2021 Lent Journal

Sunday Morning

Wednesday Evening

Welcome to the season of Lent. This is a season in our church year that is set aside for self-examination, repentance, and confession. It is a time to work on our relationship with God and with others.

This journal is designed as one tool for you to use on our Lent journey. It has Scripture readings, questions and activities based on the series we will be using in worship on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings during Lent. There are no "shoulds" or "have tos" with this journal. This journal is not designed to be one more thing on your 'to-do' list. You may choose to use this tool when it works best for you. Scribbles, doodles, questions, additions and disagreements are welcome. The Bible Studies offered during Lent will be using this as their small group devotion book. You will also find explanations for the objects in your LENT TO GO kit along the way in this journal.

I encourage you to set up a home altar someplace in your home that can stay set up all season long. Some of you may have the clothes and crosses from other events you can use. A candle and a small bowl of water are good to add to your altar. The objects in your kit will be set on the altar as well as we encounter them on our journey. This is a wonderful visual reminder God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit are with us as we worship, no matter where we are.

A prayer to begin the journey:

Gracious God,

We come to you from all walks and places in life. Be with us as we begin the season of Lent. Bless this journal and all in our LENT TO GO kits that they may be tools for us to deepen our relationship with You and with others. Open our hearts to learn and grow as we journey towards the cross and Easter once again. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Thank you for being a part of this journey.

Pastor Deb Grismer

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina, "divine reading," is a way to connect with God's word through prayer. This form of prayer is different from reading the Bible for study or analysis. Rather the passage is read as the living Word of God, through which He can speak into your heart. It's a way to engage God in a conversation and listen for His Words to you.

Lectio Divina is a process of reading, reflecting, responding, and resting in a piece of scripture.

During Lent, I encourage you to practice this divine reading as you participate in your devotion time. Many of the days in this journal, I offer Scripture and lots of blank space. You are welcome to use this space to journal your experience with Lectio Divina that day. (See Rest/Contemplatio) May your relationship with God deepen through this process. *Pastor Deb*

Lectio Divina Steps

Prepare Your Heart for Lectio Divina Prayer

- As you get started, find a comfortable and quiet place to sit.
- Begin to quiet your mind and body, setting aside all the thoughts and to-do lists running through your mind.
- Open your time of prayer by calling upon the Holy Spirit to guide your reading.

Step #1: READ (lectio)

In this first step, we're "taking a bite" of the scripture (lectio) by reading a passage of Scripture. Read the verse slowly, several times, listening with the "ear of the heart."

- Is there a word or phrase that begins to stand out to you?
- The word or phrase that grabs your heart may not be the main idea of the passage. Listen and be open to how God wants to use his Word to speak into your heart.
- Begin to repeat that word or phrase over and over slowly, soaking your heart in the words.

Step #2: REFLECT (meditatio)
Next, spend some time "chewing" on the words or phrases God placed in your heart. Reflect and meditate on the words you heard in the Scripture passage, attentive to what speaks to your heart.

- Sit in the silence and allow God the space to speak to you as you turn the words over in your mind.
- Ponder what these words mean for your life.
- What hope or encouragement do these words bring to you?
- What next step do you feel God asking you to take?

Step #3: RESPOND (oratio)
Now "savor" the essence of God's Word. Respond in prayer to what you heard from God and how the words spoke to your heart.

- Offer up a prayer of praise, thanksgiving, or petition, depending on how you're moved.
- Continue turning your word or phrase over and over in your mind.
- Share your heart with God in prayer, responding to his Word.

Step #4: REST (contemplatio)
Finally, "digest" what God has spoken to you, embedding it deeply into your heart. Rest in God and contemplate his words for your life. Sit in the silence and just "be" with God for a few minutes. Open your heart to God's presence and allow His words to permeate your soul.

- You may want to journal your experience so you can see how God is moving in your life.
- Record the verse you used and what you heard God speak to your heart.
- Write down how those words apply to your life and how is God calling you to action in response.

