

LENT 2023

saint mark's episcopal church, palo alto



**HOLY ENCOUNTERS**  
**TRANSFORMATION IN THE**  
**PRESENCE OF CHRIST**

# AN INVITATION TO LENT

In his letter to the Galatians, St. Paul uses some remarkable language to describe Jesus's transformative power in his life: "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." During the holy season of Lent, we are invited to ponder what it means to be "crucified with Christ," and to live in a transformative relationship with the God who loved us and gave himself up for us. During these wilderness days leading up to Easter, we encounter Jesus in his humanity, his vulnerability, his suffering, and his brokenness. We experience the mysterious and paradoxical power of God's self-giving love, and invite that love to flow through us, so that we might in turn become instruments of holy transformation in a world starving for grace, justice, compassion, and healing. Our hope at St. Mark's is that this booklet of Lenten meditations will help you encounter the Crucified Christ this season. May the love of God hold you close in the wilderness, and may the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with a passionate desire to encounter the One who died so that we can live.

## Let Your God Love You

*Edwina Gateley*

Be silent.

Be still.

Alone.

Empty

Before your God.

Say nothing.

Ask nothing.

Be silent.

Be still.

Let your God look upon you.

That is all.

God knows.

God understands.

God loves you

With an enormous love,

And only wants

To look upon you

With that love.

Quiet.

Still.

Be.

Let your God—

Love you.

## 1ST SUNDAY IN LENT — FEBRUARY 26, 2023

### Collect of the Day

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### Scripture Readings

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

Psalms 32

Romans 5:12-19

Matthew 4:1-11

**Sunday Preacher** The Rev. Liz Milner

### Reflection *Andrew Bridges*

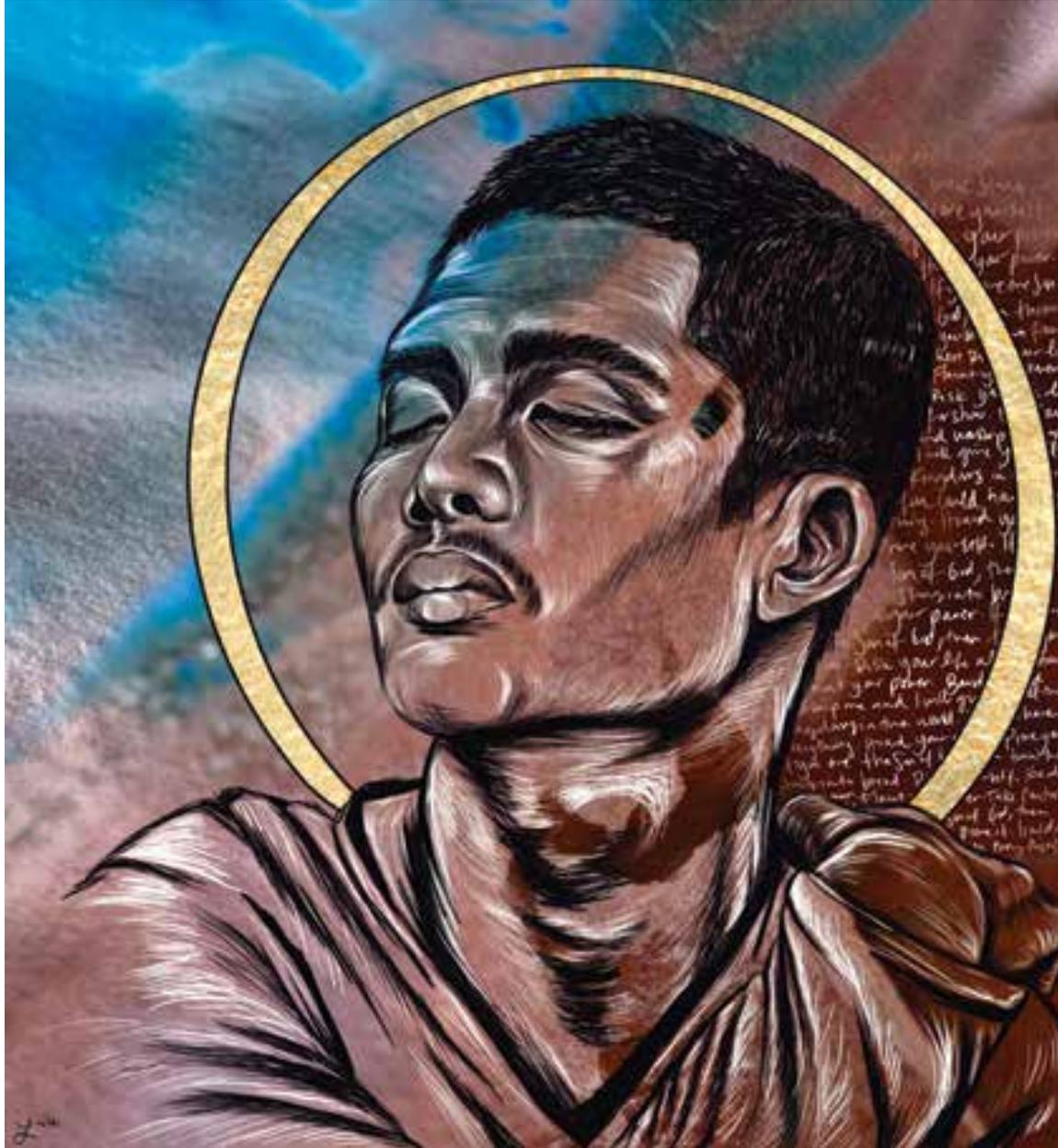
The Gospel passage of Jesus's three temptations in the wilderness addresses three models of temptation. First is the temptation to satisfy a need; second to avoid a feared harm; third to reap worldly rewards in a deal with the Devil. All three were temptations for Jesus to prove his divinity even as he walked the earth. His miracles attested to that, so he didn't lack for proof. Yet all three times he resisted a challenge to get a personal benefit, instead making reverence of God his focus.

