrection hope.

By focusing on faith, surrender, and covenant renewal, Lent becomes a time to deepen our trust in God, just as Abram did.

Psalms
Psalm 27





My Light and My Salvation

This passionate and expressive psalm expands on themes found in its more subdued neighbors, Psalms 26 and 28: the Lord's protection, the joy of being in His house, and the singer's unwavering loyalty and trust.



Psalm 27 is a powerful expression of trust in God, highlighting several key themes:

1. Confidence in God's Protection (Verses 1-3) – The psalmist declares that the Lord is his light, salvation, and stronghold, which removes all fear even in the face of enemies.
2. Desire for God's Presence (Verse 4) – A central theme is the longing to dwell in the house of the Lord, seeking His presence and beauty above all else.



3. Dependence on God in Troubled Times (Verses 5-6) – The psalmist trusts that God will provide shelter and victory over adversaries, lifting him above his troubles.

4. Prayer and Seeking God's Guidance (Verses 7-12) – The tone shifts to a plea for mercy, guidance, and protection, emphasizing the importance of seeking God during times of distress.



5. Patience and Trust in God's Timing (Verses 13-14) – The psalm concludes with a strong affirmation of faith, encouraging the reader to wait on the Lord with courage and confidence in His goodness. Overall, Psalm 27 balances unwavering faith with honest prayer, illustrating both confidence in God's protection and the necessity of patience and trust in His timing.



Application During the Lenten Season

Applying Psalm 27 during Lent can deepen your faith, strengthen your trust in God, and help you focus on spiritual renewal. Here's how to integrate its themes into your Lenten journey:

1. Trust in God's Protection (Verses 1-3): Let Go of Fear and Anxiety. Lent is a time for repentance and drawing closer to God. Use this season to release your fears and anxieties, trusting that God is your light and salvation. Whenever you feel overwhelmed, recite Psalm 27:1:

“The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?”



Application During the Lenten Season

2. Seek God's Presence (Verse 4): Prioritize Prayer and Worship

David expressed a strong desire to dwell in God's house. During Lent, cultivate that same desire through prayer, fasting, and reflection. Set aside quiet time each day to be in God's presence, whether through Scripture reading, worship, or solitude.

3. Find Refuge in God (Verses 5-6): Trust in God's Provision

Difficulties may arise, but Lent teaches us to rely on God as our refuge. Instead of seeking comfort in worldly things, turn to God for strength. When fasting or facing struggles, remind yourself that God lifts you up in times of trouble.



Application During the Lenten Season

4. Seek God's Guidance (Verses 7-12): Confess and Align Your Heart

Lent is a season of repentance. Use David's prayerful posture as a model to seek God's will, confess your sins, and ask for direction. Pray Psalm 27:11: "Teach me your way, Lord; lead me in a straight path."

5. Wait on the Lord (Verses 13-14): Practice Patience and Trust**

Lent reminds us that spiritual growth takes time. Waiting on the Lord means trusting His timing in your life. When you feel impatient, reflect on Psalm 27:14:

"Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."

By incorporating these themes into your Lenten journey, you can develop a deeper connection with God and enhance your spiritual growth.

New Testament
Philippians 3:17–
4:1





Philippians 3:17–4:1 emphasizes several essential themes related to discipleship, heavenly citizenship, perseverance, and standing firm in faith. Here are the key themes:

1. Imitating Godly Examples (3:17)

Paul encourages believers to follow his example, as well as that of other faithful Christians. This underlines the significance of discipleship, mentorship, and surrounding ourselves with godly influences.



2. Warning Against Enemies of the Cross (3:18-19)

Paul expresses sorrow over those who live contrary to Christ's teachings. Their focus is on earthly desires rather than spiritual growth, leading to their ultimate destruction. This serves as a call for self-examination and vigilance against worldly temptations.

3. Heavenly Citizenship (3:20-21)

Believers are citizens of God's kingdom, not of this world. Our ultimate hope lies in Christ's return when He will transform our bodies to be like His. This theme emphasizes hope, transformation, and living with an eternal perspective.



4. Standing Firm in the Lord (4:1)

Paul encourages believers to remain steadfast in their faith, holding on to Christ despite challenges. This reminds us to stay strong in trials and continue pressing forward in our spiritual journey.



Application During the Lenten Season

Philippians 3:17–4:1 offers profound guidance for reflection, especially during the season of Lent, which is a time for self-examination, repentance, and spiritual renewal. Here's how you might apply its lessons to your life:

1. Follow Christ-like Examples

In verse 3:17, Paul encourages believers to follow the example of faithful Christians. During Lent, consider reflecting on the lives of those who inspire your faith—whether they are biblical figures, saints, or people in your own life. Strive to emulate their Christ-centered qualities. Ask yourself: *Am I living in a way that reflects Christ to others?



Application During the Lenten Season

2. Set Your Mind on Heavenly Things

Verses 3:18–20 contrast those who focus on earthly desires with those whose citizenship is in heaven. Lent is an ideal time to identify distractions or habits that pull your attention away from God. This might involve fasting from something you are overly attached to—not just food, but also things like technology or negativity—to reorient your heart toward spiritual priorities.

3. Stand Firm in the Lord

In 4:1, Paul urges believers to remain steadfast in their faith. Use this Lenten season to strengthen your spiritual practices, such as prayer, Bible reading, and acts of service. By doing this, you will be better equipped to stand firm in God's promises, even during challenging times.



Application During the Lenten Season

4. Hope in Transformation

Verses 3:20–21 remind us that Christ will transform our humble bodies to be like His glorious body. This message of hope can inspire a focus on inner renewal during Lent. Consider ways to let Christ transform areas of your life where you may feel “stuck” or distanced from Him.

Gospel – Luke
13:31-35





The central theme of Luke 13:31-35 focuses on Jesus' unwavering mission despite opposition, His lament over Jerusalem, and His prophetic vision of God's redemptive plan.

1. Jesus' Determination: In this passage, Jesus is warned by the Pharisees that Herod is seeking to kill Him. However, He remains resolute, declaring that He must continue His work of healing and teaching, as His mission will only conclude in Jerusalem. This demonstrates His courage and dedication to fulfilling His divine purpose, even in imminent danger.



2. Lament Over Jerusalem: Jesus expresses deep sorrow for Jerusalem, the city that has historically rejected prophets and God's messengers. His lament reflects His compassion and desire to gather the people under His care, like a hen gathering her chicks, despite their unwillingness to accept Him. This imagery illustrates Jesus' longing to protect and nurture His people.

3. Prophetic Fulfillment: The passage concludes with Jesus foretelling that the people of Jerusalem will not see Him again until they proclaim, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" This points to both His eventual rejection and His ultimate triumph, anticipating His entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday) and His role in God's plan for salvation.



Together, these verses highlight themes of steadfastness, sorrow for human resistance to God's love, and the hope of redemption. It serves as a powerful reflection on Jesus' mission and the tension between divine love and human rejection.



The themes in Luke 13:31–35 resonate deeply with modern Christian life, offering guidance and encouragement in several ways:

1. Steadfastness in Faith:

Jesus' determination to fulfill His mission, despite opposition and danger, inspires Christians today to remain faithful even when facing challenges or resistance. In environments that may not always be welcoming, modern Christians are called to live out their faith boldly. Jesus' example serves as a reminder to stand firm and continue the work of love and service, regardless of the circumstances.



2. Compassion for Others:

Jesus' lament over Jerusalem reflects His deep compassion and desire to nurture and protect His people. This challenges Christians to have a heart for those who are lost, hurting, or distant from God. It encourages them to approach others with grace and understanding, longing to draw them closer to God's love, even when faced with resistance.

3. Hope and Redemption:

The prophetic statement, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," reminds Christians of the ultimate hope found in God's redemptive plan. In a world that often feels broken, this message reassures believers that God's purposes will prevail, encouraging them to trust in His timing and sovereignty.



4. Personal Reflection on Spiritual Readiness:

Jesus' lament over the rejection of God's messengers invites modern Christians to self-reflection. How receptive are we to God's call in our lives? Do we recognize the ways He reaches out to us, or do we turn away? This theme encourages daily reflection and fosters an openness to His presence.

5. The Call to Reconciliation:

Just as Jesus longed to gather Jerusalem under His care, Christians are called to foster reconciliation and unity within their communities. This may involve working to heal divisions, promote understanding, and embody Christ's love in action, especially in times of conflict or misunderstanding.



Ultimately, these themes challenge believers to live intentionally, guided by faith, love, and the hope of God's eternal promises.



The season of Lent is a time for reflection, repentance, and renewal—making Luke 13:31–35 particularly fitting for spiritual growth during this sacred period. Here’s how you can apply its themes meaningfully:

1. Steadfastness in Your Lenten Journey:

Like Jesus, who remained committed to His mission despite opposition, you can approach Lent with determination. Whether you’re fasting, praying, or engaging in acts of service, stay focused on the spiritual disciplines you've chosen to honor God during this season. Ask God for strength to persevere and make Lent a time of transformation.



2. Compassion and Reconciliation:

Jesus' lament over Jerusalem reflects His desire to gather His people and offer protection. Use Lent as an opportunity to reconcile with others and extend compassion, especially to those who may feel distant from God or the Church. Acts of kindness can be a powerful expression of His longing to draw people under His care.

3. Reflection and Repentance:

Jesus' sorrow over Jerusalem's rejection invites personal reflection. During Lent, consider: Where have I turned away from God's call? In what areas of my life am I resisting His guidance? Use this time for honest repentance and open your heart fully to His presence and will.



4. Hopeful Anticipation of Easter:

Jesus' declaration, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," points to the hope of redemption and the triumph of God's plan. As Lent leads to Easter, let this passage inspire hope and anticipation for the resurrection, reminding you that God's love and salvation can overcome all obstacles.

5. Prayer and Contemplation:

Pray with the themes of this passage in mind. Reflect on how Jesus' steadfastness, compassion, and hope guide you in your Lenten walk. Consider meditating on the image of Jesus longing to gather His people, envisioning Him reaching out to you with the same tender love.



Week Four Scriptures

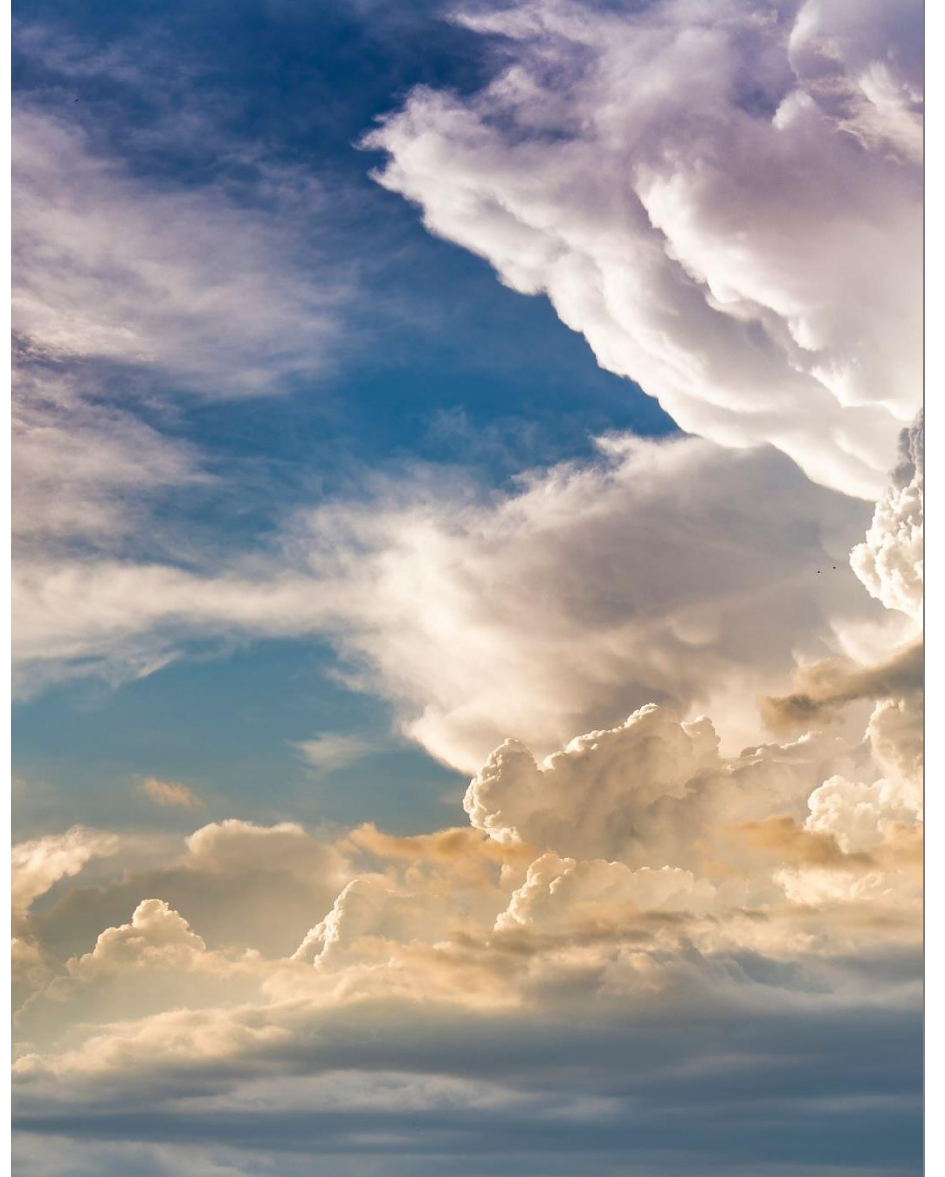
Old Testament Isaiah 55:1–9

Psalm Psalm 63:1–8

New Testament 1 Corinthians 10:1–13

Gospel Luke 13:1–9

*Revised Common Lectionary
(Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2009).*



*Old Testament –
Isaiah 55:1-9*





Isaiah 55:1–9 is a critical passage within the book of Isaiah and the entire Bible. It emphasizes God's grand plan of salvation and His invitation for humanity to respond to His grace. It centers on God's gracious invitation to receive His free, life-giving sustenance—a spiritual nourishment that surpasses anything the world can offer.



- God's Provision Is Free and Abundant:

The text begins with a heartfelt invitation: “Come, all you who are thirsty.” Instead of spending your resources on things that only temporarily satisfy, God offers a gift that truly fulfills—the nourishment of our souls. This highlights the contrast between human efforts and worldly pursuits versus the effortless, generous kindness of God.

- Spiritual Satisfaction Over Worldly Gain:

The verses challenge us to reconsider our priorities, questioning why we labor and spend resources in pursuit of sustenance that does not fill the deepest voids in our hearts. In God's economy, what is offered is free and meets our deepest needs, encouraging us to seek a relationship with Him rather than clinging to fleeting material pursuits.



- The Supremacy of Divine Wisdom:

Verses 8 and 9 states, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.” This part of the passage reminds us that God’s plans and understanding are far beyond our human comprehension. It calls for trust in God's higher wisdom, affirming His methods and plans are designed for our ultimate good—even when they differ from our human expectations.



- Invitation to Transformation and Renewal:

Overall, the passage serves as an invitation to a new way of living—one aligned with divine grace and wisdom. It encourages us to leave behind the futile pursuit of temporary satisfactions and to embrace the transformative, healing power of God's promises.

In Summary:

The central theme of Isaiah 55:1–9 is the call to experience God's unfailing, free grace (we did not do anything; it was all God), a grace that not only satisfies our deepest spiritual thirst but also challenges us to trust in a divine way of understanding that surpasses human comprehension. It is a generous invitation to shift our focus from worldly pursuits to a life enriched by God's all-sufficient love and wisdom.



Isaiah 55 begins with a heartfelt invitation: “Come, all you who are thirsty.” This calls you to seek a satisfaction that transcends the physical. During Lent, a time when you may be purposefully fasting or simplifying to refocus your heart, this invitation emphasizes that true nourishment comes from God’s gracious word rather than worldly pursuits.

- Morning Reflection: Start each day by meditating on the invitation of Isaiah 55. Recognize that your thirst—whether for forgiveness, understanding, or peace—is met by God’s free, overflowing grace.



2. Trust in Divine Wisdom Over Human Understanding

Insight: Verses 8–9 remind us, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.” During Lent, a season focused on introspection and trust in God's plan, this truth invites you to set aside your limited perspective.

Application: Prayerful Surrender: When anxieties or confusions arise, pray, “Lord, help me trust Your way even when I don’t understand.” Allow yourself to release control and lean into the mystery of God’s higher wisdom.



3. Emphasize Repentance and Renewal

Insight: Lent is traditionally a season of repentance—a time to turn away from destructive patterns. Isaiah 55 encourages you to leave behind “the pursuit of things that do not satisfy” and to embrace God's free and life-giving offer.

Application: Examine Your Priorities: Use this season to identify habits or attachments that leave you spiritually dry. Invite God to help renew your focus on what truly sustains you—His love, grace, and truth.

- Personal Commitment: Write a prayer of repentance or a vow of renewal, committing yourself to seek God first, trusting that His grace is more than enough to fill any void.