Ash Wednesday
February 17, 2021

Restoring Relationships Through Justice
Isaiah 58:1-12
Psalm 51:1-17
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Lent begins with a call to fasting, prayer and repentance as we begin our journey to the cross. In our Old Testament lesson, God reminds the Israelites, and us, that the outward observance of faith is no substitute for genuine fasting that results in acts of justice, such as feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and clothing the naked. Sincere repentance will lead to restored relationships through justice.

From the kit: Spoon with Ashes
*Use the ashes to make the sign of the cross on your forehead and/or on the forehead of others with you.
"Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return"

Space for reflecting

Thursday, February 18, 2021

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Space for reflecting

Friday, February 19, 2021

Isaiah 58:1-12

Space for reflecting

Saturday, February 20, 2021

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism
From Luther's Small Catechism

THE INSTITUTION OF BAPTISM

First: What is Baptism?
Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water used by God's command and connected with God's Word.

Which is that Word of God?
Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!"

THE BLESSINGS OF BAPTISM

Second: What does Baptism do for us?
Baptism works forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare. What are these words and promises of God? Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

THE POWER OF BAPTISM

Third: How can water do such great things?
It is certainly not the water that does such things, but God's Word which is in and with the water, and faith which trusts this Word used with the water. For without God's Word the water is just plain water and not baptism. But with this Word it is baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of rebirth by the Holy Spirit.

Where is this written?
St. Paul says in Titus, chapter 3, "God saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life." This is a trustworthy saying.

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM FOR OUR DAILY LIFE

Fourth: What does baptizing with water mean?

Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written?

St. Paul says in Romans, chapter 6, "We were buried with Christ through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Space for reflecting on Baptism

1st Sunday in Lent
February 21, 2021

Restoring Relationships Through Faithfulness
Genesis 9:8-17
Psalm 25:1-10
Mark 1:9-15

Because of human sin, the Lord destroys the earth by flood, yet divine destruction gives way to divine commitment and faithfulness to his people and all of creation. The Spirit that comes upon Jesus at his baptism sustains him when he is tried by Satan. Our baptism sustains us to restore our relationships through faithfulness to God and to others.

From home: Small bowl of water
*Place a small bowl of water on your home altar to remind you of your baptism. Dip your finger in the water and trace the sign of the cross on your forehead, speaking these words.
"I am a child of God. I have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever."

Space for reflecting or worship note taking

Small Group Bible Study

Restoring Relationships Through Faithfulness
Week of February 21 – 27

OPENING PRAYER
Dear God, help us feel your presence with us today as you work in us, by your Holy Spirit, for those things that are beneficial for you and your Kingdom. Give us faith to believe and trust in your mercy and grace, that we may see ourselves as children of God and heirs to your Kingdom. Amen!

ICEBREAKER
What's the funniest thing you've ever witnessed at a baptism?

CONTENT
(Read Mark 1:9-15.) This is Mark's account of Jesus' baptism. In this account we can see God in action, toward us and the world!

DISCUSSION
How do you see God in action in this story?
What does God say to Jesus? What does God do? How does this same thing happen to us, in our baptism?

DISCUSSION What is Jesus' response to what God has done in baptism? How does baptism both prepare him and protect him for what happens next? How do you see your baptism prepare and protect you for your daily living?

DISCUSSION How does Satan tempt you? With what? How do you respond? How does baptism factor in to this situation? How do you share the good news of God in your life?

DISCUSSION Thinking about Sunday's sermon, what you read in Scripture and what you read about baptism from Luther's Small Catechism, what does all of this mean? Do any of these thoughts about baptism trouble you? Excite you? Why?

Were you baptized? When? If you were baptized as an infant, did your parents or sponsors mark your baptism anniversary in any way? Why, or why not? If you're a parent, do you mark your children's baptism day in any way? Why, or why not?

If you were baptized as an adult, why did you decide to get baptized? Did you take any steps to "prepare" to be baptized? Is this necessary? Why, or why not?
Do you know anyone who hasn't been baptized? Does God have any promises for them?