Needs, fears, and desires are the basis of most of our intercessory prayers, and I read

this passage as a caution about intercessory prayer. Later in Matthew, at 26:39, Jesus prays, saying "not as I will, but as you will." In our Book of Common Prayer, one of the collects at the prayers is as follows: "Almighty God, to whom our needs are known before we ask: Help us to ask only what accords with your will; and those good things which we dare not, or in our ignorance cannot ask, grant us for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

Whether prayer changes God's mind, or changes the world, is a hard question – but it certainly changes us. It brings us deeper into the mystery of God, it reflects our devotion to and dependence on the Divine, and it is a manifestation of our desire to follow a path of righteousness.

During Lent – as we explore our wildernesses and temptations that are real in our needy, dangerous, and competitive world – it is good to focus on inquiring, discerning, thankful, and resolute prayer in seeking out God's will and committing to live out that will. In all this, we conform and bind ourselves to God's infinite power as in the prayer of St. Patrick's Breastplate. We will share unavoidable suffering; that cup will not pass from our lips. But we will also share the glory of Jesus's resurrection.



## Where the Breath Begins

*Jan Richardson*

Dry  
and dry  
and dry  
in each direction.

Dust dry.  
Desert dry.  
Bone dry.

And here  
in your own heart:  
dry,  
the center of your chest  
a bare valley  
stretching out  
every way you turn.

Did you think  
this was where  
you had come to die?

It's true that  
you may need  
to do some crumbling,  
yes.

That some things  
you have protected  
may want to be  
laid bare,  
yes.

That you will be asked  
to let go  
and let go,  
yes.

But listen.  
This is what  
a desert is for.

If you have come here  
desolate,  
if you have come here  
deflated,  
then thank your lucky stars  
the desert is where  
you have landed—  
here where it is hard  
to hide,  
here where it is unwise  
to rely on your own devices,  
here where you will  
have to look  
and look again  
and look close  
to find what refreshment waits  
to reveal itself to you.

I tell you,  
though it may be hard  
to see it now,  
this is where  
your greatest blessing  
will find you.

I tell you,  
this is where  
you will receive  
your life again.

I tell you,  
this is where  
the breath begins.

