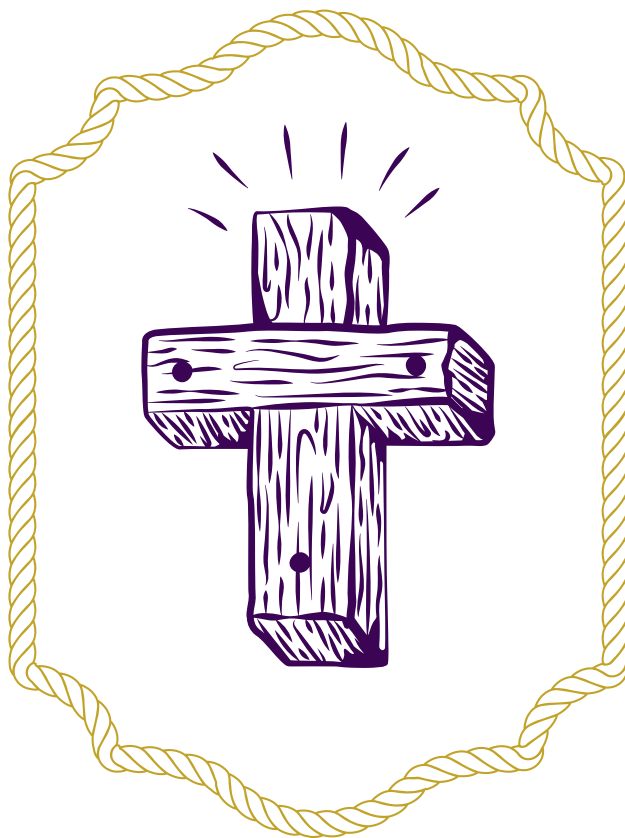


# LENTEN *Devotionals*

February 18th-April 5th



Midweek Disciple Name:

Lenten Mentor Name:

February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026

# I AM The Good Shepherd

## Ash Wednesday



John 10:11-18

A beloved image of Jesus is much more than we ever imagined. Jesus with a lamb on his shoulders comforts us, makes us feel secure and safe. Jesus keeps the threats out. We follow Jesus because we know his voice and he calls us by name. But when we keep reading, we find out that Jesus as shepherd is not just a promise for us, but a promise for others. "I have other sheep that are not of this fold." We'd like to hold on to Jesus as our shepherd, my shepherd, and ours alone. That is our reward, so to speak, for believing in Jesus. And yet Jesus as the good shepherd shapes our reality by asking us, just as he did with Peter (John 21:15-19), to be the shepherd now. The promise of other sheep to be invited into the fold, the promise of God loving the world, will come to fruition when we recognize Jesus as shepherd also names our identity. So we look for those sheep who have been outcast, rejected (John 9:34), to invite them into the community of Christ, to give them belonging when they have never had it or have been denied it.

### Questions:

What are the characteristics of a good leader?

Jesus contrasts the hired hand from the good shepherd. Summarize these differences here.

Jesus mentions the Father in three verses (15, 17, 18). How do the words Know, love, and authority connect to us (the sheep), in relationship between Father and Son according to these verses?

What is the response of those who hear these words?

What does it mean to have Jesus, the Good Shepherd as your leader? What might be challenging to you having God as the leader of your life?

February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2026

# I AM The Bread of Life

## Week 1



John 6:35-40

When Jesus says, "I AM the bread of life," it is easy to limit this promise to our practices surrounding the Lord's Supper. Certainly, this communal act is central to our Christian identity. But Jesus reminds us that the offer of himself is not just for us on a Sunday morning, but also so that we might provide life for others. Jesus as the bread of life is for the sake of eternal life for all, life that is both the assurance of life after death, but also life while living, here and now. When we believe that Jesus is the bread of life, we actively look for the people who need to be fed, whom the world drives away, whom the world allows to go hungry, for whom abundant life (John 10:10) is almost impossible to comprehend. Jesus as the bread of life shapes the reality we can help create for the world God loves so much.