Do you think your own life is different as a result of baptism? Why, or why not? Does your life change the minute you're baptized? Do you think God "feels" differently about those who are baptized and those who aren't? What are God's promises to those who haven't been baptized? What does your baptism mean to you?

GOING DEEPER: RESTORING RELATIONSHIPS
This series is all about relationships, and today we've looked at baptism as God's action toward us, forgiving us and making us children of God. The challenge we face is this: what do we do next?

DISCUSSION How can baptism become something more than just an event that is commemorated by a certificate we hang on the wall? What does it mean to "do" our baptism in everyday living? How is baptism not just an event, but more a lifestyle? How does our baptism enable us to reach out to others in relationship? What are your next steps? How will you "do" your baptism?

APPLICATION
God has reached out and claimed us as God's own in baptism. And, just like Jesus, the Holy Spirit now calls us to move! God is calling us to do. We are called to enter into relationships, and use our baptism to reconcile our relationships with others.

CLOSING PRAYER
God, thank you for claiming us and naming us "child of God" in baptism. Help us live out our baptism every day, restoring relationships that have been broken or damaged, so that you are glorified and your love is seen by the world. Amen.

Space for reflecting

Monday, February 22, 2021

Genesis 9:8-17

Space for reflecting

Tuesday, February 23, 2021

Psalm 25:1-10

Space for reflecting

Created for Community
Midweek Lent Service
Wednesday, February 24, 2021

Week 1 – In Community with Creation
Mark 4:35-41

From the kit: baggie with sand
*Pour the sand into a container. Put your fingers in the sand. Play with it. Draw in it. Reflect on the sand as you imagine its natural settings of wilderness (or desert) and beach. Jesus' temptation with the wild animals takes place in the wilderness, and today's story of the storm takes place at the sea.

Write or draw or think through your answers to these four questions:

- What is one way you are dependent on creation in your daily life?
- What is one way you are in danger from creation in your daily life?
- What is one way our lives endanger creation?
- What is one way our lives enrich creation?

When you have completed these questions, say a simple prayer of thanks to God for all the ways you are in community with creation.

Space for reflecting

Thursday, February 25, 2021

1 Peter 3:18-22

Space for reflecting

Friday, February 26, 2021

Mark 1:9-15

Space for reflecting

Saturday, February 27, 2021

Acts 22:12-21
Focus on vs 16

Space for reflecting

Looking back at this week…space for reflecting

2nd Sunday in Lent
February 28, 2021

Restoring Relationships Through Trust
Genesis 17:1-7
Psalm 22:23-31
Romans 4:13-25

God promises to make Abraham and Sarah the ancestors of nations. Though Abraham and Sarah are far too old to bear children, they trust that God will accomplish what God has promised. Their trust catalyzes their transformation as they receive new names and identities. Paul says God's promise comes to all who share Abraham and Sarah's faith and trust in God. We, too, get new identities in baptism, as we put on Christ.

From the kit: Blindfold
*When we put on a blindfold, we are unable to see and we need to trust others to get us around in a safe way. We probably did not know where they might be leading us but we had to trust them anyway. That takes a lot of trust. In a way, this is like our relationship with God. Often, we can't see where God is leading us, but we trust God to lead us in the right direction.

Space for reflecting or worship note taking

Small Group Bible Study

Restoring Relationships Through Trust
Week of February 28 – March 6

OPENING PRAYER
Dear God, we gather here in your name. Breathe into us your Holy Spirit, that our hearts may be opened, and our minds renewed by your Word. Lead us to trust in you and love our neighbor as you have loved us. Amen!

ICEBREAKER
What's your trust factor with people like politicians, religious leaders, your financial advisor, etc? What makes someone, or something, trustworthy?

CONTENT
(Read Genesis 17:1-17.) The foundation of the Abraham story in Genesis is God's promises. These promises are recorded in nearly every chapter of Abraham's story. This iteration might be a renewal of the covenant; perhaps Abram and Sarai need regular reminders.