4. Cultivate a Heart of Generosity and Community

Insight: Isaiah 55 not only speaks to individual transformation but also extends an invitation to all, emphasizing God's universal offer of grace. Lent is an ideal time to foster unity and share that grace with others.

5. Transform Fasting into a Spiritual Feast

Insight: Lenten fasting isn't just about abstaining from physical food; it's an opportunity to replace what is lacking with the nourishment of God's word and prayer. Isaiah 55 encourages you to turn away from fruitless pursuits toward a satisfying, living relationship with God.



This passage becomes not just a scriptural text but a lived encounter—a daily reminder that amidst the rigors of fasting and spiritual discipline, you are invited to a transformative experience with the abundant grace of God. Isaiah 55 begins with a heartfelt invitation: “Come, all you who are thirsty.” This calls you to seek a satisfaction that transcends the physical. During Lent, a time when you may be purposefully fasting or simplifying to refocus your heart, this invitation emphasizes that true nourishment comes from God’s gracious word rather than worldly pursuits.

*Psalms –
Psalm 63:1-8*





The following psalm is better understood as a collection of pious meditations rather than a series of prayers. These reflections provided comfort to David during times of danger, anxiety, and significant distress. Additionally, the psalm includes the vows he made to God in response to the alarming circumstances he faced.



63:1–4. God my desire

The longing expressed here is not that of a stranger but the eager yearning of a friend or lover seeking closeness with God. The affirmation "Thou art my God" encapsulates the essence of the covenant relationship, underscoring a deep thirst for God that even the unbeliever experiences (John 4:13f). The translation "early will I seek thee," suggesting eagerness, remains fitting. David's prayer arises from a parched and desolate environment, indicating a deeper inner longing. Despite the wilderness, David believes he can encounter God as he did in happier times, highlighting God's omnipresence.



3. David's true estimate of devotion reflects the sacrifices of countless martyrs, resonating with Paul's words (Acts 20:24) about not valuing life above fulfilling God's purpose.

4. David's internal devotion is complemented by external expressions of worship, illustrated through lifting hands or eyes to heaven, as supported by New Testament references (1 Tim. 2:8).



63:5–8. God my delight

This stanza reveals that David's faith and persistence lead to abundant rewards. The shift from thirst to feasting emphasizes joy and the intensity of praise. While hardship sharpened his desire for God, his wakefulness at night deepened that longing. The imagery of clinging to God reflects a passionate pursuit, sustained by God's upholding presence, paralleling Philippians 3:8–14.



Psalm 63:1-9 is a deeply personal and heartfelt expression of longing for God, making it a powerful passage for spiritual formation during Lent. Here are some ways to apply it to your Lenten journey:

1. Deepen Your Hunger for God (vv. 1-2)

“O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”

- Lent is a time for spiritual thirst and longing. Use this season to cultivate a deeper hunger for God through prayer, fasting, and meditation on Scripture.

- Consider fasting from distractions (such as social media and entertainment) to create space for seeking God with greater focus.



2. Practice Praise in the Wilderness (vv. 3-5)

“Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. . . My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips.”

- Even during times of sacrifice and self-denial, let gratitude and praise be central to your experience.
- Keep a Lenten gratitude journal where you write down the ways you experience God’s steadfast love.



3. Meditate on God During the Night (vv. 6-7)

“When I remember you upon my bed and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.”

- Lent is a season for deeper reflection. Consider setting aside quiet time at night to meditate on Scripture and reflect on God’s faithfulness.



4. Cling to God in Commitment (vv. 8-9)

“My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.”

- Use this verse as a personal prayer of commitment, especially when facing struggles or temptations during Lent.

- Make a conscious effort to “cling” to God through increased prayer, acts of service, and by surrendering areas of your life that need transformation.



By using Psalm 63 as a guide, your Lenten journey can become a time of deep spiritual renewal, allowing you to draw closer to God through longing, praise, meditation, and commitment.

New Testament
1 Corinthians
10:1–13





The danger of presumptuousness (10:1–13)

Paul takes his lessons from the way God dealt with his people under the old covenant, during the time of the wanderings in the wilderness under Moses. In that generation, God's people knew many blessings, but they also were guilty of many sins, for which they were severely punished.



Their blessings (1–4)

Paul compares the arrogance of certain Corinthian Christians to that of God's people under Moses. Both groups underwent significant spiritual experiences—Israelites passed through the sea and were under the cloud, while Corinthians were baptized into Christ.

However, just as the Israelites failed to fully embrace their blessings, the Corinthians were focused on their rights without acknowledging the responsibilities that came with their relationship with the Lord. Paul emphasizes that the true significance of baptism lies in the allegiance it represents, urging the Corinthians to reflect on the implications of their faith.



Their sins (5–10)

Before we enumerate specific points, verse 5 notes that most of the generation that left Egypt under Moses did not please God and were overthrown in the wilderness, with only Joshua and Caleb reaching Canaan, this highlights God's displeasure with a presumptuous generation. Notably, the text does not address their eternal destiny, as the focus is on warnings for us in 10:6. The sins of the Israelites, such as covetousness, idolatry, immorality, and grumbling, serve as a caution for the Corinthian church. Paul reminds them not to boast about their spiritual state, warning that thinking sin doesn't matter puts them in a dangerous position. They mistakenly relied on sacraments and spiritual experiences for protection rather than on Christ. Paul emphasized his own need for self-discipline and encouraged the Corinthians to adopt the same approach.



Their punishment (5–10)

This can be summarized in three dramatic and tragic phrases: they were overthrown (5); they fell (8); they were destroyed (9–10) by the Destroyer. The last example is a similar situation to that described in 5:5. Destruction of the flesh, in this case of thousands, did not necessarily involve eternal destruction as well. These people did not see the Promised Land, but nothing was said about their eternal destiny. Paul wants these beloved but boastful brethren to be the best they can be for the Lord. The same things that spoiled the lives of God's people in those distant days under Moses wreck Christian communities today. They have been written down for our instruction (11). They happened to them to act as a warning on the slippery slope of rejecting God.



Their warning (11–13)

The Passover/Exodus saga teaches more than just wisdom; it highlights the unique privilege of Paul's contemporaries who lived at the end of the ages, in a time 'between the ages' of this world and the age to come. This period is marked by divine revelation, human disobedience, and divine judgment, a pattern evident in the experience of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan and reflected in the New Testament. The Exodus stands as a pivotal event in salvation history, significant for Christians today.



Paul's warning in 10:12 about standing firm also addresses the serious nature of spiritual testing, urging the Corinthians to recognize the make-or-break significance of their trials. The essence of his message is not merely about the dangers of temptation but about enduring these tests with resilience and faith in God.



Paul encourages us by affirming God's faithfulness, reminding us that our trials are common to humanity. Jesus, who has endured similar struggles, understands our limits and guides us through them. The term for "way of escape" (ekbasis) connects to the concept of "exodus," reflecting God's redemptive plan through Jesus' death. He offers support, not punishment, and reminds us that we endure alongside many others facing similar tests, always looking toward the victory that awaits.



1 Corinthians 10:1–13 can significantly influence your spiritual formation during Lent by encouraging deep reflection, honest self-examination, and a renewed reliance on God’s faithful provision.

1. Embracing God’s Faithfulness in the Midst of Temptation

Verse 13 reminds us that every temptation we face is common to humanity—and, more importantly, that God is faithful. This promise serves as a powerful anchor during Lent. When confronted with weakness or vulnerability, remembering that God always provides a way out can strengthen your resolve. In your life, this means turning to prayer and seeking God’s guidance during challenges, confident that you are never left to face temptation alone.



2. Learning from the Past to Inform Your Present

Paul references the historical experiences of the Israelites not to condemn them but to serve as a cautionary example. Their journey—despite the miracles and blessings they received—highlights the dangers of complacency and disobedience. Reflecting on their story during Lent encourages you to pause, examine your own journey, and identify areas where you might be drifting away from God. This process of self-examination is crucial for spiritual growth, paving the way for repentance and transformation.



3. Cultivating Humility and Gratitude

The narrative in this passage reminds us of the human tendency to stumble—even in the presence of divine provision. Acknowledging this vulnerability can cultivate a spirit of humility and foster gratitude for God's continuous care. During the reflective season of Lent, take time to meditate on your moments of grace and protection, recognizing how each "way of escape" has guided you through trials and deepened your trust in God.



4. Engaging in Intentional Prayer and Meditation

Lent is a season dedicated to prayer, fasting, and deeper meditation. Use this passage as a catalyst for your prayers. You might pray for the wisdom to discern subtle temptations and the strength to act according to God's will.

Consider journaling your reflections as you meditate on verses like 1 Corinthians 10:13, and ask yourself:

- Where in my life have I faced challenges that seemed overwhelming?
- How have I experienced God's grace in those moments?
- What practical steps can I take to be more vigilant against the subtle lures of complacency?

These reflective questions can help transform abstract scriptural insights into concrete practices in your daily life.



5. Renewing Your Commitment to a Transformed Life**

Ultimately, the lesson from 1 Corinthians 10:1–13 revolves around transformation through divine help. It encourages you to recognize and resist pitfalls that can lead you astray while also leaning into the transformative power of God's grace. As you journey through Lent, this passage can inspire a deeper commitment to living in a way that honors God—by remaining watchful, humble, and ever grateful for His enduring support.



Engaging with these themes can illuminate your personal path of spiritual formation, fostering a renewed sense of hope and accountability. As you reflect on these lessons throughout Lent, consider integrating them into your prayer life and daily journaling. You might also explore related scriptures that echo these themes—such as passages on renewal, endurance, and grace—to further enrich your personal journey.

Gospel
Luke 13:1–9





Here, we have references to two disasters about which we have no definite information and can only speculate.

This is a parable illuminated by grace and filled with warnings.



The reference to the Galilaeans, whom Pilate killed during their sacrifices, illustrates their frequent involvement in political unrest. Pilate had proposed a necessary improvement to Jerusalem's water supply, intending to finance it with Temple funds. This idea outraged the Jews, leading to mob protests. Pilate then ordered his soldiers to disguise themselves and disperse the crowd with force, resulting in unintended violence and fatalities, likely involving Galilaeans. Additionally, the tension between Pilate and Herod may have been exacerbated by this incident, only resolving later when Pilate sent Jesus to Herod for trial (Luke 23:6–12).



The eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell remain obscure. The Authorized Version refers to them as sinners, but it should actually say, debtors. It's suggested they may have worked on Pilate's aqueducts, earning money that was owed to God and should have been returned. This could explain why some believed the tower fell on them as punishment for their work.



But there is far more than a historical problem in this passage. The Jews rigidly connected sin and suffering.

Jesus warned that if his listeners did not repent, they would perish, particularly foreseeing the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. He understood that if the Jews continued their rebellions and rejected God's kingdom, they would face a national calamity as a consequence.

This creates a paradox: while individual suffering and sin aren't always connected, national sin and suffering are. Nations that choose the wrong paths inevitably face the consequences, whereas individuals may suffer without having made those choices. It's important to recognize that while human suffering isn't directly tied to sin, a nation rebelling against God is likely heading toward disaster.



This parable is simultaneously illuminated by grace and filled with warnings.

(1) The parable tells us of the gospel of the second chance. A fig tree normally takes three years to reach maturity. If it is not fruiting by that time it is not likely to fruit at all. But this fig tree was given another chance.

It is always Jesus' way to give us chance after chance. Peter and Mark and Paul would all gladly have witnessed to that. God is infinitely kind to those who fall and rise again.

(2) But the parable also makes it quite clear that there is a final chance. If we refuse chance after chance, if God's appeal and challenge come again and again in vain, the day finally comes, not when God has shut us out, but when we by deliberate choice have shut ourselves out. God save us from that!



Luke 13:1-9 is a significant passage for spiritual formation during Lent, as it emphasizes themes of repentance, self-examination, and trust in God's grace—all crucial elements of the Lenten journey. Here are ways this passage can strengthen your walk with Christ during this season.



1. A Call to Urgent Repentance (Luke 13:1-5)

Jesus challenges the common belief that suffering is always a result of personal sin. Rather than focusing on the sins of others, He urges His listeners to examine their own hearts: “Unless you repent, you too will all perish.” (Luke 13:3, 5)

Lenten Application:

- Use this season as an opportunity for deep repentance—not merely feeling sorry for sin, but genuinely turning away from it.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas in your life needing transformation.
- Pray for a heart that responds quickly to God’s conviction.



2. The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9)

In this parable, the fig tree has been given time to bear fruit but remains barren. Instead of cutting it down immediately, the gardener (representing Christ) intercedes, requesting more time to cultivate and nurture it.

Lenten Application:

- Acknowledge God's patience with you—He is granting you time to grow.
- Reflect: Are you producing the fruit of repentance, such as love, joy, peace, humility, and generosity?
- Allow Christ, the Divine Gardener, to work on your heart through prayer, fasting, and meditation on Scripture.



3. Embracing the Grace of a Second Chance

Jesus reminds us that, while God is patient, time is not infinite. Lent serves as an invitation to respond to His mercy now.

Lenten Application:

- Surrender to God's transformative work—invite Him to “dig around your roots” and remove anything that hinders your growth.
- Commit to spiritual disciplines that will help you bear fruit.
- Rest in Christ's intercession—He does not give up on you.



This passage aligns with the themes of Lent: repentance, renewal, and preparation for the new life of Easter. By embracing its message, you allow God to shape you into a fruitful disciple, ready to reflect His kingdom.



Week Five Scriptures

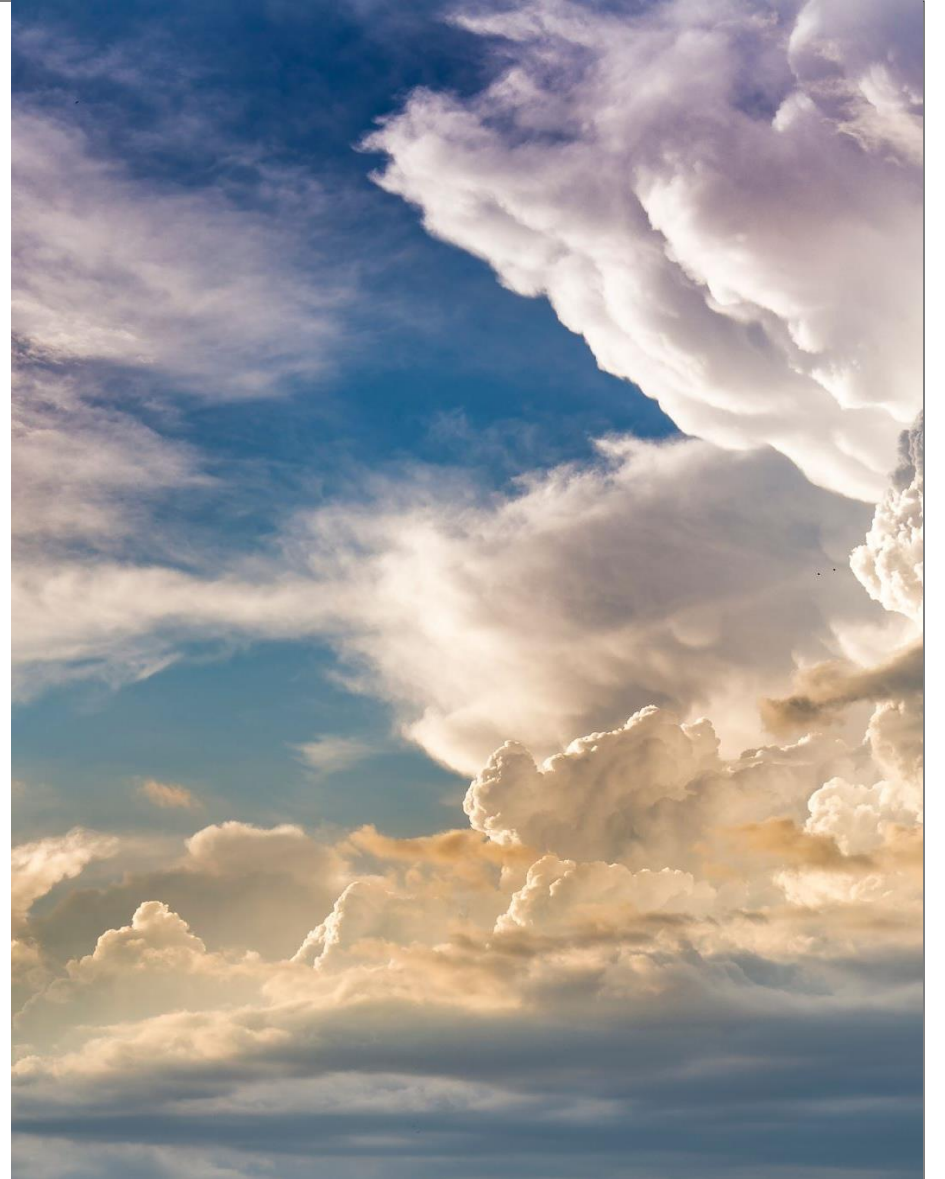
Old Testament Joshua 5:9–12

Psalms Psalm 32

New Testament 2 Corinthians 5:16–21

Gospel Luke 15:1–3, 11b–32

*Revised Common Lectionary
(Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2009).*



Old Testament
Joshua 5:9–12





Joshua 5:9–12 highlights a significant moment of transformation and covenant renewal for the Israelites as they transition from the wilderness into the Promised Land. God uses the act of circumcision—a ritual that may seem painful and inconvenient—to symbolically cleanse them of the shame and legacy of their Egyptian bondage. When God says, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you” (verse 9), He proclaims that their past disgrace has been removed, marking them as a people set apart for His purposes.