### Questions:

Other than food, what does bread in general mean or symbolize to you?

Do you have phrases you use with references to food (or idioms)? For example; 'let's get this bread.' Or "that's not my cup of tea." List them here:

What does 'Bread of Life' say about the character of Jesus?

What must the audience do to receive this bread of life?

What do you think Jesus means when he says that he is the Bread of Life?

What does receiving the Bread of Life mean for your faith journey?

How do you understand Jesus to talk about Himself as the Bread of Life when receiving Holy Communion?

March 4th, 2026

# I AM The Light of the World

## Week 2



John 8:12-20

Readers of John's Gospel know Jesus is the light of the world since way back in the opening chapter, but it is only here, in John 8, that Jesus states it so clearly. Yet, he does not say it to the disciples first. That revelation happens later in the story of the healing of the man born blind. No, "I AM the light of the world" is first for those who question it and condemn it. It is first for those who refuse it and reject it. It is first for those who, even if they don't know it, need to hear it the most. It's easy to testify to the true light that shines in the darkness to willing listeners. It's far more difficult to give witness to Jesus as the light of the world when you are certain your witness will be rebuked and, in the end, rejected. We are to be the light of the world in the world — this is our reality now. Light that exposes people and systems and institutions that have used darkness to hide what they don't want to be seen. It is light that shines in the lives of those who have known only darkness.

### Questions:

What comes to mind when you hear the word 'light'?

How do you respond to being in dark places?

Who is Jesus talking to in this passage? How did they respond to him claiming to be light? Claiming to be Son?

John's mission in writing his Gospel, according to John 20:30-31, is that 'you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name.' Discuss why light may have been included to support this mission.

March 11th, 2026

# I AM The Gate

## Week 3



John 10:1-10

Doors keep in and keep out. They make us feel safe, either by making sure no one gets in or by justifying our staying in. They are the border that insures separation from those who we suspect might harm us. This passage affirms that Jesus as the door is most certainly our security. But a careful reading suggests also that this is a rather permeable gate. The sheep are led out to pasture and they are brought back into the fold, safely into the arms of their shepherd. "I AM the door" is cause for us to imagine what kinds of access we choose to be — to keep out or to invite in. To provide protection for those in peril or shut out those who need shelter. Moreover, "I AM the door" shapes our reality, asking us to recognize and realize where and how and why we walk out of the fold (or not), leaving comfort and safeguard behind to be God's love in the world.

### Questions:

How are doors and Gates a comfort? In what situations may they not be a comfort? What other emotions does a door bring to mind?

When expecting visitors and greeting them at the door, what do you do? Does that change based on your familiarity with the visitors?

Consider the qualities of doors and Gates and the emotions discussion in the first question of this session. Which of these do you associate with Jesus Christ?

Do you tend to be more of a gatekeeper, gate, or sheep? Does it change at times according to situations? Describe how you act that way and which characteristics you may prefer to take on.

March 18th, 2026

# I AM The Vine

## Week 4



John 15:1-9

The imagery of the vine and the relationship of the branches, appendages to the main source of nourishment, has long been used to describe the church. The image of the sturdy vine that continues to thrive beyond all challenges that come against it can be a helpful one for the church. The branches, the people individually, congregations, or even denominations, cannot continue to grow and to thrive within the Body of Christ unless they hold closely to the teachings of Christ. If that were the case, what the church would look like in its corporate life is a representation of all people with all their differences and a true image of diversity. The guiding principle by which all would be transformed into the image of Christ is boundless love of God and neighbor. In addition, because of that love, each person would seek to bring others into the beloved community to become fully a part of the Body of Christ.

Bearing fruit means engaging for ourselves as individuals and as the church in those activities and tasks that recognize and invest in the goodness of God's love by spreading that love to the neighbor whom we are called to love. The specifics of bearing fruit are left to the community as a whole and to each individual who receives the nurture that both Christ and the community provide. Each and all must come to the realization that we are not self-made. Yes we are individuals, but as Christians the individualism so admired by the world must take a back seat to the reality that all that we are and have are as a result of the abiding grace of God.