DISCUSSION What is the nature of the relationship between God and Abram? What does God say that creates a predicament for Abram? What creative solutions might you come up with if God had spoken these words to you?

DISCUSSION How is this covenant a promise, and not Law? Who is responsible for ensuring that this covenant is fulfilled? What is Abraham and Sarah's responsibility? How is this the story of God's covenant with us in Jesus? What does God require of us?

(Read Romans 4:13-25.) Paul has experienced God's grace poured out upon the Gentiles. His experience tolls him that they are saved. The question is, how? How can that possibly be, when they are not part of God's Sinai Covenant people?

DISCUSSION How would you answer those questions? How does someone become a part of the covenant of God?

DISCUSSION What does it mean to be made righteous by faith? What is faith? Where does faith come from? How are faith and trust similar? Different? How does faith establish and restore our relationship with God?

GOING DEEPER: RESTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Trust is the foundation of all healthy relationships, and yet we've all experienced the pain of broken promises. Chances are, we've broken a few ourselves. Our willingness to trust others, to take them at their word, isn't what it once was. Deals that were once sealed with a handshake now require massive amounts of paperwork and a legal team. Is it any wonder that many of us struggle to take God at God's word?

When it comes to promises, it helps to know the character of the one making the promise, and that person's ability to keep the promise. Over and over again, God's people have given witness to their experience that God is faithful, and able to do what God has promised. Lutherans tend to go back to our baptism when we want to be reminded of how rooted we are in the promises of God. In baptism, God has named and claimed us. In baptism, God has joined us to the death and resurrection of Jesus. In baptism we are made new people. In baptism, God has made us one in Christ. In baptism we are given the Holy Spirit, the guarantee and down payment on all that God has promised, all that we hope for.

Our baptism is the foundation of our relationship with God through Christ. Luther would say that the object of our faith is what God has done for us in baptism. The transformation that this relationship creates sets us free to be people who keep our promises in this world, living the cycle of confession, repentance and forgiveness when we fall short.

DISCUSSION How is baptism like the covenant between God and Abraham? What does Baptism call out from us, draw us into, demand of us – like Abraham? In what ways does God say "trust me!" in baptism?

APPLICATION
God has reached out and claimed us as God's own in baptism. Throughout history, God has entered into the human story and established covenant relationship with us, calling us to faith. Because this is God's action toward us, we are free to live in the promise of God, free to love our neighbor, free to worship, free to live in hope and not despair, free to respond without the fear of not living up to some pre-set condition of relationship with God. What are you doing with this freedom?

CLOSING PRAYER
God, thank you for claiming us and naming us "Child of God" in baptism. Thank you for being trustworthy, keeping your promises even when we don't. Strengthen our faith, that we may live in the freedom of your promises, leading others to see you in our lives and come to faith in you, too! Amen.

Space for reflecting

Monday, March 1, 2021

Genesis 17:1-17

Space for reflecting

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Psalm 22:23-31

Space for reflecting

Created for Community
Midweek Lent Service
Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Week 2 – In Community with All the Saints
Mark 9:2-8

From the kit: paper strips
From home: writing tool
*On each strip of paper, write the name of a person whose life and faith have influenced your own. On the reverse side of each strip, write the name of a person whose life and faith you hope you have influenced. Once you have written names on either side, connect the paper strips until you have a paper chain representing the community of saints. You do not need to use all the strips of paper or write names on both sides. You can cut and add more strips of paper from home if you have more names to add to the chain. Place this chain around your home altar.

Space for reflecting

Thursday, March 4, 2021

Mark 8:31-38

Space for reflecting

Friday, March 5, 2021

Romans 6:1-8

Space for reflecting

Saturday, March 6, 2021

Romans 3:21-26

Space for reflecting

Looking back at this week…space for reflecting

3rd Sunday in Lent
March 7, 2021

Restoring Relationships Through Limits
Exodus 20:1-17
Psalm 19
John 2:13-22

After escaping from slavery, the Israelites come to Mount Sinai, where God teaches them how to live in relationship with one another. In order to live in healthy relationship, God sets loving limits in the Ten Commandments. Jesus also sets loving limits in the temple as he defends the worship of God alone, and rejects the ways commerce can become our god.