This act of cleansing reaffirms the covenant relationship initially established with Abraham and prepares Israel both spiritually and communally for the challenges and victories that await them in a land where their enemies already tremble in fear.

Notably, this passage emphasizes the theme of identity transition. For decades, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, during which a new generation was born that had not undergone the covenant sign of circumcision. With this command, Joshua renews their covenant identity through a mass circumcision, aligning every member of the community with the traditions and promises that define them as God's chosen people.



The timing of this act is critical, as it occurs just before they are about to celebrate the Passover—a feast closely linked to liberation and renewal. The act of circumcision marks both a literal and symbolic rebirth into a life of freedom and divine backing. Essentially, this passage reminds the community that their deliverance, identity, and future victories depend not on their own strength but on their obedience to God’s calling and the sacrificial markers of His covenant.



Joshua 5:9–12 speaks profoundly about transformation and the renewal of identity, a theme that can deeply inform and enhance your spiritual formation during Lent. In this passage, God declares that He has "rolled away the reproach of Egypt," symbolizing the shedding of an old, burdensome past and the commissioning of a new identity as God's covenant people. During Lent, a season dedicated to repentance, self-reflection, and renewal, you can apply this message in several ways:



1. Embrace a Process of Renewal:

Just as the Israelites underwent a ritual of circumcision to mark a decisive break from their past and step fully into God's promise, use Lent as an opportunity to evaluate what in your life still carries the weight of past mistakes or old habits. Identify these "reproaches" or lingering burdens and commit to letting them go. This might involve confessing sins, seeking forgiveness, or making a personal commitment to change behaviors that keep you from fully embracing your identity in Christ.



2. Rituals as Markers of Spiritual Transformation:

The act of circumcision was not just a physical rite; it was a visible sign of covenant renewal. Similarly, consider introducing a personal or communal ritual during Lent that symbolizes your commitment to transformation. This could be as simple as a daily prayer of repentance, a meditation on letting go, or even a small, tangible act (like lighting a candle or writing a letter to God) where you symbolically "roll away" the reproach of your past, preparing your heart to enter into the "Promised Land" of new life.



3. Reflection on Identity and Belonging:

The passage underscores how the Israelites' identity was re-forged through their obedience to God's command. Lent invites you to reflect on your own identity in Christ—who you were, who you are becoming, and how God's transformative power is at work in your life. Spend time meditating on scriptures and journaling about moments when you felt bound by past failures and how, through repentance and God's grace, those chains were broken. This reflection can rekindle your sense of belonging to a loving, forgiving community and empower you to live out your renewed identity.



4. Transitioning from the Old to the New:

Lent is a liminal season—a time of transition from the old self to the new self, much like the Israelites' transition from the wilderness to the Promised Land. Use this period to intentionally plan for a future that values spiritual growth over past comforts. Set specific, achievable goals for spiritual disciplines (such as consistent prayer, Bible study, or acts of service) that will carry you into a post-Lenten season filled with hope and renewed direction.

- Noted in the ODB on 3/31/25.



5. Community and Covenant:

Remember that Joshua 5:9–12 isn't just about personal renewal; it's also about communal identity. Engage with your fellow believers during Lent—whether in small group discussions, communal worship, or shared acts of service—to experience firsthand the strength that comes from a community united in the journey of renewal. This collective practice echoes the communal aspect of the Israelites' covenant and reinforces the idea that transformation is both an individual and collective process.



In essence, by applying the themes of Joshua 5:9–12 during Lent, you invite a deeper re-examination of your life, intentionally "rolling away" old reproaches and embracing a renewed, covenantal identity in Christ. This mindful practice not only aligns with the penitential spirit of Lent but also sets a foundation for the joyous resurrection of a new self in your walk with God.

Psalms
Psalalm 32





The main theme of Psalm 32 is the joy of forgiveness. David reflects on the blessings of being forgiven by God, contrasting the burden of unconfessed sin with the relief and peace that come from repentance. The psalm highlights:

The Blessing of Forgiveness (vv. 1-2) – David begins by praising the joy of those whose sins are covered and not counted against them.



The Burden of Unconfessed Sin (vv. 3-4) – He describes the physical and emotional toll of hiding sin, showing how guilt can weigh heavily on a person.

The Power of Confession (v. 5) – David testifies that when he acknowledged his sin before God, he received complete forgiveness.



God's Protection and Guidance (vv. 6-8) – He encourages others to seek God while He may be found and assures that God will surround the repentant with His steadfast love and instruction.

The Contrast Between the Wicked and the Righteous (vv. 9-11) – The psalm ends by warning against stubbornness and emphasizing that those who trust in the Lord will experience His unfailing love and joy.



Overall, Psalm 32 teaches that true happiness comes not from perfection but from a heart that is honest before God, trusting in His mercy and grace.



Psalm 32 can be a powerful tool for deepening your spiritual formation during Lent by inviting introspection, repentance, and renewal. Here are some ways it can enhance your Lenten journey:

1. Embracing Confession and Repentance

Honest Self-Examination: Psalm 32 emphasizes the importance of acknowledging one's sins. Lent is traditionally a time for self-examination, and the psalm invites you to look honestly at your inner life.

Release from Guilt: By confessing your sins—as David does—you can experience the relief that comes from unburdening yourself of guilt, echoing the transformative message of repentance.



2. Experiencing the Joy of Forgiveness

Spiritual Renewal: The psalm underscores the joy and freedom that come from experiencing God's forgiveness. This theme is especially resonant during Lent, a season focused on spiritual rebirth and renewal.

Deepened Relationship with God: Recognizing God's willingness to forgive can strengthen your trust in Him and encourage a more intimate, honest relationship.



3. Trusting in God's Guidance and Love

Assurance in God's Presence: Verses that speak of God's protection and guidance remind you that, even in times of struggle, God is actively involved in your life. This assurance can be particularly comforting during the reflective and sometimes challenging period of Lent.

Invitation to Dependence: The psalm invites you to lean on God rather than on your own strength—a lesson that is central to the Lenten practice of surrender and spiritual dependence.



4. Practical Applications for Lent

Meditative Reading: Incorporate Psalm 32 into your daily prayers or meditation sessions. Reflect on its themes as you prepare your heart for Easter.

Journaling and Prayer: Use the psalm as a basis for journaling your thoughts and prayers. Write about areas in your life where you need confession and where you have experienced God's forgiveness.

Community and Worship: Sharing insights from the psalm in small group studies or during worship can foster communal support and deepen collective spiritual growth.



By meditating on Psalm 32, you not only confront the realities of sin and the beauty of forgiveness, but you also invite a transformation that is at the heart of the Lenten season. It challenges you to live with authenticity before God and to embrace His grace fully, setting a foundation for a renewed spiritual life as you move toward Easter.

New Testament
2 Corinthians 5:16–21





The effects of ministry: new creation (5:16–17)

In verses 15–16, the apostle repeatedly uses the phrase "no longer." This indicates that for someone who is now in Christ through the ministry of reconciliation, certain aspects of their life are no longer true. Such a person no longer lives for themselves (verse 15) and no longer views Christ from a purely worldly perspective (verse 16). These things, which are no longer true, belong to the past and have been replaced by the new creation (verse 17) that has now arrived (verse 16).



2 Corinthians 5:16-21 focuses on the transformation of identity and the important call to reconciliation. In this passage, Paul contrasts the old way of viewing humanity—judging people by their outward appearances and worldly status—with the new reality that comes from being “in Christ.” When believers accept Christ, they become a new creation; their past is left behind, and a renewed perspective arises that reflects God's grace within them. This transformation is not only personal but also alters how one perceives others and the world. Instead of viewing life through the lens of human frailty and sin, Christians begin to see every individual as a reflection of God’s redemptive work.



The central theme of the passage is reconciliation. Through Christ's sacrificial death—taking on sin despite being sinless—the barrier between God and humanity is removed. God, through Christ, restores this broken relationship and invites believers to a life characterized by unity with Him rather than separation. As a result, Paul states that believers are to serve as ambassadors for Christ, carrying the message of God's love and reconciliation to the world, and encouraging others to restore their relationship with Him. This emphasis on transformation into a new creation and the subsequent calling to be messengers of reconciliation offers a powerful framework for personal renewal and communal outreach.



For someone who is deeply involved in spiritual formation and community healing, this theme resonates on many levels. It not only invites personal transformation but also challenges you to embody and share that transformative power within your community, fostering unity even amid historical or ongoing struggles. Essentially, the passage calls for profound inner change that naturally extends outward, transforming relationships and communities through the reconciling grace of God.



2 Corinthians 5:16–21 can greatly support your spiritual formation during Lent by inviting you into a journey of renewal and reconciliation. Here are some ways this passage can guide you:

1. Embracing a New Identity:

The passage reminds you that you are a new creation in Christ. Lent, as a season of repentance and renewal, is an opportune time to shed old habits and embrace a transformed identity. Reflect on how Christ's sacrifice has freed you from your past, inspiring you to live out this new reality each day.



2. Shifting Perspectives:

This text challenges you to view the world not through a human lens, but through God's transformative vision. During Lent, when introspection is central, you are encouraged to re-examine your perceptions and let divine compassion and understanding shape how you see yourself and others.

3. Experiencing Reconciliation:

A key theme in this passage is reconciliation—both with God and with others. Lent is a time for healing relationships and seeking forgiveness. By meditating on this scripture, you are reminded of the peace that comes from being reconciled with God, which motivates you to extend that same grace to those around you.



4. Embracing the Ministry of Reconciliation:

You are called to be an ambassador of reconciliation. As you engage in Lenten practices such as prayer, fasting, and reflection, consider how you can actively participate in mending broken relationships and fostering community. This call challenges you to embody the love and mercy you have received in your interactions with others.



5. Cultivating Humility and Gratitude:

Recognizing that reconciliation comes through Christ's sacrifice fosters a spirit of humility and gratitude. Lent invites you to acknowledge the cost of grace, inspiring a deeper commitment to live a life marked by thankfulness and service.

By meditating on 2 Corinthians 5:16–21 during Lent, you allow its truths to reshape your understanding of yourself, others, and God—laying a firm foundation for continued spiritual growth and transformation throughout the season and beyond.

Gospel
Luke 15:1–3, 11b–32





This chapter is one of the most well-known and beloved in the entire Bible. It includes three parables that highlight the joy God feels when a lost sinner is found. The first two parables specifically show individuals who actively search for what is lost, emphasizing the idea that God does not wait passively for sinners to approach Him but actively seeks them out instead.



Verse 15:1 summarizes the entire section that precedes it, while verse 15:2 summarizes the section that follows. When sinners approach, God welcomes them. The prodigal son, when he returned with the humility Jesus described in his ‘narrow door’ teachings, confessed, “I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” In response, his father ran to him, embraced him, and kissed him (15:19, 20). When I come to God stripped of everything I once thought would earn me His favor, that is when He calls out, “Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him” (15:22).



How can a person be saved? In summary, through repentance. Verse 15:7 encapsulates this lesson by highlighting who is involved in the salvation of humanity: the heavenly principalities and powers, and the triune God Himself—no one else and no one less. It explains why this salvation occurs: because it is God’s joy and delight to save people from their sins. It also clarifies how this salvation is attained: by coming near to God as penitent, helpless sinners. Indeed, there is “joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.”



Jesus does not reveal whether the elder son responded to his father's invitation or how the younger son lived after experiencing his father's welcoming love. By leaving these questions unanswered, he challenges all his listeners, whether they identify with the elder brother or the younger. We often see ourselves as the prodigal, rejoicing in God's welcoming love, which is good. However, it is even better if we respond appropriately to that love.



At the same time, we should reflect on the fact that, unless we are very unusual, we can also see ourselves in the elder brother. It is a common human tendency to feel underappreciated, believing that others do not recognize our efforts. Regardless of whether we are religious or not, we frequently judge others who we perceive as not meeting our standards, even if those standards differ from theirs. The fact that Jesus leaves the elder son's reaction open-ended is encouraging; it means we still have the opportunity to choose to do the right thing. God's love continually challenges our self-centeredness.



Luke 15 offers a profound opportunity for reflection and transformation, particularly during Lent—a season characterized by repentance, self-examination, and renewal. Here are several ways this passage can support your spiritual growth:



1. Embracing God's Unconditional Love and Forgiveness

The Heart of the Prodigal Son: The parable (Luke 15:11b–32) vividly depicts a loving father who welcomes his wayward son back with open arms, despite his mistakes. This powerful image serves as a reminder that, regardless of how far you feel from God, divine mercy is always available to you.

Overcoming Self-Judgment: During Lent, you may encounter feelings of guilt or inadequacy. This passage reassures you that God's love is not earned through perfection but is, instead, a freely given gift. Recognizing this truth can be essential for personal healing and transformation.



2. Recognizing the Value of Every Soul

The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin: These parables, mentioned in the earlier verses (Luke 15:1–3), emphasize the significance of every individual to God. They encourage you to reflect on your own sense of worth and to appreciate the often-overlooked aspects of your life.

Community and Compassion: Understanding that God actively seeks out the lost can inspire you to show compassion to others. This fosters a spirit of inclusivity and mercy within your community.



3. A Call to Conversion and Repentance

A Journey Inward: The narratives encourage you to reflect on the aspects of your life that feel “lost” or disconnected. Lent naturally provides a season for such introspection, inviting you to realign your priorities, renew your commitment to spiritual growth, and embrace change.

Transformative Repentance: Rather than viewing repentance as mere self-punishment, these parables present it as a joyful return to a loving relationship with God. This perspective can transform your Lenten practices into a celebration of renewal instead of a time of mere abstinence.



4. Cultivating Humility and Letting Go of Judgment

Confronting Self-Righteousness: The opening verses (Luke 15:1–3) highlight the critical attitudes of religious leaders, serving as a warning against self-righteousness. This reminds us to practice humility in our own journeys and in our interactions with others.

Learning Empathy: When you reflect on your own imperfections, you may cultivate a deeper empathy for those who struggle with sin and guilt. This increased understanding can enrich your spiritual life and strengthen your commitment to expressing God's love in your daily relationships.



In essence, Luke 15 can serve as a transformative mirror—encouraging you to view your life through the lens of God’s grace, to seek forgiveness without shame, and to nurture a spirit of compassion and humility as you journey through Lent.



Week Six Scriptures

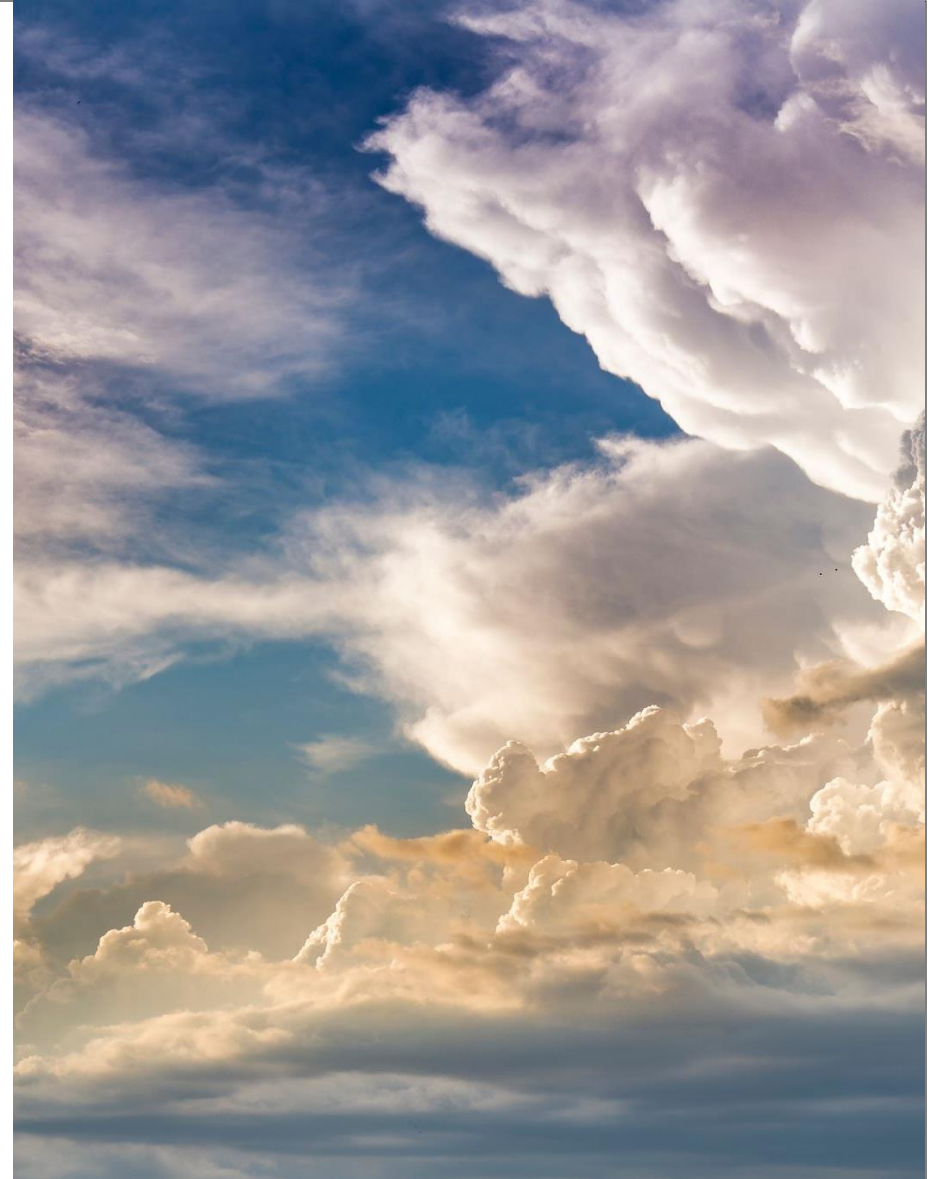
Old Testament Isaiah 43:16–21

Psalm Psalm 126

New Testament Philippians 3:4b–14

Gospel John 12:1–8

*Revised Common Lectionary (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife,
2009).*



Old Testament
Isaiah 43:16–21





Isaiah 43:16–21 carries a powerful message of renewal and redemption. This passage signifies a turning point where God proclaims His intention to do something entirely new—a fresh act of salvation that goes beyond past deliverances. Instead of focusing on previous signs of salvation, God calls His people to let go of old memories and embrace the transformative work that lies ahead. The invitation to "forget the former things" highlights that clinging to past experiences can prevent us from seeing the vibrant promise of divine renewal.



