



Lent begins in the ache, the questions, the tension between love and loss. It does not rush toward resolution, but invites us to slow down, to turn with honesty, and to journey with Jesus through wildness, confrontation, and cross. Along the way, we listen to voices from the margins, learn from stories of resistance and renewal, and remember that God meets us not in strength, but in surrender.

This is the work of imagination: to envision a world remade by mercy, to trust that healing is possible even in the shadow of empire, and to practice love that outlasts despair. Lent calls us into this holy labor—not as a solitary act, but as a communal path toward transformation.

THE WORK OF IMAGINATION DEVOTIONAL

Spend time each week reading the scripture and reflection. Ponder the provided questions or discuss them with someone in your home or your community.

We hope this resource gently guides you through Lent, Holy Week, and Easter—creating space for reflection, connection, and meaning along the way.

FEEDBACK

Your thoughts matter to us. If you found this resource helpful or meaningful, we'd love to hear from you! Any suggestions or ideas for improvement are always welcome. You can reach us at info@illustratedministry.com or connect with us on the following social networks:

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–Illustrated Ministry



I exited the building at the end of the rainy work day, headed towards my car in the parking lot, and I saw that the back passenger window was shattered. It looked like someone had taken a baseball bat to it. Shattered, but still in place—the glass hadn't all fallen in, it was just cracked in every direction. I was sure it would be a really expensive fix. I was annoyed, frustrated, and disappointed...but I wasn't really surprised.

The building where I work is close to downtown, so we see some vandalism and petty crime in our parking lot. I didn't take it personally. I figured my car was just on the receiving end of someone's aimless outburst. There's plenty to be angry about these days, right? I was starting to get pretty angry myself, but I wasn't really surprised...until I got closer.

I got closer, and I saw what had looked like shatters—like a bunch of splintered lines in the glass—were actually wrinkles. The lines were tiny folds in a pale silver plastic bag that had been carefully laid over my back passenger window. I walked around to the back driver's side and saw the same thing—another pale silver bag, nearly clear—a small trash bag, misshapen and battered by the rain and stuck to my window. An inch or so reached over the window, carefully connecting it to the top of the car door. And on that bag, someone had written in red marker, “window is open.” The letters bled as raindrops pushed them down the plastic.

I couldn't believe it. I had the story all wrong. The first thing I saw was violence. The first place my mind went was to an impersonal adversary, a tremendous inconvenience, and a debilitating cost. And I was completely wrong about all of that.

Driving in to work that sunny morning, I'd cracked both of my back windows open just a couple of inches. I'd wanted to let in some fresh air, to wake up with the cool breeze. After I dropped my boys off at school, I came to work, pulled into the parking lot, got out of the car, locked the doors, and forgot all about those small openings over the back seats. Later that morning, when the rain began to fall, someone—I don't know who—saw my open windows and covered them.

I asked the folks I worked with the next day: one of my co-workers is super-responsible and detail-oriented; it's something he would do. But he didn't. Another is really thoughtful and always prepared; I wouldn't have been surprised if it were him. But it wasn't. I kept asking, kept getting “no, not me” from everyone I questioned.

What I'd thought was a random violation turned out to be a mysterious kindness. Instead of anonymous anger, this was an act of indiscriminate caretaking. I don't know if the person who took the time to cover my windows knew the car was mine, or if they just went out of their way to extend goodwill to some absent-minded anybody. But they did more for me than just protect my back seats from getting soaked. They upended my assumptions. They challenged my cynicism. They disrupted the narrative in my head, the one telling me random violence is just the way of the world. Instead, they invited me to imagine my neighborhood is home to folks practicing ordinary faithfulness—not for approval or applause, but out of the recognition that we all belong to each other, and small acts of solidarity are how we take care of one another.

As we enter the season of Lent, I wonder how those early listeners to Jesus' teaching would have responded to his words about secret faithfulness. I wonder if it might have felt like freedom, to hear God isn't only listening to the loudest voices, isn't only watching the most public displays of righteousness, isn't impressed by posturing and proclamations. I wonder if it might have felt like release, to be given permission to let go of performative piety and search their own hearts for what would be an authentic expression of their faith, their doubt, their questions, their hopes. I wonder if it might have felt meaningful to know that what they say and do, even if not met with showers of applause, is heard and seen by God, who smiles on their honest intentions.

I don't think I'll ever know who covered my windows that day. I like not knowing, actually. It lets me imagine it might be anyone I meet. It inspires me to consider the secret ways I might work to practice faithfulness to God, to extend care to my neighbors, to learn from and protect this world we all share.

Reflection Questions

1. What are some ways you pray? What is meaningful to you about those different ways?
2. If you had been in the crowd listening to Jesus, what question would you have asked him?
3. When was a time you've been on the receiving end of someone's quiet kindness?
4. How do you wrestle with the tension between proclaiming good news and practicing secret faithfulness?
5. What are some religious expectations you'd like to loosen or let go of this Lenten season?