All are evidence of God's love and that love must be spread abroad, thereby bearing fruit. It is not about judgment; it is about growth. Because as the dead branches are removed, those that remain adhered to the vine become stronger and contribute to the health of the vine. That is a message that in this time carries much urgency for the contemporary church in all its divisions for the sake of the diversity that is the true Body of Christ.

### Questions:

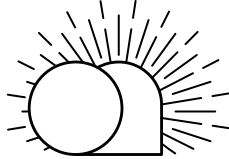
How does Jesus describe God in this passage? How are followers described? What is the duty of the branches? How do followers bear fruit? Who is the fruit for? What does abiding in Him mean or look like?

What fruit have you born and who has benefited from it? What kind of home does Jesus have in you? How has he made it special? What has God cleaned or pruned off your branch so you may bear more fruit?

March 25th, 2026

# I AM The Resurrection and the Life

## Week 5



John 11:(1-16)17-27

The raising of Lazarus makes two very important claims for our future — that Jesus will be raised, and so will we. This is good news, of course — a certainty of what happens after death that gives us hope and allows us to hope for those we love whom we lose. Death will not be the end. Jesus' tomb, our tomb, will end up empty. But in all of that certainty about our future, we sometimes forget the ways in which the promise of resurrection impinges on our present. This is what Jesus needed Martha to see, and what he needs us to see — Jesus is the resurrection AND the life. Jesus needs us to see that we can experience resurrected life here and now, and that shapes our reality here and now.

This means that we make sense of life through the lens of resurrection. It means we give witness to rebirth and recreation when all there seems to be is death all around. Witnessing resurrection on a daily basis is what makes it possible to view the places and spaces where death seems to have taken hold, where empire appears to be the only power, and where suspicion and intolerance look to have won the day. This is where we must give witness to the truth we know.

Questions:

What makes a life worth living?

What hints does Jesus give through the passage about his intention to resurrect Lazarus?

Are there instances that you have experienced Resurrection? Like something that you thought that would never happen come to life?

Share and pray about the resurrections that God has put on your heart.  
Consider dreams and relationships as well as characteristics of following  
Jesus like hope or joy.

APRIL 2ND

# MAUNDY THURSDAY

On this night we begin the Three Days during which we participate once again in the saving power of Jesus's passing over from death into life. The Maundy Thursday service includes the words of Jesus' new commandment (mandate - from which Maundy comes) to love one another. As a sign of our calling to follow Jesus is example of humility and service, we may wash one another's feet as Jesus washed the disciples feet. On this night, in which Jesus was handed over to death we also gather around the Lord's supper. At the service's conclusion, the altar area is stripped of furnishings as a sign of Jesus' abandonment.

APRIL 3RD

# GOOD FRIDAY

The Good Friday service continues the journey through the Three Days of Jesus suffering, death, and resurrection. "Tenebrae" is the Latin word meaning "darkness." The service of Tenebrae as practiced in most Protestant Churches is an adaptation of medieval Roman Catholic practices dating back to the ninth century. For Protestants, this single service is typically held at night on Good Friday. As Jesus draws all people to himself, we pray for the whole world for which Christ died. Finally, we honor the cross as the sign of forgiveness, healing, and salvation. With all God's people, we are invited to bow before this mystery of faith. Christ has died so that we may live.

# Reflections on Your Journey



Reflecting on your Lenten Journey (and journey with a mentor), what have you learned about Jesus? What have you learned about yourself? What have you learned about the church?

What was your favorite part of this Lenten midweek worship?

What was your least favorite part of this Lenten midweek worship experience?

SEE YOU ON EASTER!



# I am curious about...

If you don't know where to start: Where did your reflections take you? What is something you have more questions about? Did you find yourself leaning towards something you found interesting or something you kept thinking about during your Lenten journey?

# Prayer Station Reflection

Questions to jumpstart your reflection: What was your favorite station? What poem stuck with you? Name something every station had in common or something that was different at every station. Did you notice a pattern?