The vivid imagery—such as creating a road in the wilderness and streams in the desert—illustrates how God transforms barren landscapes into life-giving places. Even in situations where there seems to be no hope or natural resources, God’s redemptive power can create pathways and sources of sustenance in unexpected places. For believers, this offers both comfort and challenge: it encourages trust in God’s ability to provide and invites us to see every moment as an opportunity for a new beginning. This serves as a reminder that His work is not static; it is ever-unfolding, inviting our active participation in the ongoing story of redemption.



The passage addresses a profound level of personal and communal transformation. It encourages listeners to witness and engage with "the new thing" that God is doing, aligning with the broader biblical theme of moving from bondage and despair toward liberation and hope. During moments of personal reflection—especially during seasons of spiritual formation like Lent—the invitation to release the past and embrace God's fresh, creative presence can be both inspiring and transformative. This message fosters openness to change and a willingness to be reshaped by divine grace, instilling a confident expectation that God's future holds more than our current struggles.



Isaiah 43:16–21 serves as a powerful reminder to trust in a God who continually works to renew and redirect our lives, creating order and life from chaos. This message speaks to both individuals and communities, encouraging us to understand that our past does not limit us; instead, it lays the groundwork for God’s greater plan to unfold.



Isaiah 43:16–21 offers a powerful invitation to transformation, especially relevant during Lent, a season dedicated to introspection, repentance, and spiritual renewal. Here's how this passage can enhance your spiritual journey this Lenten season:



1. Letting Go to Embrace Renewal

The call to "forget the former things" encourages us to release old burdens, regrets, or habits that hold us back. During Lent, when many focus on self-examination, this passage invites you to reflect on past patterns that may be limiting your growth. As you engage in daily prayers or meditative reflections, consider confessing and letting go of these attachments to fully welcome the new work God promises. Releasing the past aligns with the Lenten journey toward renewal in heart and spirit.



2. Seeing God at Work in the Wilderness

The imagery of making a way in the wilderness and creating streams in the desert speaks to the idea of transformation, where it may seem impossible. In your personal spiritual journey, these symbols represent the hope that even in the driest or most barren parts of your life, God is ready to make a way. This message is especially resonant during Lent, a season focused on finding renewal amidst struggle. Meditate on how, just as deserts can become life-giving landscapes, your own challenges can be reframed as opportunities for divine intervention and growth.



3. A Call to Participate in God's New Work

At its core, this passage emphasizes that God is doing something entirely new. This is an invitation to actively participate in that process. Lent is not just a time for fasting or sacrifice; it is also a time to be open to the dynamic and creative presence of God in your life. Whether you engage through reflective journaling, communal worship, or silent prayer, let the promise of “a new thing” guide you toward a deeper trust in God's redemptive work. Consider that each day during Lent presents an opportunity to embrace that unfolding grace.



4. Deepening Your Relationship with God

Isaiah 43:16–21 invites you to trust that the same God who delivered Israel in the past is actively working in your life today. This trust can serve as a powerful foundation during Lent, a season focused on renewing your commitment to follow Christ's example of sacrifice and resurrection. As you progress through Lent, let this passage remind you that transformation is not just a one-time event but an ongoing journey of renewal. Each act of letting go and each moment of embracing God's new work fosters a deeper, more resilient faith.

Psalms
Psalm 126





This Psalm is divided into three parts. In the first part, the Prophet encourages the faithful who have returned from captivity to express their gratitude. He emphasizes the grace evident in their deliverance to demonstrate that they were brought back to their homeland by God's hand, not by chance or human favor.

The second part contains a prayer asking God to complete the work He has begun.

Finally, even though there is no immediate hope for full restoration, the Prophet helps alleviate the weariness that may come from the delay. He reassures them that, although they are currently experiencing sorrow, a joyful harvest will ultimately come.



Psalm 126 is a beautiful reflection on restoration and hope that resonates deeply with the Lenten journey—a season marked by reflection, repentance, and the promise of renewal. Its evocative imagery of “sowing in tears” and later “reaping with joy” provides a rich metaphor for understanding how our moments of surrender and vulnerability can become the fertile ground from which transformative grace flourishes.



During Lent, you may find that personal struggles and moments of penitence invite you to lay down your burdens and open yourself to divine reconciliation. As you meditate on Psalm 126, try to view each trial or tearful moment as a seed planted in your spiritual life, destined to eventually blossom into renewed joy. This perspective encourages you to acknowledge your brokenness without despair, understanding that even in our most difficult moments, there is the promise of restoration and growth.



In practical terms, engaging with Psalm 126 can deepen your spiritual formation by providing a structured, yet flexible framework for self-examination. Consider incorporating the psalm into your daily prayer or meditation routine. Read or recite its verses slowly, allowing yourself to dwell on its vivid imagery; this practice can help you internalize the message that every sorrow is temporary and every tear can be transformed by hope. Journaling your reflections—how specific moments of grief eventually led to insights or unexpected grace—can further solidify this understanding, turning abstract consolation into a tangible memory of spiritual growth.



Moreover, Psalm 126 invites you to look beyond your individual experience and embrace the communal nature of restoration. The text recalls a shared moment of hope and renewal in the history of Zion, reminding you that your journey is part of a larger, collective narrative. This can inspire you to seek fellowship during Lent, engaging in shared prayer, communal reflection, or dialogue with others who are also navigating their paths of surrender and renewal. Such community engagement reinforces the idea that while personal transformation is crucial, it also contributes to the broader tapestry of collective faith and restoration.



Ultimately, by meditating on the themes of Psalm 126 during Lent, you can embrace a dual perspective—one that honors both the reality of present difficulties and the assurance of future joy. The psalm becomes more than just text; it serves as a spiritual mirror, reflecting your current state and gently urging you toward hopeful transformation. As you journey through Lent, remember that your tears can be the very seeds from which divine joy is sown, nurturing a faith that understands the beauty of restoration and the promise of new beginnings.

New Testament
Philippians 3:4b–14





The passage from Philippians 3:4b–14 presents a profound redefinition of what constitutes true achievement and righteousness. In this section, Paul reflects on his own credentials—the accomplishments and religious honors that many would value highly—and then boldly declares that all of these are completely worthless compared to knowing Christ. Rather than relying on the self-righteous security of his heritage, legal accomplishments, or external observances, Paul chooses to embrace a life defined by faith. He explains that righteousness from God is attained not through human effort or strict adherence to the law, but through a personal, transformative relationship with Christ.



Paul's message has two key points. First, he teaches that holding onto past achievements, no matter how impressive, can hinder spiritual growth. When he states that he counts everything as loss, he invites believers to reflect on what truly matters. The surpassing value of knowing Christ far exceeds any human measure of success or recognition. Second, he encourages his readers to adopt a forward-looking determination—a call to "press on toward the goal." This means not resting on past accomplishments or identity but continually striving for the deeper, ongoing transformation that comes from a vibrant relationship with Christ. It is a call to let go of old ways of self-reliance and to live in the grace and empowerment of God.



For spiritual growth during Lent, inviting you to reexamine your priorities, let go of attachments that hinder your progress, and pursue a more profound, transformative relationship with Christ.

1. Reassessing What Truly Matters

In this passage, Paul contrasts worldly achievements and past gains with the surpassing value of knowing Christ. This reflection is especially relevant during Lent, a season dedicated to spiritual renewal and self-examination. Take the time to evaluate your own life: What are the “gains” or accomplishments that might distract you from deepening your spiritual walk? By intentionally “counting all things as loss” compared to the value of Christ, you can concentrate on what truly matters in your journey toward spiritual transformation.



2. Letting Go of the Past

Paul emphasizes the need to “forget what is behind and strain toward what is ahead” (Philippians 3:13). During Lent, this call to release past regrets, disappointments, or even the comfort of familiar habits allows you to embrace a spirit of renewal. This perspective helps you let go of burdens that may keep you stuck, inviting you to open your heart to God’s new work in your life and laying a foundation for transformation through repentance and forgiveness.



3. Cultivating Determination and Perseverance

This passage encourages us to pursue the spiritual goal of becoming more like Christ—a goal that requires persistent effort, much like the discipline practiced during Lent. Paul's unwavering determination serves as a reminder that spiritual growth is a journey that often involves stepping outside our comfort zones. Whether through fasting, prayer, or acts of service, Lent offers a season to embrace a mindset of perseverance. Trust that the challenges you face will refine both your character and your faith.



4. Embracing Humility and Surrender

Paul's willingness to let go of what once seemed important demonstrates the value of humility. During Lent, when you practice self-denial and reflect on your dependence on God, you align your heart with the humility that Christ exemplified. This act of surrender isn't merely about experiencing loss; it's about gaining a deeper joy and understanding that comes from fully dedicating your heart to God.



5. Focusing on the Eternal Prize

The ultimate goal described in this passage is to "win the prize" of spiritual transformation and eternal fellowship with Christ. This forward-looking vision encourages you to view your Lenten practices not as ends in themselves, but as stepping stones toward a richer and more fulfilling life in God's presence. The daily disciplines and sacrifices made during Lent serve to reorient your life toward that eternal goal, fostering hope and joy even in the face of challenges.



In summary, Philippians 3:4b-14 presents both a challenge and an encouragement. It invites you to let go of what no longer contributes to your true self and to recommit to a life centered on Christ. This aligns with the themes of repentance, renewal, and hopeful transformation that characterize the Lenten season.

Gospel
John 12:1–8





John 12:1–8 presents a powerful narrative that can serve as a rich source of inspiration and transformation during the Lenten Season. The passage invites you to reflect on themes of extravagant love, sacrificial giving, and the reordering of priorities—a call to examine what truly matters in your life.



1. Reflect on Extravagant Love and Sacrifice

The account of Mary anointing Jesus with costly perfume serves as a profound symbol of extravagant love. Consider how Mary's selfless devotion transcended societal expectations and material concerns, focusing solely on honoring Christ. During Lent, reflect on the following: In what areas of your life could you benefit from a similar act of surrender? How can you release attachments that hinder your relationship with God?

2. Embrace a Lifestyle of Generosity

Mary's willingness to use what is most valuable to her invites you to reconsider how you allocate your time, resources, and energy. Lent is the perfect opportunity to practice generosity by: Simplifying your lifestyle to free up resources for acts of service and charity. Cultivating a spirit of detachment from materialism and shifting your focus to spiritual growth.



3. Cultivate a Heart of Worship

Mary's action was a form of worship, demonstrating her intimate connection to Jesus. Use her example to deepen your own worship by incorporating moments of reflection and prayer into your daily routine. Seeking creative or unconventional expressions of gratitude and reverence for God. Be mindful that true worship is measured by the heart's condition, not by outward formality.

4. Reevaluate Priorities Amid Distractions

In John 12:1–8, the disciples' reaction—especially Judas's criticism—contrasts with Jesus' affirmation of Mary's act. This highlights the tension between worldly practicality and spiritual significance. During Lent, consider: What “costly” actions or commitments might you neglect due to worldly distractions? How can you realign your priorities to ensure that your spiritual life takes precedence over the temporary?



5. Engage in Daily Practices of Self-Examination

The narrative inspires ongoing self-examination. Lent, as a season of reflection and renewal, offers daily opportunities to practice spiritual disciplines such as Journaling about the costs and rewards of your faith journey, practicing confession and renewal through regular participation in Communion or other sacramental rites, and incorporating fasting or other forms of self-denial that help reveal where your heart truly lies.



6. Seek the Guidance of the Holy Spirit

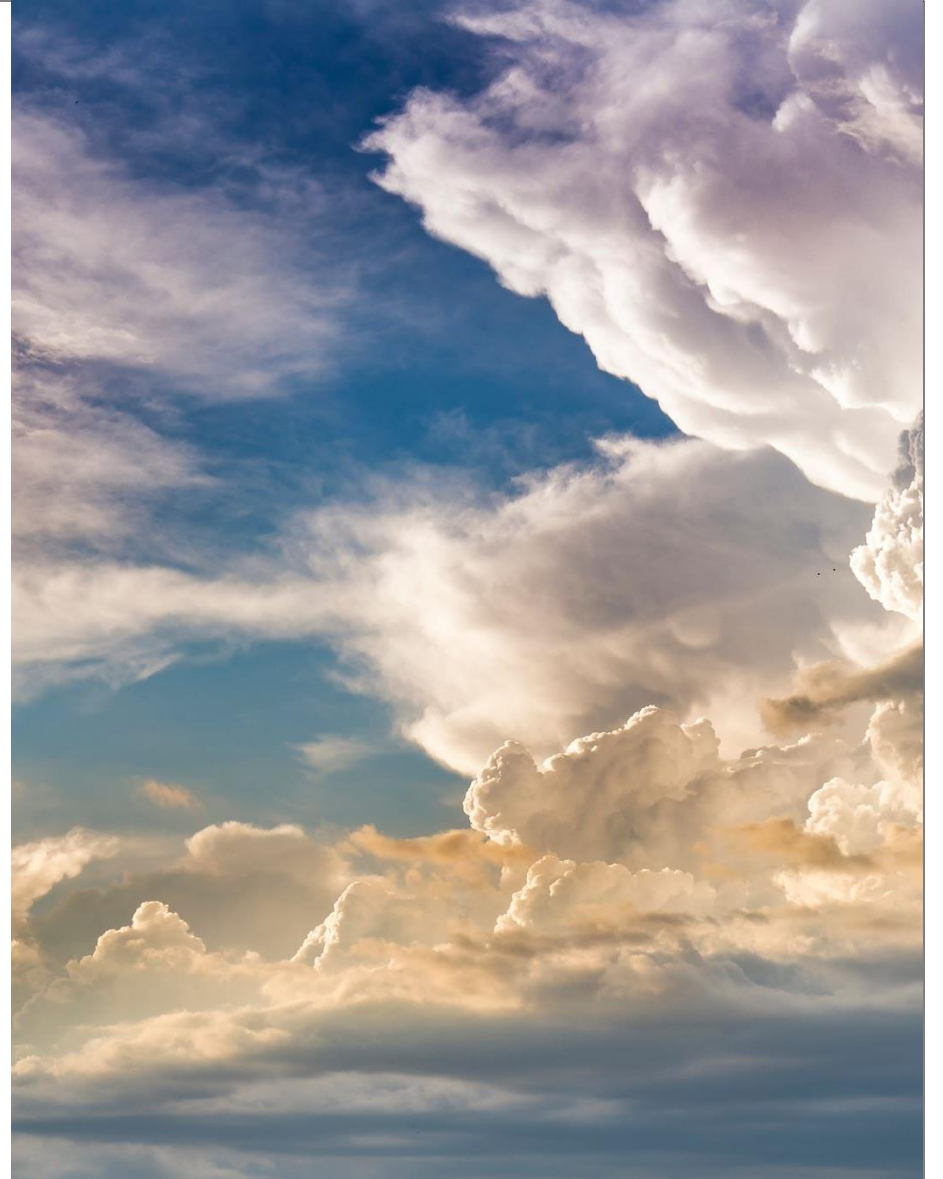
The transformative act of anointing invites you to reflect on how the Holy Spirit works in your life. Ask for the Spirit's guidance in Revealing the “expensive perfume” moments—those instances of grace that remind you of the depth of God's love. Strengthening your resolve to live a life marked by sacrificial giving and deep, enduring faith.