## 2ND SUNDAY IN LENT — MARCH 5, 2023



### Collect of the Day

O God, whose glory it is to always have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### Scripture Readings

Genesis 12:1-4a

Psalms 121

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

John 3:1-17

### Preacher

Debie Thomas

**Reflection** *The children of St. Mark's (Malcolm, Aven, Aster, Mayer, Anders, Malia, Leo, Aria, William, Elise, Margot, Michael)*

Lent is about making changes to our lives so we can be happier, healthier, and more connected to God. When we make these kinds of changes, we feel happy, we recognize good things in our lives, and we can make the world a better place for others. Some changes we can make include: taking better care of our bodies, praying more, noticing what we're grateful for, not lying, and being nicer. We can change little things in our daily routines that transform our lives over time because we do them with God. But making these changes is hard! Things that make these changes hard can be: forgetting, being stuck in old habits, and difficult people. Sometimes, we don't even know that we can change or that things can be better. We think that we are as happy and healthy as we can be, and we don't realize that God is calling us to something better!

This is why God helps us be "born again." Part of us "dies" and then we are "new" so that we can start seeing things differently. God's Spirit encourages us when we are trying to transform our lives. God tells us things like "you've got this," "do your best," and "don't wait for things to be perfect - you can start making changes right now!"

When we are struggling to make healthy changes, God helps us. That's why connecting with God's Spirit is important! We think prayer is the best place to start.

Our suggestions for times to add prayer to your routine: when you wake up, when you eat, when you see the sky, and when you go to bed.

### Now I Become Myself *May Sarton*

Now I become myself. It's taken  
Time, many years and places;  
I have been dissolved and shaken,  
Worn other people's faces,  
Run madly, as if Time were there,  
Terribly old, crying a warning,  
"Hurry, you will be dead before—"  
(What? Before you reach the morning?  
Or the end of the poem is clear?  
Or love safe in the walled city?)  
Now to stand still, to be here,  
Feel my own weight and density!  
The black shadow on the paper  
Is my hand; the shadow of a word  
As thought shapes the shaper  
Falls heavy on the page, is heard.  
All fuses now, falls into place  
From wish to action, word to silence,  
My work, my love, my time, my face  
Gathered into one intense  
Gesture of growing like a plant.  
As slowly as the ripening fruit  
Fertile, detached, and always spent,  
Falls but does not exhaust the root,  
So all the poem is, can give,  
Grows in me to become the song,  
Made so and rooted so by love.  
Now there is time and Time is young.  
O, in this single hour I love  
All of myself and do not move.  
I, the pursued, who madly ran,  
Stand still, stand still, and stop the sun!



## 3RD SUNDAY IN LENT — MARCH 12, 2023

### Collect of the Day

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### Scripture Readings

Exodus 17:1-7

Psalm 95

Romans 5:1-11

John 4:5-42

**Preacher** The Rev. Matthew McDermott

### Reflection *Margalynne Armstrong*

What strikes me about this passage is the power of the honesty shared between the Samaritan woman and Jesus. The woman is unafraid to immediately ask why a Jewish man would even speak to a lone woman, a stranger and a Samaritan, a people with whom Jews had been in schism for centuries. And when Jesus responds that he can offer God's living water, the woman is honest with her skepticism, noting he doesn't even have a bucket. Jesus speaks unsparingly but truthfully about the woman's past, but then describes a future where the past doesn't matter, not the conflicts between Jews and Samaritans about where to worship, not the

relationships that have brought the woman to feel ashamed. Jesus proclaims, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth," then reveals himself as the Messiah. Both believing and uncertain, the woman returns to Sychar and tells the townsfolk: "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" Jesus telling truth transformed the woman who would one day become Saint Photini, and her new truth transformed her world. Our society has been having a lot of difficulty with truth for a few years, but it has never been easy to hear and speak the truth. So often, not speaking the truth seems to be the path of least resistance. But Christ uses truth to present his followers with an amazing gift. To worship God, he says, shed everything but spirit and truth. Truth is daunting, but it can embrace doubt and uncertainty, for even as Photini told her community to come and see Jesus, she hesitated to fully believe that the Messiah would reveal himself to someone like her. To worship in truth, we must assess the ways in which we do not embrace the great commandments to love God and each other. Spirit enfolds us some days and feels distant on others, but can be revived by a moment of beauty, or an hour in community or upon hearing a song. I find a sweet infusion of spirit listening to the traditional song, "Jesus Met the Woman at the Well," performed by Mahalia Jackson, perhaps it will move you as well. [youtube.com/watch?v=BV4l6aKRTsI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BV4l6aKRTsI)

**The Avowal** *Denise Levertov*

As swimmers dare  
to lie face to the sky  
and water bears them,  
as hawks rest upon air  
and air sustains them,  
so would I learn to attain  
free fall, and float  
into Creator Spirit's deep  
embrace,  
knowing no effort earns  
that all-surrounding grace.