From the kit: The 10 Commandments from Luther's Small Catechism
*Take time to read through the Commandments and their meanings from the newest version of Luther's Small Catechism. Place this sheet on your home altar.

Space for reflecting or worship note taking

Small Group Bible Study

Restoring Relationships Through Limits
Week of March 7 - 13

OPENING PRAYER
Lord Jesus, show us how limitless your love for us is, and fill our hearts and minds with the joy of your presence. Amen!

ICEBREAKER
What were the rules of your house when you were growing up? Which ones were your favorites? Which ones did you hate?

CONTENT
*Read Exodus 20:1-17
DISCUSSION What is your understanding of the Ten Commandments? Why does God give them to us? How are they a sign of God's love?

*Read Psalm 19
DISCUSSION Where do you see God's law in action? What does your heart say when it experiences God's law?

*Read John 2:13-22.
DISCUSSION What would you have done if you were Jesus? Why does he drive the moneychangers out of the temple? How are they wrong? How is Jesus right? How are the moneychangers transgressing the first commandment?

DISCUSSION How do you react when you read this story about Jesus? What do you see as peoples' "gods" these days? What do you do about it? How is this any different than the religious extremism that terrorists use these days?

DISCUSSION Why do relationships need boundaries? How does remembering this produce love and praise for God?

GOING DEEPER: RESTORING RELATIONSHIPS

An understanding of law and gospel, from wikipedia.org (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_and_Gospel).

A specific formulation of the distinction of law and gospel was first brought to the attention of the Christian church by Martin Luther (1483–1546), and laid down as the foundation of evangelical Lutheran biblical exegesis and exposition in Article 4 of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531):

"All Scripture ought to be distributed into these two principal topics, the law and the promises. For in some places it presents the law, and in others the promise concerning Christ, namely, either when [in the Old Testament] it promises that Christ will come, and offers, for his sake, the remission of sins justification, and life eternal, or when, in the Gospel [in the New Testament], Christ himself, since he has appeared, promises the remission of sins, justification, and life eternal" (– F. Bente and W.H.T. Dau).

The law has two functions (a "third use" is debated by and not unanimous between Lutheran theologians). The two functions are these: the law gives order to life and exposes our sin. It does not save – only Christ saves us from sin, death and the power of the devil. To look to the law for salvation only leads to death. The law has a purpose for us, to bring some sort of order to the chaos of living. But those who look to the law and its keeping as a way to please God and earn God's favor are looking for the law to save them. In trying to keep the law, only find that they can't. Their sin is exposed, and the law demands what it exposes, to which the person cannot pay – hence the condemnation one feels when one turns to the law for salvation.

As Luther said in Thesis 26 of the Heidelberg Disputation of 1518: "The Law says 'do this' and it is never done. Grace says 'believe in this' and it is already

done.” The Law demands and accuses, but does not deliver life. Only Christ, through faith alone, brings life.

DISCUSSION Have you ever heard of the law/gospel distinction? What about the “uses of the law”? How could reading today’s Scripture lead you to believe that keeping the law brings salvation? Do you think keeping the law brings salvation? Why, or why not? Where do you see the ‘two uses/functions’ of the law in today’s Scripture readings? Why is it important to have this awareness as we read the Bible?

CLOSING PRAYER
Holy God, thank you for being in relationship with us, through your Son, Jesus the Christ. Help us to see the purpose of your law as love and not punishment, and draw us to repent of those things we create as gods. Cleanse our hearts like you cleansed the temple in Jerusalem, and restore in us your love as the highest good that we seek. Amen.