Finally, let John 12:1–8 inspire you to consider the legacy you are building. Use this passage to remind yourself that every sacrificial act, each moment of worship, and every loving deed contributes to a larger tapestry of faith. May your journey through Lent be marked by a fervent, transformative commitment to living a life of deep, reflective devotion, echoing the timeless message of love, sacrifice, and grace in these sacred words.

Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday
Old Testament Isaiah 50:4–9a
Psalm Psalm 31:9–16
New Testament Philippians 2:5–11
Gospel Luke 23:1–49

*Revised Common Lectionary (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife,
2009).*



Old Testament
Isaiah 50:4–9a





Isaiah 50:4–9a centers on the steadfast obedience of God’s servant in the face of suffering. The passage portrays a servant endowed with the ability to teach and to listen—qualities signifying divine wisdom and readiness to receive God’s instruction—even though this calling comes with deep personal cost. The servant’s willingness to endure physical abuse and humiliation (as described vividly in the text) is not presented as a sign of weakness but rather as a profound expression of commitment to God’s purpose. Even amid mistreatment, the servant’s trust in God’s ultimate vindication shines through, revealing a paradox intrinsic to discipleship: true engagement with God’s call often involves embracing hardship while holding fast to the promise of divine support and restoration.



Overall, it's a powerful picture of faithful endurance in suffering, rooted in confidence in God's help and justice. For Christians, this passage is often seen as a prophetic glimpse of Christ's suffering and obedience.



Isaiah 50:4–9a can deeply enrich your spiritual formation during Holy Week by drawing you into the heart of Christ’s suffering, obedience, and unwavering trust in God. Here are a few ways this passage can shape your journey:

Aligning with Christ’s Obedience

The Servant’s words, “The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious” (v.5), mirror Jesus’ obedience even unto death (Philippians 2:8). During Holy Week, as you reflect on Jesus’ journey to the cross, this passage can help you examine your own willingness to listen to God and obey—even when it’s difficult.

Spiritual Practice:

Pray for a “listening ear” each day this week—ask God to help you hear His voice in Scripture, silence, and the needs of others.



In summary, Isaiah 50:4–9a is a lens through which to walk the path of Jesus with greater intentionality. It forms in you the heart of a servant: one who listens, obeys, endures, trusts, and loves sacrificially. This is perfect preparation for Easter.



By meditating on Isaiah 50:4–9a, you position yourself in the tension between the pain of the present and the transformative promise of God’s care—mirroring the journey of Palm Sunday through Good Friday and into the hope of Easter. This passage invites you to reframe adversity as a crucible for renewed faith and a deeper responsiveness to God’s call, a message that resonates powerfully during Holy Week.

Psalm Psalm
31:9–16





The central theme of Psalm 31:9–16 is a plea for mercy and deliverance amid deep suffering, grounded in trust in God.

This section of the psalm is raw and emotional, reflecting the psalmist's vulnerability, yet a firm grip on hope also marks it.



1. Honest Lament (vv. 9–13)

The psalmist pours out a litany of pain—grief, physical weakness, social rejection, and threats from enemies. He feels forgotten, isolated, and even as good as dead:

“My life is spent with sorrow... I am a reproach... like a broken vessel.”

This shows us that God welcomes honest lament—not sanitized prayers but real expressions of heartache.

2. Radical Trust (vv. 14–16)

In the depths of distress, the psalmist makes a bold turn:

“But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my God.’ My times are in your hand.”

This is the spiritual heartbeat of the passage—choosing trust in God’s faithful care even when circumstances seem unbearable.



Amid overwhelming suffering and fear, the psalmist clings to God with honest lament and radical trust, entrusting their life into God's hands.

This theme makes Psalm 31:9–16 especially powerful during Holy Week, as it echoes the cry of Jesus from the cross (“Into your hands, I commit my spirit,” v.5). It reminds us that lament and trust can—and must—coexist in a life of faith.



Psalm 31:9–16 forms you during Holy Week by teaching you to:

Lament honestly,

Trust deeply,

Surrender fully,

And hope faithfully.

As you pray it alongside Jesus, it shapes you into someone who doesn't just believe in the cross—you learn to carry it with Him.



Learning to Trust in the Dark

“But I trust in you, O Lord. . . My times are in your hand.” These verses mirror Jesus’ final words: “Into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46). Trust, especially in darkness, is a central act of Holy Week faith.

Formation Moment:

This trust shapes a resilient, surrendered soul—able to say “yes” to God even when the outcome is uncertain.

Practice: Reflect on areas where you feel out of control. Pray, “My times are in your hand,” and rest in that surrender.

New Testament
Philippians 2:5–11





The heart of this passage is Christ's humility, obedience, and exaltation. It presents Jesus as the supreme example of self-giving love: Though He was equal with God, He emptied Himself, became human, and humbled Himself to the point of death—even death on a cross. Because of this, God exalted Him, and every knee will bow to His lordship.

Christ's Humility (vv.5–7) -He did not cling to His divine rights but took on the form of a servant.

Christ's Obedience (v.8) -He submitted fully to God's will, even in suffering and death.

Christ's Exaltation (vv.9–11) - God lifted Him high, giving Him the name above all names.



How This Shapes Your Spiritual Formation During Holy Week:

1. Cultivating the Mind of Christ

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus...” (v.5)

Holy Week is a call to internalize Jesus' humility—to think, act, and love like Him. Spiritual formation begins with transforming one's mindset.

Practice: Begin each day of Holy Week with a prayer:

“Lord, give me the mind of Christ today.” Reflect on humility in your interactions, decisions, and responses.



2. Embracing a Life of Servanthood

Jesus took the form of a servant. During Holy Week, as you remember how Christ knelt to wash feet and gave His life on the cross, you're invited to embrace downward mobility in a world that often prizes status.

Practice: Look for one intentional way each day to serve someone—especially where it costs you something (time, pride, convenience).



3. Obeying Even When It Hurts

Christ's obedience led Him to the cross. Holy Week invites you into a deeper level of trust and obedience—even when the path is painful or uncertain.

Practice: Ask: Where is God calling me to obey in a difficult area of my life?
Let Christ's example give you the courage to follow through.



4. Living with Resurrection Hope

Though the cross is central, it is not the end—exaltation follows humiliation.

This passage shapes your soul to endure hardship with hope, trusting that God honors those who follow the way of Christ.

Practice: As you reflect on the cross, hold tightly to the promise of resurrection. When you feel discouraged or low, whisper:

“God lifts up the humble.”



Philippians 2:5–11 forms you during Holy Week by calling you to walk the path of humility, obedience, and self-giving love, just like Jesus. And as you do, it anchors you in the hope that the God who brought Christ through the cross to glory will also bring you through suffering into resurrection life.

Gospel
Luke 23:1–49





The central theme of this passage is the innocent suffering and sacrificial death of Jesus, the righteous King, for the sake of humanity. Luke emphasizes Jesus' innocence, His compassion even while suffering, and His fulfillment of God's redemptive plan through the cross.

Throughout His trial, crucifixion, and death, Jesus remains composed, forgiving, and faithful—portraying a Savior who lays down His life willingly, not as a victim, but as a servant-King bringing salvation through suffering.



Key Elements of the Theme:

Jesus' Innocence: Pilate and Herod both find no fault in Him (vv.4, 14-15, 22), yet He is condemned—a powerful picture of substitutionary sacrifice.

Jesus' Compassion: He forgives His executioners ("Father, forgive them..." v.34), and assures the repentant thief of paradise (v.43).

Jesus' Kingship Through the Cross: Though mocked as "King of the Jews," He truly reigns—not in power, but in love.

Creation Responds: Darkness covers the land; the temple curtain tears—signs of the spiritual weight of this moment.

Human Response: The centurion recognizes His righteousness (v.47), and the crowd leaves in sorrow (v.48), showing the cross's power to provoke awe and repentance.



How This Shapes Your Spiritual Formation During Holy Week:

1. Deepening Awe at the Cost of Grace

Seeing the suffering of the innocent Christ compels reverence. It reminds you that salvation is free but not cheap—it cost Jesus everything.

2. Learning to Forgive Like Jesus

Jesus forgives those who mock and kill Him. His radical mercy reshapes how we treat those who wound us.

3. Embracing the Power of Repentance

The criminal on the cross recognizes who Jesus is and receives grace in his dying breath. This shows it's never too late to turn to Christ.



3. Embracing the Power of Repentance

The criminal on the cross recognizes who Jesus is and receives grace in his dying breath. This shows it's never too late to turn to Christ.

4. Following the Way of the Cross

Jesus shows that kingship means suffering love, not domination. Holy Week forms you by calling you to follow His path—not seeking comfort or status, but sacrificial service.

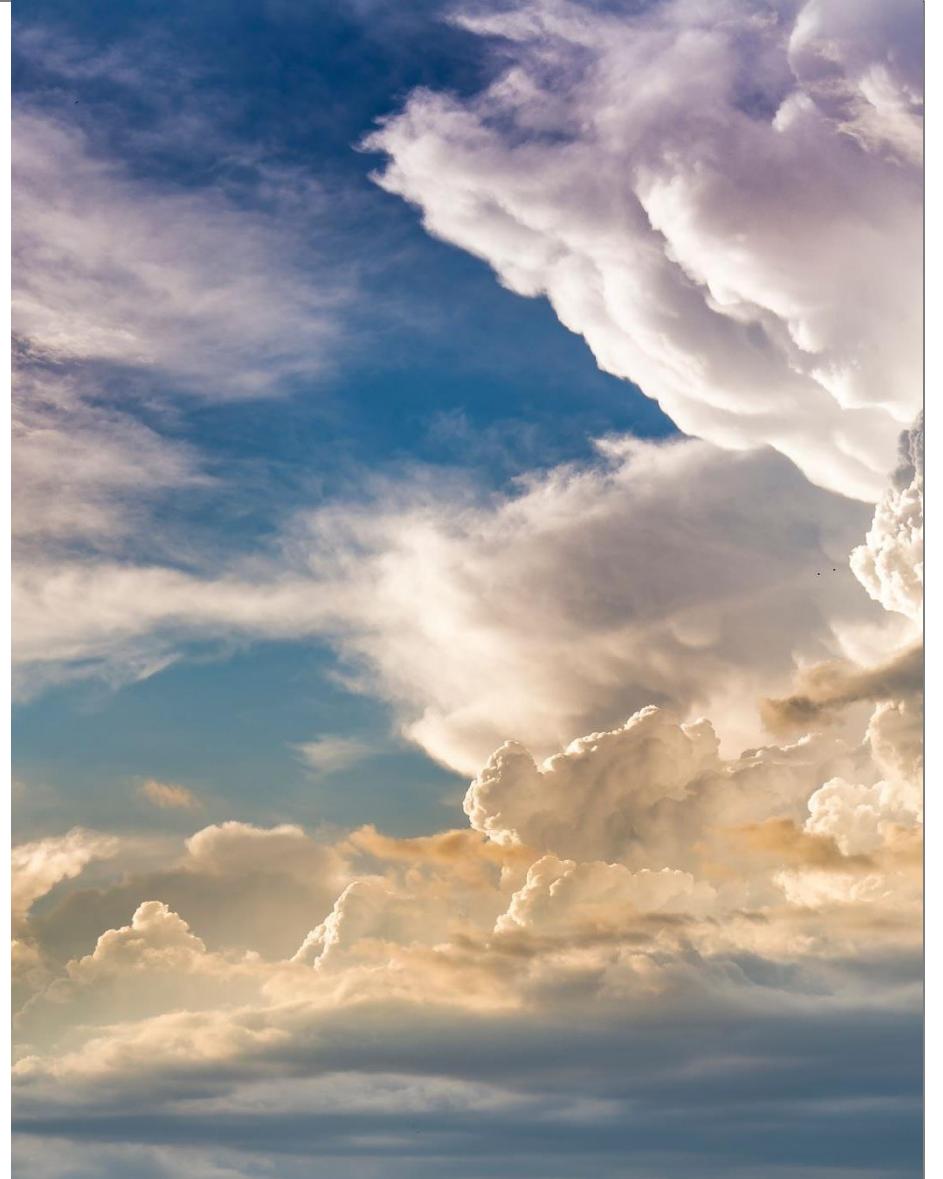


Summary:

Luke 23:1–49 forms you by drawing you into the mystery and majesty of Christ’s suffering. It teaches you to stand in awe of His sacrifice, extend forgiveness, practice repentance, and walk the way of the cross. During Holy Week, this passage becomes a mirror—showing you the depth of Christ’s love, and shaping you to reflect that love to the world.

Monday of Holy Week
Old Testament Isaiah 42:1–9
Psalm Psalm 36:5–11
New Testament Hebrews 9:11–15
Gospel John 12:1–11

*Revised Common Lectionary (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife,
2009).*



Old Testament
Isaiah 42:1–9





Central Theme of Isaiah 42:1–9

The passage centers on God’s commissioning of His chosen servant—a figure who embodies gentle strength, faithful obedience, and a mission to bring justice and light to the nations. Key aspects include:

Divine Selection and Endowment:

God declares, “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him. . .” (vv. 1–2). This highlights that the servant is divinely selected and empowered, called to act with God’s authority and guided by His Spirit.



Mission of Justice and Compassion:

The servant is tasked with bringing forth justice for the nations, not through forceful proclamation but through persistent, compassionate action. The language underscores a quiet resolve and a gentle manner that, nonetheless, effects transformative change.

Covenant and Promise:

In verses 6–9, God speaks of a new covenant—a promise to proclaim His praise to the ends of the earth. This underscores the servant’s role in ushering in a new era marked by truth and redemption, affirming God’s commitment to His people.



How This Passage Shapes Your Spiritual Formation During Holy Week

Holy Week is a time of deep reflection on the journey of Jesus to the cross—a path marked by sacrifice, profound humility, and the ultimate demonstration of God’s redemptive plan. Isaiah 42:1–9 can enhance your spiritual journey during this sacred period in several ways:

1. Embracing the Servant-Mindset

Reflection: Just as the servant in Isaiah is chosen and empowered by God, Holy Week invites you to consider how Jesus embraced a life of humble servanthood—even though He was divine.

Application: Let this challenge you to cultivate humility and intentional service. Ask yourself how you can embody this self-giving spirit in your daily life, particularly during moments of sacrifice or difficulty.



2. Aligning with a Mission of Justice and Compassion

Reflection: The servant's mission to bring justice and light encourages you to see your own life as an opportunity to manifest God's truth in the world.

During Holy Week, as you meditate on Jesus' journey of suffering and ultimate vindication, consider the social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of justice.

Application: Engage in acts of compassion and stand up for what is right—even when it is challenging. Your actions, big or small, become ways to reflect the servant's commitment to justice and mercy, echoing Christ's own ministry.



3. Trusting in God's Empowering Presence

Reflection: The promise that God will bestow His Spirit on the servant is a reminder of the divine empowerment available to all who seek to follow His ways, especially when facing trials. Jesus' own willingness to submit to God's will is the cornerstone of Holy Week.

Application: Use this truth to bolster your faith during moments of trial. Start your day in prayer, asking for the strength and guidance of the Holy Spirit to remain faithful even in the face of hardship—as Jesus did on His path to the cross.



4. Participating in the New Covenant of Redemption

Reflection: Isaiah speaks of a new era marked by God's unending promise to bring redemption and proclaim His praise. This aligns with the resurrection hope that emerges from Holy Week, where suffering gives way to new life.

Application: As you journey through Holy Week, let the anticipation of resurrection and renewal inspire your prayers and meditations. Reflect on how the promise of a new covenant can transform not just your personal life but also contribute to healing and restoration in your community.



In Summary

Isaiah 42:1–9 offers a vision of a servant chosen by God to bring justice, compassion, and light to the world through the empowerment of the Spirit.

During Holy Week, reflecting on this passage can guide you to:

Embrace humility and a servanthood mentality,

Act with justice and compassion in your interactions,

Draw on God's empowering presence in times of trial,

And hold fast to the promise of redemption and new life.

Allow this vision to inspire you to follow in the footsteps of Christ, making your life a living testimony to the transformative power of God's love during this sacred season and beyond.

Psalm 36:5–11





Central Theme of Psalm 36:5–11:

This passage celebrates the unfailing, expansive love and faithfulness of God. It portrays God's steadfast love as immeasurable—extending to the heavens—and His righteousness as a refuge for all creation. The psalmist emphasizes that God's compassionate care provides shelter, sustenance, and hope, assuring us that His love is the foundation of all life and salvation.



Key elements include:

Unconditional Love and Faithfulness:

The psalmist declares that God's love is vast and unchanging, reaching beyond human limits. This boundless love is the foundation for trust and hope in every circumstance.

Protection and Provision:

Just as a garden is well-watered and flourishing under divine care, those who seek refuge in God experience nourishment and safety. His abundant provision reassures us that we are cared for in both good times and moments of distress.

Hope and Trust:

The psalm encourages us to rest in God's reliable goodness. Acknowledging God as our hope from youth onward, it calls us to lean on His everlasting love, even when challenges arise.



How This Passage Can Shape Your Spiritual Formation During Holy Week:

Holy Week is a time of deep reflection on the suffering of Christ and the mystery of redemption. Integrating the themes of Psalm 36:5–11 into your spiritual formation can be profoundly transformative:

1. Finding Refuge in Divine Love:

Reflection: In Holy Week's solemnity and the weight of the cross, remember that God's love offers a safe haven. His care envelopes us even in our moments of vulnerability and sorrow.

Practice: Spend time in meditation or prayer, visualizing yourself taking shelter under God's loving wings. Let this image strengthen you as you confront personal challenges.



2. Embracing Abundant Grace Amid Suffering:

Reflection: The psalm depicts God's love as the source of life and nourishment, reminding us that divine provision exists even at the heart of suffering. Jesus' sacrifice during Holy Week is the ultimate expression of this abundant grace.

Practice: Contemplate how the suffering of Christ is transformed into hope and renewal through God's steadfast love. Allow this reflection to deepen your understanding of grace and extend compassion toward others.



3. Cultivating Trust Through Uncertainty:

Reflection: Holy Week is marked by uncertainty and the tension between despair and the hope of resurrection. The assurance of God's enduring love and faithfulness offers a counterpoint—a promise that no matter how dark the present may seem, God's care is unchanging.

Practice: Use this time to silently affirm, “Your steadfast love, O Lord, is upon me,” inviting that assurance to permeate your inner life. Let your daily reflections serve as a reminder that God is your hope and refuge.



4. Living in the Light of God's Righteousness:

Reflection: As you journey through the narrative of Christ's passion, allow the psalm to remind you of the transformative power of God's righteousness. His ways invite us to pursue a life of integrity and compassion, reflective of the love that shelters and sustains us.

Practice: Consider journaling how God's love has manifested in your own life. Let these reflections inspire you to live more boldly in the light of His truth and mercy.



Summary:

Psalm 36:5–11 calls us to recognize the vastness of God’s love—a love that envelops us in protection, nourishes our souls, and instills lasting hope. During Holy Week, this understanding invites you to find solace and strength in the certainty of God’s care. As you reflect on the journey to the cross and beyond, let His love become your guiding light, transforming suffering into a profound encounter with divine grace and renewal.

New Testament
Hebrews 9:11–15





Central Theme of Hebrews 9:11–15

This passage reveals that Christ's once-for-all sacrifice inaugurates a new covenant of eternal redemption. It emphasizes the superiority of Jesus' sacrifice over the repeated, temporary sacrifices of the Old Covenant. Rather than being cleansed by the blood of goats and calves, believers are made clean through the shedding of Christ's own blood as He entered the heavenly sanctuary, securing eternal redemption and granting believers direct access to God.



Key elements of the theme include:

Once-for-All Sacrifice:

Unlike the continual sacrifices required by the old system, Jesus' sacrifice is complete and permanent. His self-offering brings final and lasting atonement for sin.

Heavenly Sanctuary:

Christ did not enter an earthly tabernacle but the very presence of God in heaven. This signifies that His work transcends the physical and temporal—attaining eternal and perfect redemption.

Establishment of a New Covenant:

Through His blood, a new covenant is established. This covenant is characterized by internal cleansing and transformation, not mere ceremonial washing, fulfilling the promise of direct reconciliation between God and humanity.



How This Passage Can Shape Your Spiritual Formation During Holy Week

During Holy Week—the sacred time when you reflect deeply on the passion, death, and eventual resurrection of Christ—Hebrews 9:11–15 offers profound insights that can transform your spiritual life:

1. Deepening Gratitude and Awe for Christ's Sacrifice

Reflection: Meditate on the enormity of Christ's sacrifice. Realize that His offering was not only a historical event but a continuing source of grace, offering eternal redemption to all who believe.

Practice: Spend quiet moments in prayer contemplating how this single, perfect sacrifice covers all sin. Allow your heart to be filled with gratitude for the depth of God's love demonstrated on the cross.



2. Experiencing Renewal Through the New Covenant

Reflection: Recognize that your relationship with God is now marked by an intimate, transformative covenant. Christ's sacrifice cleanses your conscience and invites you into a renewed life characterized by hope, forgiveness, and spiritual freedom.

Practice: In your Holy Week meditations, affirm the truth that you have been redeemed and empowered by this new covenant. Write in a journal about the personal impact of accepting this eternal redemption, and reflect on how it calls you to live in accordance with God's will.



3. Embracing a Life of Faith and Direct Access to God

Reflection: Hebrews 9:11–15 assures you that through Jesus, you can approach God directly, without the need for continual mediators or constant sacrifices. This truth inspires a life of bold, unmediated faith.

Practice: Begin each day of Holy Week with prayer, acknowledging the access you have to God and asking for the strength to live out your redemption in every aspect of your life. Use this time to examine how your actions, decisions, and relationships reflect the transformative power of Christ's sacrifice.



4. Walking the Path of Redemption and Transformation

Reflection: Holy Week is not merely a remembrance of past events; it is an invitation to step into the living reality of Christ's redemption. The passage challenges you to allow His sacrifice to shape your identity and purpose.

Practice: Consider practical ways to embody this transformation—such as acts of service, forgiveness towards others, or personal repentance—and let the significance of the cross guide your thoughts and actions throughout the week.



In Summary

Hebrews 9:11–15 speaks to the extraordinary nature of Christ’s sacrifice—a single, definitive act that brings eternal redemption through a new covenant.

During Holy Week, meditating on this passage can help you:

Cultivate a deep sense of gratitude for the sacrificial love of Christ.

Embrace the renewal and transformation offered by the new covenant.

Strengthen your direct relationship with God, rooted in the confidence of eternal redemption.

Live out a faith that reflects the redemption and transformation celebrated during Holy Week.

Gospel
John 12:1–11





Central Theme of John 12:1–11:

This passage centers on a profound act of worship that prefigures the imminent sacrifice of Christ. It contrasts genuine, sacrificial devotion with motives tainted by selfishness and greed.



In the narrative:

Mary's Act of Devotion: Mary, in an extravagant gesture, anoints Jesus with expensive perfume and lovingly wipes His feet with her hair. Her action is a deliberate, heartfelt expression of gratitude, reverence, and deep personal love for Jesus. It also serves as a symbolic preparation for Jesus' burial—foreshadowing the passion that is to come.

The Contrast of Motives: While Mary's devotion is selfless, Judas Iscariot criticizes the act, not out of concern for wastefulness, but because his thoughts are aligned with greed. His critique highlights the tension between worldly values (focusing on material cost) and the spirit of sacrificial love that truly honors Christ.

A Call to Authentic Worship: Overall, the passage invites the reader to consider how worship and love for Jesus are best expressed—through generous, unreserved acts of devotion rather than calculated or self-serving behaviors.



How This Passage Can Shape Your Spiritual Formation During Holy Week:

1. Embracing Sacrificial Devotion:

Reflection: Holy Week is a time to meditate on the depth of Jesus' love and the impending sacrifice on the cross. Mary's actions exemplify an unreserved outpouring of gratitude and love, reminding you that true worship involves giving of oneself wholly, even when it comes at a personal cost.

Practice: Reflect on your own expressions of worship. Consider how you can cultivate a heart that values what Jesus has done and is willing to give back—not merely in words, but in tangible, loving action.



2. Setting Priorities in Light of the Eternal:

Reflection: The tension between Mary's lavish worship and Judas' concern over material expense invites you to reassess what matters most. It's a reminder that, in the face of eternal truths, worldly concerns fade into insignificance.

Practice: During Holy Week, create space in your daily routine for prayer and reflection on what you truly cherish. Ask God to help you discern the eternal from the temporary, focusing on the depth of your relationship with Christ rather than on material pursuits.



3. Preparing for the Passion:

Reflection: Mary's anointing is also a sign pointing toward Jesus' imminent death and burial. As you journey through Holy Week, this passage beckons you to contemplate the mystery of the cross—its pain, its redemption, and the hope that lies beyond.

Practice: Use moments of quiet reflection or journaling to meditate on how the sacrifice of Christ transforms your life. Allow the imagery of anointing and preparation to encourage you to ready your heart for the profound mysteries of the Passion and Resurrection.



4. Cultivating Authentic Worship:

Reflection: The passage challenges you to examine the authenticity of your own devotion. True worship comes from a place of sincere love, free of ulterior motives, and recognizes the priceless nature of Jesus' sacrifice.

Practice: Engage in acts of worship that go beyond ritual. Consider simple yet profound gestures of service and love toward others, recognizing that every sincere act of kindness is a way to honor Christ's example of selfless love.



Summary:

John 12:1–11 invites you to embrace a form of worship marked by radical, sacrificial love—the kind that Mary exemplifies. During Holy Week, as you recall the unfolding drama of Christ’s Passion, this passage challenges you to:

Reevaluate your values,

Express your love for Jesus genuinely,

Prepare your heart for the mystery of the cross, and

Walk in the light of authentic, transformative worship.

Tuesday of Holy Week
Old Testament Isaiah 49:1–7
Psalm Psalm 71:1–14
New Testament 1 Corinthians 1:18–31
Gospel John 12:20–36

*Revised Common Lectionary (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife,
2009).*



Old Testament
Isaiah 49:1–7





Central Theme of Isaiah 49:1–7:

This passage is one of the Servant Songs in Isaiah, in which God speaks about His chosen servant—a figure called from birth to be a light to the nations and a source of salvation.



Divine Calling and Purpose:

The servant is appointed from birth, signifying a life dedicated to God's purpose and mission. God calls the servant to bring restoration, deliverance, and light not only to Israel but to all the nations.

Restoration Through Suffering:

Although the servant is tasked with a mission of hope and redemption, this calling will involve personal suffering and struggle. His journey is marked by challenges meant to forge a deep reliance on God and ultimately lead to the transformation of the people.

Universal Salvation and Light:

The servant's role extends beyond national boundaries. Through the trials he endures, he becomes an instrument of God's saving grace for all peoples—illustrating a vision of inclusive, redemptive love.



How This Passage Can Enhance Your Spiritual Formation During Holy Week:

Holy Week, which focuses on the passion, suffering, and redemptive love of Jesus, provides a powerful context in which Isaiah 49:1–7 can speak to your heart and shape your spiritual journey:

1. Identifying with the Servant's Vocation:

Reflection: Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the Servant Songs. As you meditate on His journey to the cross, Isaiah 49:1–7 invites you to see yourself as one called to live out God's purpose.

Practice: Reflect on what it means to be called by God. Consider journaling about the areas in your life where you feel a divine invitation to serve others and to be a bearer of light in dark times.



2. Embracing Suffering as Part of the Journey:

Reflection: The servant's path includes suffering—a reality that mirrors Christ's own passion. During Holy Week, this passage encourages you to view personal trials as transformative experiences that deepen your reliance on God, fostering spiritual growth.

Practice: In moments of difficulty, pray for the strength to embrace your struggles as opportunities to draw closer to God. Meditate on how your challenges can be redirected into acts of grace and service.



3. Living Out a Mission of Restoration and Hope:

Reflection: Just as the servant is called to bring salvation and healing to a broken world, Holy Week calls you to respond with compassionate action and a commitment to restoring hope in your community.

Practice: Look for practical ways to be a light to those around you—whether through volunteering, kind words, or simple acts of service. Let the passion of Christ inspire you to bring renewal and hope to the lives of others.



4. Deepening Your Relationship with God:

Reflection: The servant's life is one of total reliance on God's strength and guidance. Holy Week is a time to renew your trust and surrender your own will to the divine plan, much like the servant who fully embraces his calling despite the cost.

Practice: Dedicate time each day during Holy Week for prayer and meditation on Isaiah 49:1–7. Invite God to reveal areas where you can grow in obedience and trust, reaffirming your commitment to follow His lead even through suffering.



Summary:

Isaiah 49:1–7 encapsulates the calling of God’s servant—a calling marked by divine purpose, a willingness to endure suffering, and a mission to bring light and salvation to all people. During Holy Week, as you meditate on the sacrifice and victory of Christ, this passage offers a model of servant leadership and radical trust. By embracing this mindset, you are encouraged to recognize your own divine vocation, to find strength in times of struggle, and to actively work to bring hope and restoration to those around you—all of which are central to deep spiritual formation in the shadow of the cross.

Psalms
Psalms 71:1–14





Central Theme of Psalm 71:1–14

This passage centers on a fervent, lifelong trust in God as both refuge and redeemer. The psalmist calls upon God for protection in times of distress and ages, affirming God's faithfulness in the past and expressing hope for continued salvation in the future. Key elements include:

Reliance on God Throughout Life:

The psalmist vows to continually trust in God, seeking refuge and strength from the One who has been a constant source of deliverance. This trust remains unshaken even as the psalmist faces the vulnerability of advancing age and challenges.



Testimony of Past Deliverance:

Reflecting on God's previous acts of salvation, the psalmist draws comfort and confidence. This recollection serves as a powerful reminder that God's faithfulness is not momentary but has been proven throughout life.

Hope in God's Sustaining Presence:

The plea for ongoing guidance and protection emphasizes a deep hope that God will not abandon the faithful, ensuring that His salvation and steadfast love remain accessible, no matter the circumstances.

A Call to Empower Others:

Beyond personal deliverance, the psalmist also expresses a desire to proclaim God's righteousness before all people—a testimony to how God's mercy has changed and sustained life.



How This Passage Can Enhance Your Spiritual Formation During Holy Week

Holy Week is a time of profound reflection on the suffering and sacrifice of Christ—a journey that invites you to contemplate themes of vulnerability, redemption, and divine faithfulness. Here's how Psalm 71:1–14 can shape your spiritual journey during this sacred season:

1. Cultivating Trust Amid Vulnerability

Reflection: Just as the psalmist turns to God in moments of personal weakness and frailty, Holy Week invites you to recognize your own vulnerabilities.

Reflect on the Cross, where Jesus, in His ultimate act of trust, surrendered Himself for the sake of humanity.



2. Remembering God's Faithfulness

Reflection: The recounting of past deliverances in the psalm encourages you to remember the many ways God has carried you through difficult times. In Holy Week, as you ponder Christ's redemptive work, allow yourself to recall personal instances of God's salvation and mercy.

3. Finding Hope in Redemption

Reflection: The psalmist's hope—anchored in God's sustaining presence—is a powerful counterpoint to the despair often associated with human weakness. Holy Week is not only a remembrance of suffering but also a celebration of the hope that comes with redemption and new life.



4. Empowering Your Witness to Others

Reflection: By affirming God's lasting salvation, the psalmist commits to proclaiming His righteousness to others. Similarly, your journey through Holy Week can serve as a catalyst for sharing the transformative power of God's love in your community.



Summary

Psalm 71:1–14 calls you to a deep, unwavering reliance on God—a reliance that is nourished by memories of past deliverance and sustained by an ever-present hope in His salvation. During Holy Week, as you meditate on the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ, allow this psalm to reinforce your trust in God amid life’s vulnerabilities, to remind you of His faithfulness in every season, and to empower you to share that hope with others. In doing so, you transform Holy Week from a commemoration of suffering into a living testimony of divine love and redemption.

New Testament
1 Corinthians 1:18–31





Central Theme of 1 Corinthians 1:18–31

This passage centers on the paradox of the cross—how what appears as weakness and foolishness to the world is, in fact, the power and wisdom of God. Key points include:

The Power of the Gospel:

Paul contrasts human wisdom with God's wisdom, emphasizing that the message of the cross is seen by many as foolishness, yet it is the means by which God saves those who believe. It is not based on human strength or intellect but on divine power.



God's Choice of the Lowly:

The passage teaches that God deliberately chooses the weak, the despised, and the foolish according to worldly standards to shame those who consider themselves wise and powerful. This reversal of values highlights that true wisdom and power are found in submission to God and His redemptive plan through Christ.

Call to Humility and Dependence:

In recognizing that salvation comes not from human merit but from God's grace and power, believers are called to a posture of humility and complete reliance on God. This underscores the idea that our accomplishments and intellectual abilities pale in comparison to the transformative work of Christ on the cross.



How This Passage Can Enhance Your Spiritual Formation During Holy Week

Holy Week is a time to reflect deeply on the mystery of Christ's sacrifice—a journey that calls for a radical reordering of priorities and values. Meditating on 1 Corinthians 1:18–31 during this sacred time can foster spiritual formation in several ways:

1. Embracing the Paradox of the Cross

Reflection: Holy Week invites you to confront the apparent contradiction of the cross: a symbol of shame turned into the supreme sign of God's power. Instead of viewing suffering and sacrifice as defeat, see them as the ultimate expression of divine wisdom.