Space for reflecting

Monday, March 8, 2021

Exodus 20:1-17

Space for reflecting

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

Psalm 19

Space for reflecting

Created for Community
Midweek Lent Service
Wednesday, March 10, 2021

Week 3 – In Community with Our Neighbor
Mark 2:1-12

From the kit: cloth piece, pieces of string and clothespin person
*Use these items as a symbol of the man who was lowered down to Jesus by his friends who sought healing from Jesus. Hold these items in your hands. Think about all the people who you wish to bring to Jesus – whether for healing, salvation, love, mercy, or forgiveness. Name them silently or aloud. Consider the way you can lift your neighbors even now. Place these pieces on your home altar.

Space for reflecting

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Matthew 21:12-17

Space for reflecting

Friday, March 12, 2021

John 2:13-22

Space for reflecting

Saturday, March 13, 2021

Luke 19:45-48

Space for reflecting

Looking back at this week…space for reflecting

4TH Sunday in Lent
March 14, 2021

Restoring Relationships Through Love
Numbers 21:4-9
Psalm 107:1-3
John 3:14-21

In the wilderness, the people become impatient and begin to lose their faith and trust in God. God sends poisonous serpents among the people, but his love for them prompts him to make a promise to Moses: those who look on the bronze serpent will live. Just as those who look upon the bronze serpent are healed, so we will be restored when we behold Christ lifted up on the cross, God's ultimate gift of love.

From the kit:
*Paper heart – Holding the heart in your hand, lift to God all of the people in your life whom you love in various ways. Turn the heart over. Lift to God people in your life with whom you have broken relationships that you wish to reconcile. What are the 'snakes' or roadblocks that get in your way of healing those relationships? Pray for God to help take away the roadblocks so healing can happen.

Space for reflecting or worship note taking

Small Group Bible Study

Restoring Relationships Through Love
Week of March 14-20

OPENING PRAYER
Lord Jesus, thank you for loving us, and for your continuous presence with us. Help us to receive your Word of love, that we may love our neighbor as you have loved us. Amen

ICEBREAKER
When you think of love, what comes to mind? What's the greatest sign of love you've ever seen anyone give to another?

CONTENT
*Read Numbers 21:4-9.
DISCUSSION How would you describe the relationship between God and God's people in this passage? What makes people get whiny with God? When do you get "short of soul"?

DISCUSSION Have you ever been discontent, even when your needs have been met? Have you ever complained that you wanted a "better" life (better job, better house, better health, better stuff) than the one you have? Have you ever failed to see the amazing gifts ("manna from heaven") right in front of you?

DISCUSSION What?! What does this even mean? What kind of God would inflict death death for complaining, or lack of trust? Do you find this troubling? Does God send us "snakes" today, or do we imagine that hardships in our lives are punishments?

DISCUSSION How are love and discipline tied together? Have we also received the covenant from Mount Sinai? Do you count yourself among these complaining, wandering people? Are you comfortable with this language of punishment? Why, or why not?

DISCUSSION How can this be described as a story of grace? What do you think this ancient writer is trying to confess through this story? What is the writer trying to tell us about God? Is the

message that God is filled with wrath for the disobedient? Or is the message that God is filled with grace for the creation that God so loves? That God is filled with grace even for you?

Does reading this story through the lens of grace affect how you understand God in the Old Testament? God in general? When you read the story now, do you see more wrath, or more grace? And how can this story be seen as our story, as we live between promise and fulfillment? One difficult but important question this story raises is about the character of God.

DISCUSSION After reading this story, how would you describe the "character" of God? Make a list of adjectives. If you had to describe the character of God in a story, which story would you use? Why? Which works better: the list of adjectives, or the story?

*Read Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22.
DISCUSSION Are you starting to see the trend? Can feeling God's judgment be a reason to celebrate and give thanks to God? Why, or how? How do you respond to God's judgment? When have you deserved God's judgment, but experienced God's grace instead? After reading today's passages, is it easier to see how often this happens?

*Read John 3:14-21.
DISCUSSION How does Nicodemus think eternal life works? How does Jesus explain it to him? How do you explain it? Does Nicodemus miss the point? Do we? How is death the cure for death? What does this mean?