2. Cultivating Humility

Reflection: Paul's teaching reminds us that God exalts those who, by worldly standards, might seem insignificant or foolish. In a culture that values self-reliance and intellectual prowess, Holy Week calls you to recognize that true greatness comes from humility and dependence on God.



3. Reordering Worldly Values

Reflection: Holy Week is a season to reexamine what is truly valuable. The passage challenges you to shift from valuing worldly success to cherishing the redemptive work of Christ. Consider how the wisdom of God, which upends societal expectations, can transform your priorities.



4. Deepening Dependence on God's Grace

Reflection: Recognize that the salvation offered through Christ is not something you can earn by your own effort but is a gift of grace. This realization is particularly poignant during Holy Week, as you meditate on the cost of the cross and the depth of God's love.



Summary

1 Corinthians 1:18–31 reveals that the message of the cross—though it may seem foolish to human eyes—is the embodiment of God’s wisdom and power. During Holy Week, when the journey to the cross is deeply felt, this passage can guide your spiritual formation by encouraging you to:

Embrace the mystery of the cross as a source of divine power.

Cultivate humility and a reliance on God rather than on worldly measures of success.

Reorder your values to reflect the redemptive and transformative work of Christ.

Deepen your gratitude for the grace that redeems your life.

Gospel
John 12:20–36





Central Theme of John 12:20–36

This passage focuses on the paradoxical truth that true life is born from sacrificial death. Jesus speaks about His impending death and the transformative power it holds: just as a grain of wheat must fall to the ground and die to produce a plentiful harvest, His death will bring forth abundant new life, not only for Himself but for all who believe. Key aspects include:

The Necessity of Sacrifice:

Jesus uses the metaphor of a grain of wheat that must die in order to bear fruit. This illustrates that sacrificial loss—of one's self, ego, and worldly attachments—is essential for the emergence of true life and renewal.



Transformation Through Death:

Jesus' impending death is presented not as defeat but as an act that will shine light into a darkened world. The imagery of light overcoming darkness speaks to the transformative power of His sacrifice, ushering in the glory of God.

A Call to Radical Discipleship:

The passage challenges believers to embrace a similar mindset: those who love their life in this world must learn to lose it in order to gain eternal life. It is a call to reorient one's values toward eternal truth rather than temporary, worldly gain.



How This Passage Can Enhance Your Spiritual Formation During Holy Week

During Holy Week—the time when you journey with Christ toward the cross—John 12:20–36 provides a profound framework for deepening your spiritual life:

1. Embracing the Reality of Sacrifice:

Reflection: As you meditate on Christ's words about the grain of wheat, allow yourself to confront the reality that transformation often requires letting go. Recognize that Christ's sacrificial death is the ultimate expression of God's love and the pathway to new life.



2. Seeing Death as a Path to Renewal:

Reflection: Holy Week brings you face-to-face with the mystery of death and resurrection. Jesus' declaration that his death will produce abundant life invites you to reframe your understanding of loss—not as an end, but as a fertile ground for spiritual rebirth.



3. Living Out Radical Discipleship:

Reflection: Jesus challenges His followers to “hate” (or more accurately, to reframe their attachment to) their earthly life in order to gain eternal life.

During Holy Week, this serves as a call to evaluate your priorities, placing God’s eternal kingdom over transient concerns.



4. Walking in the Light of Christ:

Reflection: Christ's sacrificial act is meant to dispel the darkness of sin and despair. As you reflect on His words about light breaking forth from death, let this truth illuminate your personal struggles and doubts during Holy Week.



Summary

John 12:20–36 centers on the transformative power of sacrificial death—a theme that calls you to see the cross as the origin of new life. During Holy Week, this passage invites you to:

Embrace the necessity of sacrifice as a pathway to spiritual renewal.

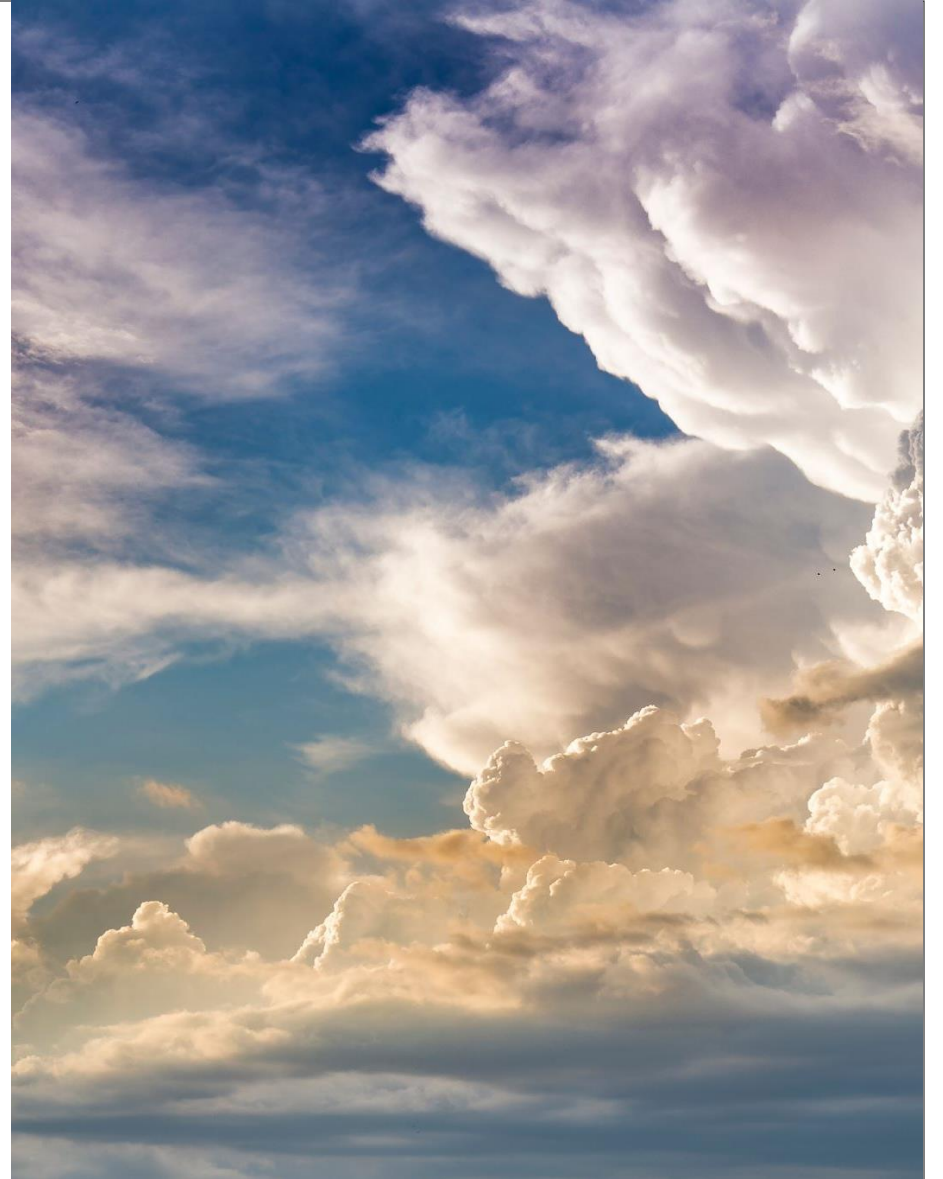
Recognize that what seems like loss can lead to a deeper, more vibrant life in Christ.

Reorder your priorities, choosing the eternal over the temporary.

Live in the light that Jesus' sacrifice offers, allowing His example to reshape your heart and actions.

Wednesday of Holy Week
Old Testament Isaiah 50:4–9a
Psalm Psalm 70
New Testament Hebrews 12:1–3
Gospel John 13:21–32

*Revised Common Lectionary (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife,
2009).*



Old Testament
Isaiah 50:4–9a





Isaiah 50:4–9a is a profound passage in which the speaker—often understood as the obedient servant—depicts a life fully immersed in God’s word, marked by both divine empowerment and the inevitable costs of faithful service. The central theme of the passage revolves around obedient trust in God amid suffering and rejection.



Central Themes in Isaiah 50:4–9a

1. Divine Equipping Through God's Word

The passage opens by highlighting how the servant is endowed with the ability to learn from God—“My tongue is the pen of a skilled scribe” (Isaiah 50:4). This imagery underscores the idea that true wisdom, strength, and purpose come directly from divine instruction rather than human wisdom. It portrays a posture of listening deeply, learning, and internalizing God's truth.



2. Obedience and Enduring Suffering

The text moves into the realm of suffering and opposition. The servant is willing to face hardship, rejection, and even physical torment because of a deep commitment to God's calling. Despite being exposed to adversaries, the servant remains steadfast and declares that God's help is his vindicator. This unwavering trust—even when he is “spit upon” (verse 6) or faces injustice—illustrates the ideal of obedient submission to God's will in the midst of adversity.



3. Identification with Divine Purpose

The servant's willingness to endure suffering is not merely for personal atonement but points to a larger, redemptive mission. By accepting hardship as an inherent part of God's design, the passage prefigures a transformative and redemptive model of suffering. In Christian interpretation, this idea has been traditionally seen as a foreshadowing of Christ's passion.



Application to Spiritual Formation During Holy Week

1. Walking the Path of Humility and Obedience

Holy Week invites believers to enter into the narrative of Christ's suffering and sacrifice. Just as the servant in Isaiah accepts his share of suffering for a greater purpose, Holy Week challenges us to embrace humility and surrender to God's will. This means acknowledging that trials and sufferings are not meaningless but can be integral to spiritual growth and alignment with God's redemptive plan.



3. Embracing God's Vindication and Mercy

The servant's confident assertion that God is both his strength and his vindicator encourages believers to rely not on their own might but on God's sustaining presence. In the context of Holy Week, this is a reminder that even in moments of apparent abandonment or distress (as experienced on the cross), God's love and purpose prevail. This can bolster one's spiritual formation by shifting the focus from personal weakness to God's redemptive power at work in every circumstance.



Integrative Reflection

As you journey through Holy Week, meditating on Isaiah 50:4–9a can be particularly enriching. Consider the following reflective practices:

Scriptural Meditation: Spend time reading and meditating on the text. Focus on how the servant's example of learning from God and enduring suffering can inform your own walk with Christ.

Prayer of Surrender: Emulate the servant's resolve by praying for the grace to trust in God completely—even when the path is steep and fraught with difficulties.



Conclusion

In essence, Isaiah 50:4–9a teaches that true strength is derived from obedient reliance on God, even amid suffering and opposition. This theme is incredibly pertinent during Holy Week, a time when Christians remember Christ's own path of sacrifice and redemption. By embracing this model, your spiritual formation can be enriched through a deeper understanding of how God's word shapes, sustains, and ultimately redeems us through every trial.

Psalms
Psalm 70





Psalm 70 is a brief yet impassioned plea for divine intervention. Its central theme is an urgent cry for deliverance—a heartfelt appeal to God in moments of distress, persecution, or overwhelming adversity. In this psalm, the psalmist asks God to hasten to rescue and vindicate, trusting that God’s intervention will bring salvation and turn the tables on those who oppose or harm the faithful.



Key Aspects

1. Urgency in Seeking God's Help

The psalm is marked by a sense of immediacy. The psalmist does not delay in calling on God to “hasten” and provide rescue. This reflects a deep trust in God’s willingness to act when one is in dire need, encouraging believers to approach God with sincerity and immediacy when confronted by life’s trials.

2. Reliance on Divine Deliverance

Throughout the psalm, there is a firm reliance on God for salvation. The psalmist expresses confidence that God will ultimately deliver and protect, despite the presence of adversaries. This trust in God’s intervention serves as a model of faith—one that does not depend on human strength or circumstances, but on the promise of divine rescue.



3. Vindication and Reversal of Misfortune

The plea is not only for personal rescue but also for the humbling and shaming of those who seek to cause harm. This element underscores a belief in the justice of God: that He will set things right, vindicating the faithful by turning the ill fortunes against the oppressors.



Here's how meditating on this psalm can enrich your spiritual formation during this sacred time:

1. Embracing Vulnerability and Honesty in Prayer

Holy Week invites you to enter fully into the mystery of suffering and abandonment, as experienced by Christ. Psalm 70 encourages an honest confrontation with pain and despair—a willingness to cry out without reservations. Reflect on how Christ's own cry for help in the midst of anguish parallels the psalmist's urgent plea, inspiring you to bring your deepest needs to God with sincerity.



2. Strengthening Trust in God's Providence

The psalm reinforces the theme of relying completely on God. During Holy Week, as you meditate on the Passion, you are called to trust that even in moments of profound darkness and despair there is a divine plan at work. This trust can help you see your struggles as part of a redemptive journey leading toward the hope of resurrection and renewal.



3. Identifying with the Suffering Servant

While Psalm 70 is a personal cry for help, it also mirrors the broader biblical narrative of the suffering servant—a figure who endures hardship for a greater purpose. In Holy Week, you can see in the cry of the psalmist a reflection of Christ's own experience on the cross. This identification can deepen your understanding of suffering as an element of spiritual formation, where personal trials contribute to your overall growth in faith and resilience.



4. Living Out the Promise of Divine Justice and Restoration

Finally, the psalm points to a future where God rightfully restores and vindicates the faithful. During Holy Week, this promise is echoed in the resurrection—the ultimate act of God’s justice and mercy. Let Psalm 70 remind you that, despite the immediacy and intensity of present suffering, God’s power to deliver remains steadfast, and this hope fuels your perseverance and devotion.



Conclusion

The central theme of Psalm 70—an urgent plea for God’s deliverance—offers a powerful framework for reflection during Holy Week. By embracing its call for honest, vulnerable prayer and unwavering trust in God’s saving intervention, you can deepen your spiritual formation. Meditating on this psalm encourages you to see your own challenges as moments when God’s grace is most needed and, ultimately, most transformative, echoing the journey from suffering to redemption that is at the heart of Holy Week.

New Testament
Hebrews 12:1–3





Hebrews 12:1–3 serves as an exhortation for believers to persevere on the spiritual journey by looking to Jesus as the ultimate example of endurance and faith. This passage encourages us to cast off every hindrance and sin and to run life's race with steadfast determination, much like Jesus did on the path to the cross. Here's a closer look at its central theme and how it can enrich your spiritual formation during Holy Week:



1. The Call to Endurance and Perseverance

The passage opens by urging believers to “run with endurance the race that is set before us.” The imagery of a race conveys the idea that the Christian journey is one of continuous effort and determination. It reminds us that spiritual growth does not come without challenges, but it is marked by perseverance even in difficult and painful moments.



2. Casting Off Hindrances

The author advises believers to “lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely.” This instruction highlights the importance of identifying and removing whatever burdens or distractions—whether habitual sins, unnecessary anxieties, or worldly concerns—that can impede our progress in faith. It calls for an intentional focus on what truly matters.

3. Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus

A key element of the passage is the exhortation to look to Jesus, described as “the author and finisher of our faith.” This reminder is especially potent because it does not just point us toward a distant historical figure; rather, it invites us to adopt Jesus’s example of faithful endurance in the face of suffering. His willingness to endure the cross and reject shame offers a model for us to emulate.



Application During Holy Week

Holy Week, which commemorates the events leading to and including the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, presents a powerful context in which the message of Hebrews 12:1–3 becomes profoundly relevant:

1. Letting Go of What Weighs Us Down

The call to cast off every hindrance encourages a process of introspection during Holy Week. This is an ideal time to examine your life and identify what “weights” you down—whether they are sins, unhealthy attachments, or negative thoughts. Embracing this discipline can lead to a lighter, more focused heart as you walk with Christ toward renewal.



2. Maintaining a Fixed Gaze

By looking to Jesus as the perfect example of faith, you are reminded that no matter how steep the journey seems, you are supported by the One who has already traversed the path of suffering and emerged victorious. This focus can instill in you the strength to meet your own trials with hope and resilience, echoing the assurance that resurrection follows even the darkest moments.

3. Transforming Trials into Spiritual Growth

Just as Jesus transformed the agony of the cross into a means of redemption and hope for the world, you too can transform your personal hardships into steps toward spiritual maturity. Holy Week becomes not only a remembrance of past events but also an invitation to see the redemptive quality of suffering—integrating this understanding into your daily walk with God.



Conclusion

The central theme of Hebrews 12:1–3—the call to run the race of faith with endurance by shedding distractions and fixing our eyes on Jesus—provides a robust framework for spiritual formation. During Holy Week, this passage not only commemorates the profound sacrifice of Christ but also challenges you to view your personal struggles as opportunities for growth. By following Christ’s example of enduring suffering with hope and determination, you can find renewed strength, focus, and a deeper commitment to your faith journey.

Gospel
John 13:21–32





John 13:21–32 is a poignant moment during the Last Supper in which Jesus reveals His awareness of the impending betrayal by one of His closest followers. This passage not only sets the stage for the events of the Passion but also offers rich insights into the nature of human relationships, the inevitability of suffering, and the depth of divine love. Its central theme can be seen as the revelation of betrayal within intimate relationships and the mysterious, yet sovereign, unfolding of God’s redemptive plan even amid human frailty.



Key Aspects of the Central Theme

1. Foreknowledge and Acceptance of Betrayal

In this passage, Jesus calmly reveals that betrayal is imminent. His awareness and acceptance of what is to come show a profound trust in God's overarching plan, even when personal relationships and loyalties are deeply tested. This foreknowledge is not used for condemnation but as part of the redemptive narrative that must unfold.



2. The Complexity of Human Relationships

Jesus' disclosure highlights that even among those closest to Him, human weakness and conflicting loyalties can lead to betrayal. It is a stark reminder that our relationships can be fraught with imperfections. This complexity calls us to examine our own hearts, recognize our potential for both loyalty and failure, and strive to cultivate integrity and genuine love.

3. Divine Sovereignty Amid Human Frailty

Despite the impending betrayal, Jesus remains composed and purposeful. His demeanor in the face of betrayal underscores the message that God's plan is not thwarted by human sinfulness. Instead, even moments of profound betrayal contribute to the mystery of redemption, pointing forward to the hope found in resurrection and renewal.



Application to Spiritual Formation During Holy Week

1. Confronting the Reality of Betrayal and Suffering

Holy Week is a time to reflect on the intensity of suffering and the reality of betrayal—not only in the historical context of Jesus’ passion but also in our personal lives. Meditating on this passage encourages us to acknowledge that betrayal, disappointments, and deep pain are parts of the human experience. In doing so, we can learn to approach these experiences with greater honesty, self-compassion, and the resolve to seek healing.



2. Deepening Trust in God's Providence

Jesus' calm acceptance of betrayal invites us to trust in God even when circumstances are painful or confusing. This trust is a call to surrender our desire for control and to lean into the mystery of God's redemptive work. During Holy Week, as we contemplate the path to the cross, we are reminded that God's purpose transcends even the darkest moments of our lives.

3. Encouraging Self-Examination and Authenticity

Reflecting on the dynamics of betrayal among friends and disciples prompts us to engage in self-examination. Holy Week provides an opportunity to look inward at our own lives—our patterns of trust, forgiveness, and the ways we might inadvertently betray our own deepest values or commitments. This introspection can cultivate a more authentic and compassionate relationship with both ourselves and others.



4. Modeling Forgiveness and Compassion

While the text starkly portrays betrayal, it also, by contrast, sets the stage for the ultimate act of love in Jesus' sacrificial death. In our lives, we are encouraged to strive for forgiveness and to extend grace even when we have been hurt. This practice of forgiveness is at the heart of the resurrection hope: that through love and sacrifice, healing and redemption are made possible.



Integrative Reflection for Holy Week

Meditative Prayer:

Dedicate time to prayer and silent reflection, asking God to reveal areas in your life where trust has been compromised or where you may harbor unhealed wounds from betrayal. Use this time to seek the grace to forgive and to realign your heart with God's redemptive purpose.

Scriptural Contemplation:

Read and reflect on John 13:21–32 alongside Passion narratives. Consider how Jesus' foreknowledge and response to betrayal guide you in navigating moments of personal or relational pain.



Conclusion

The central theme of John 13:21–32—the revelation of betrayal amid close relationships and the assurance of divine sovereignty—challenges us to face the complexities of human nature with honesty and grace. During Holy Week, this passage can guide your spiritual formation by inviting you to trust in God’s purpose despite suffering, to engage in deep self-examination, and to practice forgiveness as a reflection of Christ’s love. In doing so, you align your journey with the redemptive narrative of the Passion, finding strength and hope even in the midst of life’s most challenging moments.

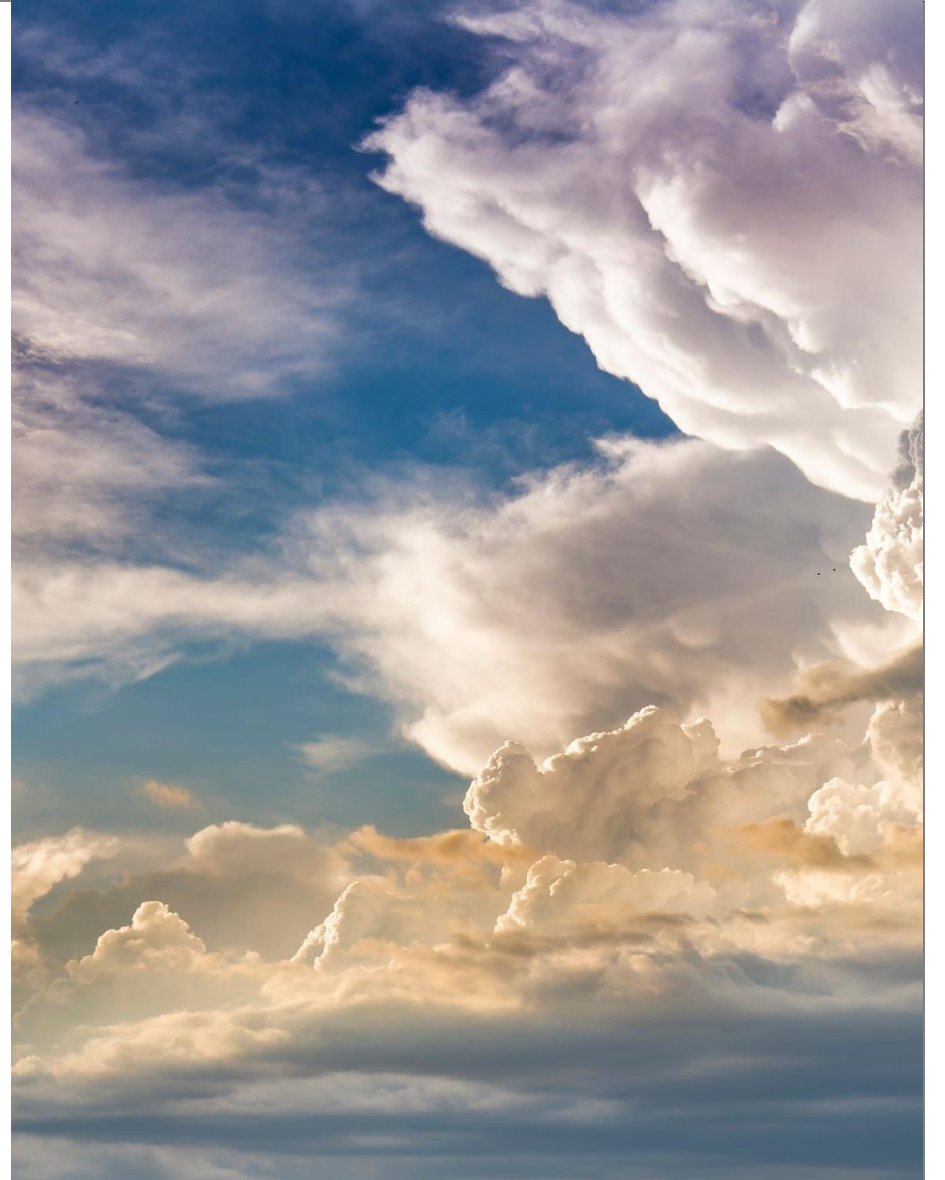
Old Testament Exodus 12:1–4 (5–10) 11–14

Psalm Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19

New Testament 1 Corinthians 11:23–26

Gospel John 13:1–17, 31b–35

*Revised Common Lectionary (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife,
2009).*



Old Testament
Exodus 12:1–4 (5–10)
11–14





Central Theme of Exodus 12:1–4 (5–10) 11–14

At the heart of these instructions for Israel's first Passover is deliverance through the blood of the lamb, marking the inauguration of a covenant people set apart for God. In these verses we see three interlocking motifs:

1. Covenant Initiation through Sacrificial Blood

Each household selects “a lamb without blemish” (12:5) and applies its blood to the doorposts so that “when I see the blood, I will pass over you” (12:13).

The lamb's life-blood becomes the sign by which Israel is spared from judgment and bound into a living covenant with Yahweh.



2. Holiness and Readiness

Israel is commanded to eat the lamb “in haste” with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (12:11), to remove all yeast from their homes (12:15–20).

Unleavened bread symbolizes purity and total dependence on God’s provision, while the swift meal instructs them to live in constant readiness for God’s saving action.

3. Memorial and Identity Formation

God establishes a perpetual festival so that “when your children ask...you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover’” (12:26–27).

This remembrance shapes Israel’s communal identity—past deliverance becomes present reality and future hope.



Application to Spiritual Formation During Holy Week

Exodus 12 anticipates Christ as our true Passover Lamb (1 Cor 5:7).

Meditating on these elements can enrich your Holy Week journey:

1. Appreciating Christ's Atoning Sacrifice

Just as Israel was spared by the lamb's blood, Jesus seals a new covenant "through his blood" (Matt 26:28). Reflect on how His sinless life became our means of protection and adoption into God's family.



2. Cultivating Holiness and Watchfulness

The call to remove yeast invites you to “let go of the old yeast” (1 Cor 5:7–8) of pride, bitterness, and distraction. As Holy Week unfolds, practice spiritual disciplines—fasting, confession, and silence—to keep your heart pure and attentive.

3. Living in Expectant Readiness

Eating in haste models a life alert for God’s movement. In your daily routines, cultivate a posture of expectancy: look for grace-filled moments, be prepared to serve, and trust God’s timing as you await the celebration of Resurrection.



4. Remembering and Proclaiming

Just as Israel narrated the Passover to their children, use Holy Week liturgies, personal devotions, or small-group reflections to retell the story of Christ's passion. Let testimony become part of your spiritual DNA, anchoring you in gratitude and hope.

By entering into the rhythms of Exodus 12, your heart is shaped to honor Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, to walk in holiness, and to live ever-ready for the life He brings—culminating in the joy of Easter morning.

Psalms
Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19





Central Theme of Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19

At its heart, this psalm is a personal song of thanksgiving in response to God's attentive deliverance. It moves from the psalmist's experience of being heard in distress (vv. 1–2) to an outpouring of gratitude expressed through vows, sacrificial praise, and communal worship (vv. 12–19).

1. Divine Attentiveness and Deliverance

“I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice...” (v 1). The psalmist's love arises out of God's gracious listening and rescuing in times of peril.



2. A Heart of Gratitude

“What shall I return to the LORD for all his benefits to me?” (v 12). Gratitude isn’t passive but prompts concrete response.

3. Vows and Sacrificial Praise

“I will lift up the cup of salvation...offer to you a sacrifice of thanksgiving...pay my vows...in the presence of all his people” (vv 13–14, 17–18). The psalmist repays God’s saving mercy with promises kept publicly and with tokens of worship.

4. Communal Proclamation

The vows and the cup of salvation are offered “in the courts of the house of the LORD...in your midst, O Jerusalem” (vv 18–19). Thanksgiving spills over into shared liturgy.



How This Psalm Can Shape Your Holy Week Formation

1. Cultivate a Posture of Gratitude

Morning Reflection: Begin each Holy Week day by recalling one way Christ has “heard” your plea—perhaps in healing, forgiveness, or provision. Allow that memory to stir love and praise.

2. Enter Into the Cup of Salvation

Maundy Thursday Connection: When you lift the cup in the Lord’s Supper, hear it as both Christ’s invitation and your echo of the psalmist’s vow to “lift up the cup of salvation” (v 13).



3. Renew Your Vows

Personal Commitment: Like the psalmist, make one or two specific vows—e.g. to forgive a grievance, to serve in a ministry, to deepen prayer life—and write them down. Use Good Friday to pray over their sincerity.

4. Offer Sacrificial Thanksgiving

Acts of Worship: During Holy Week, choose a tangible act of thanksgiving—fasting from a routine pleasure and offering the time in prayer, giving to a charity, or composing a psalmic song or poem of praise.



5. Join the Communal Song

Shared Liturgy: Attend services with the intention of lifting your vows and your thanks alongside the gathered body. Let the communal voice magnify your personal gratitude: “Praise the LORD!” (v 19).

By tracing the arc of being heard, giving thanks, and making public vows, Psalm 116 guides you through Holy Week from prayerful remembrance to renewed devotion, culminating in the joy of resurrection praise.

New Testament
1 Corinthians 11:23–26





Central Theme of 1 Corinthians 11:23–26

At its heart, this text is about the Lord's Supper as a means of remembering Christ's sacrificial death, proclaiming His Gospel, and anticipating His return. Paul reminds the Corinthians that in eating the bread and drinking the cup they:

1. Remember Christ's Body and Blood

“This is my body... this cup is the new covenant in my blood” (vv. 24–25).

The elements visibly embody Jesus' self-giving on the cross.



2. Proclaim the Lord's Death Until He Comes

“Do this in remembrance of me... for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes” (vv. 24, 26). Every celebration of the Eucharist is both a memorial and a public declaration of the Gospel.

3. Live in Eucharistic Anticipation

By linking remembrance with “until he comes,” Paul situates the meal within an eschatological horizon: we look back to the cross even as we look forward to the consummation of God's kingdom.



Holy Week Formation

1. Deepening Remembrance

Self-Examination: Before receiving communion, follow Paul's injunction to "examine yourself" (1 Cor 11:28). Confess and lay aside any sin that would mar your participation, so that your remembrance of Christ's body and blood is both sincere and transformative.

2. Proclaiming the Gospel Anew

Active Proclamation: As you partake of the bread and cup during Maundy Thursday or another Holy Week observance, make each action a conscious proclamation: in your heart speak the words, "This is the body of Christ... the blood of Christ shed for you." Let the meal rekindle in you the urgency and hope of the Gospel.



3. Cultivating Community Unity

Communal Focus: The Lord's Supper is not an individual devotion but a corporate meal. Use Holy Week gatherings to notice and pray for one another, reinforcing Paul's concern that we share "one bread" and "one cup" as a sign of our unity in Christ.

4. Anticipating Christ's Return

Eschatological Hope: Every time you lift the cup, let it remind you that history moves toward the return of Jesus. Allow this hope to shape your prayers and your perspective on present sufferings—seeing them as part of the "already and not yet" of God's kingdom.



Practical Steps for Holy Week

Maundy Thursday Reflection:

Before the foot-washing and communion liturgy, meditate on Paul's words.

Invite the Spirit to help you feel both the weight of Christ's sacrifice and the joy of His promised return.

By centering on remembrance, proclamation, and anticipation, 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 can transform your experience of Holy Week's liturgies. It calls you to examine your heart, to proclaim afresh the good news of Christ's body broken and blood shed, and to live with eager expectation of His coming glory.

Gospel
John 13:1–17, 31b–35





Central Theme of John 13:1–17, 31b–35

At its heart, this passage reveals that true discipleship is defined by humble, self-giving love expressed in concrete service. In the Upper Room, Jesus models servant leadership by washing His disciples' feet and then commands them—and us—to love one another as He has loved us.

1. Humble Service

Jesus, “knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands,” still takes a towel and basin to wash the feet of those who will soon abandon Him (13:3–5). His act overturns all human expectations of status and power, showing that greatness in God's kingdom is measured by willingness to serve the lowliest needs of others.



2. Commandment of Mutual Love

After the foot-washing, Jesus makes the connection explicit: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another . . . By this everyone will know that you are my disciples” (13:34–35). This “new” command is rooted in the same self-sacrificial love He demonstrates—the very love that propels Him to the cross.



How This Passage Can Shape Your Spiritual Formation During Holy Week

1. Embracing a Servant's Heart

Reflective Practice: In the days leading to Good Friday, meditate on each element of the foot-washing—towel, basin, water—and consider what “washing” might look like in your own relationships. Whom are you called to serve without regard for recognition or return?

Action Step: Choose one concrete act of lowly service this week (visiting a neighbor, helping with chores, offering a listening ear) and perform it anonymously, seeking neither credit nor praise.



2. Rooting Identity in Love

Self-Examination: Ask yourself, “Where have I sought status or power instead of love?” Confess any pride or competitiveness that contradicts Jesus’ model.

Vow of Love: Write down Jesus’ command—“Love one another as I have loved you”—and place it somewhere you’ll see it daily. Pray each morning that your words and actions will visibly reflect that love.

3. Cultivating Community Witness

Shared Ritual: If you’re part of a congregation or small group, consider holding a brief foot-washing ceremony (even symbolically, with hand-washing) on Maundy Thursday. Use it to remind one another that Christian life is bound up in mutual service.



4. Linking Service to the Cross

Contemplative Reading: As you read the Passion narrative, pause at moments when Jesus' humility and love are on display—His praying in Gethsemane, His silence before Pilate, His words from the cross. Notice how the same servant-love in John 13 undergirds His entire journey.

Personal Application: Let every act of service this Holy Week be an echo of the cross. When you grow tired or reluctant, recall that Jesus “loved them to the end” (13:1)—and ask for the strength to love likewise.



Prayer Focus: “Lord Jesus, strip away my pride. Pour out on me the servant heart You showed at the Last Supper, that my love may bear witness to Your presence in me.”

By grounding your Holy Week in John 13:1–17, 31b–35, you align your heart with the servant-king who demonstrated that the way of the cross is the way of humble love—and you nurture a faith marked not by privilege or power but by self-giving service to all.