GOING DEEPER: RESTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Exactly what all this means depends on how you frame the core human problem (sin), and how God "fixes" the problem (atonement).

My thinking about this issue has been shaped by Rev. Dr. David Lose's writings. From his perspective, the human problem is failing to trust God's love for us, leading us to seek to be our own gods, the center of our own universe. Doing so leads us to "death" – guilt, shame, broken relationships, violence, addiction – everything that stands against God's intention for wholeness and abundant life.

Jesus' proclamation of God's forgiveness is both a gift and a judgment. It's a gift to those who know their need for forgiveness, and it's a judgment upon those who don't think they need it. In fact, one way to frame why Jesus dies is that he loves and forgives too freely.

The cross "fixes" our human condition by demonstrating so clearly and powerfully the depth of God's love in a way that we can experience. The cross is not just an event, but a transformational experience. This experience of knowing that we are loved and forgiven is like being brought from death to life, like being born again.

DISCUSSION How do you frame the problem and the fix? Do you agree with David Lose's take on all of this? Why or why not? Is the cross, and the season of Lent, a transformational experience for you? What would your counsel to Nicodemus be?

APPLICATION

How can you apply what you've discussed today in your relationships with God and others? What steps can you take to restore love in relationships that have broken? Make a point of remembering this, and acting on it, as you go about your week.

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy God, you have loved us when we were unlovable, and that love has moved us from death in sin to life in you. May we receive this love with gratitude and humbleness, and see in your Son the love you have for all people. Keep us close to you, that we may live in your love. Amen.

Space for reflecting

Monday, March 15, 2021

Numbers 21:4-9

Space for reflecting

Tuesday, March 16, 2021

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

Space for reflecting

Created for Community
Midweek Lent Service
Wednesday, March 17, 2021

Week 4 – In Community with Those On the Margins

Mark 5:1-20

On the computer: www.youtube.com/TheOSLHermosa
Yes, this is Our Savior's Lutheran Church's very own YouTube channel! Please click on the subscribe button.

On the OSL channel homepage, click on "Playlists". Then click on "Devotions". In this list, you will find videos of three different people reading today's text. Use these for the following prayerful listening to the Scripture.

Note: If you do not have a computer and/or internet, please contact Pastor Deb for a DVD or CD of the readings. Or read the text three times out loud and respond.

Listen to the passage as it is read three times. Each time listen in a different way, through a different lens.

- First time: Listen for a word or short phrase that catches your attention.
- Second time: Listen for a way in which God is speaking to you personally.
- Third time: Listen for a way in which God is speaking to the community of which you are a part.

Space for reflecting

Thursday, March 18, 2021

John 3:14-21

Space for reflecting

Friday, March 19, 2021

Romans 3:21-26

Space for reflecting

Saturday, March 20, 2021

Ephesians 2:1-10

Space for reflecting

Looking back at this week…space for reflecting

5TH Sunday in Lent
March 21, 2021

Restoring Relationships Through Forgiveness
Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalm 119:9-16
John 12:20-33

God promises Jeremiah that a "new covenant" will be made in the future: a covenant that will allow all people to know God by heart. God promises to "forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more." We see these promises fulfilled in Christ, who dies on a cross to forgive our sin so that we may have life. Because of this act of love, we are empowered to forgive ourselves and others.

From the kit: pencil and eraser
From home: piece of paper
*Write the following words on the sheet of paper: SHAME, GUILT, SIN. Add other words of confession for which you wish to be forgiven.
In today's reading we hear God say, "I will forgive my people and remember their sin no more." Speak those words and erase "Shame, Guilt, Sin" and your confession from the paper. Now crumple up the paper and throw it in the garbage. You are forgiven. God will remember your sin no more.

Space for reflecting or worship note taking

Small Group Bible Study

Restoring Relationships Through Forgiveness
Week of March 21 - 27

OPENING PRAYER
Lord Jesus, by your cross and resurrection, you forgive our sin and free us from death and the devil, a gift of pure grace from your heart of love. Move our hearts to love you as you have loved us, that we may forgive as we have been forgiven. Amen.

ICEBREAKER
What would be the most difficult thing to forgive? What person comes to mind when you think of forgiveness?

CONTENT
*Read Jeremiah 31:31-34
DISCUSSION What does it mean for God to write a covenant on our hearts? How does the law show us our sin? Why doesn't law change us? How does God fulfill the covenant and release us from our bondage?

*Read Psalm 119:9-16
DISCUSSION How can you fulfill the law? What counsel would you give "young people"? Why is it so important to follow the law when we are a people who live by grace, and grace alone?

*Read John 12:20-33
DISCUSSION Why do you think the Greeks want to see Jesus? What would you have asked him? What kind of "seeing" is Jesus referring to? How is the coming of God's Kingdom seen in the inclusion and discipling of the Greeks? Who are the "Greeks" today?

DISCUSSION How can Jesus' death be God's moment of glory? How can the cross be both proclamation of forgiveness and judgment, all at the same time? How is

the cross and resurrection God's royal pageant for crowning a new King? What happens to the old king?

GOING DEEPER: RESTORING RELATIONSHIPS

The second greatest day in the life of an addict is the day she realizes that she is powerless over her addictive behavior. Until this moment, the life of an addict is a vicious cycle of commitment, trying, failing and guilt, followed by more addictive behavior. The moment the addict embraces the reality that she is powerless over her addiction often comes from "hitting bottom," a painful experience both for the addict and for those who love her. And yet it is the proverbial dark before the dawn of hope. It is the second greatest day in the life of an addict and the first of the Twelve Steps. ("We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction – that our lives had become unmanageable.")

The greatest day in the life of an addict is the day that they are gripped by this good news: there is One who can restore them to sanity. This is the second of the Twelve Steps. This day begins a journey not of trying but of trusting, of letting go and letting God. This is a day of grace, a day of dawning freedom.

Today's texts (Jeremiah and John) address a related theme. Our inability to be obedient, even when we want to, requires a new covenant. Our hunger to be reconciled with God and one another will leave us famished until we are fed with the Bread of Life, the One who dies proclaiming that we are loved and forgiven. We're so completely loved, forgiven and reconciled through Christ that we can let go of our futile attempts to "fix" our relationships with one another and surrender to the One who can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

And so, with the Twelve Step community we pray, "I can't. You can. Go ahead."

DISCUSSION Why does it take such an extreme measure for us to "get" what God has for us? What would happen if God didn't create a new covenant in Jesus? How is this related to forgiveness?

APPLICATION

Reflect on the forgiveness given to you in Jesus. Then, as your heart is gripped by God's grace, bring to mind that person or subject that you know you've needed to forgive, but just can't seem to find it in you to actually do it. Let today be the day it happens. Pray, "I can't. You can. Go ahead." And reach out to forgive the one you've held in bondage.

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy God, your grace is overwhelming, and we are not worthy of your love. We sin against you day after day. Even with the law as our guide and your love as our focus, we still fail. Yet you come to us and for us, and forgive us every time. Work in us this kind of love, this kind of forgiveness, that we may show others who you are by the way we love and forgive them. Amen.

Space for reflecting

Monday, March 22, 2021

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Space for reflecting

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Psalm 119:9-16

Space for reflecting

Created for Community
Midweek Lent Service
Wednesday, March 24, 2021

Week 5 – In Community with Christ

Mark 10:32-45

From the kit: cross heart
Think about a time when you sacrificed or gave up something big for someone else. Hold the cross heart in your hand. Consider what Jesus has sacrificed and what Jesus gave up for you (and I). Place the cross heart on the altar as a reminder of the immense sacrifice that Jesus made for us. Repeat this verse – "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Space for reflecting

Thursday, March 25, 2021

John 12:20-26

Space for reflecting

Friday, March 26, 2021

John 12:27-33

Space for reflecting

Saturday, March 27, 2021

Colossians 1:11-14

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Please move to your Holy Week Journal