**4TH SUNDAY  
IN LENT —  
MARCH 19, 2023**

**Collect of the Day**

Gracious Father, whose blessed  
Son Jesus Christ came down  
from heaven to be the true bread  
which gives life to the world:  
Evermore give us this bread,  
that he may live in us, and we in  
him; who lives and reigns with  
you and the Holy Spirit, one  
God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Scripture Readings**

1 Samuel 16:1-13  
Psalm 23  
Ephesians 5:8-14  
John 9:1-41

**Preacher**

The Rev. Dr. Rebecca Lyman



**Reflection** *Peter Jon Shuler*

In this Gospel, Jesus heals a man who was born blind by spreading a paste of mud on the man's eyes made from the dust and Jesus's own spit. One of the most striking features of this man's encounter with Jesus is that he does not ask to be healed. The possibility of healing is beyond his imagination. He doesn't profess faith in Jesus; he doesn't know who Jesus is. But Jesus knows who he is - and marks him out as one meant to glorify God's power - even over blindness. I imagine the man sitting on the ground by the road near the temple. Most see him as a beggar, someone to be ignored or avoided or treated with contempt. But Jesus sees more.

I imagine Jesus kneeling down in the dirt by the man. Jesus always comes to us where we are. He is always willing to roll up his sleeves and get dirty. I can see Jesus taking a small handful of dirt, spitting into his dusty palms and rolling a ball of mud into paste. Then, in an act of utmost intimacy, Jesus gently spreads the paste on the man's eyes. He tells the man to wash in the pool of Siloam - a kind of baptism, from blindness to vision. Upon receiving his sight, the man is transformed. He believes and testifies to what he has seen. He becomes an evangelist, telling everyone he knows and meets, declaring to the unbelieving Pharisees the famous line, "I was blind, but now I see."

This is what Jesus continues to offer:  
Encountering us where we are. In the dirt and the mud. While we are still blind. And not just once, but over and over again. As we consider

the blind man's encounter with Jesus during our Lenten journeys, can we see our own stories? What are the blindspots, the wounds, the hopelessness that are so much a habit in our lives that we have forgotten how to ask Jesus to enter those spaces and provide the healing we long for? What burdens have we become so used to carrying, that we are oblivious to Jesus reaching out, yearning to ease? What distances have we put between ourselves and others that only Jesus can bridge? What possibilities for transformation lay waiting for us to simply allow Jesus to reach out and touch us so we can truly see?

**Touched by an Angel** *Maya Angelou*

We, unaccustomed to courage  
exiles from delight  
live coiled in shells of loneliness  
until love leaves its high holy temple  
and comes into our sight  
to liberate us into life.  
Love arrives  
and in its train come ecstasies  
old memories of pleasure  
ancient histories of pain.  
Yet if we are bold,  
love strikes away the chains of fear  
from our souls.  
We are weaned from our timidity  
In the flush of love's light  
we dare be brave  
And suddenly we see  
that love costs all we are  
and will ever be.  
Yet it is only love  
which sets us free.

## 5TH SUNDAY IN LENT — MARCH 26, 2023



### Collect of the Day

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely be fixed where true joys are found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 37:1-14  
Psalm 130  
Romans 8:6-11  
John 11:1-45

### Preacher

Debie Thomas

### Reflection *Lodewijk Gelauff*

As we rapidly approach Holy Week, we read today about how Lazarus was raised from the dead. When I read one of these famous miracle tales, I occasionally still ponder some of the details. This year, I'm especially wondering about the apparent lack of urgency. Why did Jesus wait two full days, when He had so much love for Lazarus and his sisters? Why were they put through all of this suffering?

Perhaps Jesus foresaw the events that would unfold in Jerusalem, and was hesitant to go there? Or maybe it was only after witnessing Mary's tears, that he made up his mind to bring Lazarus back to life. When Jesus and His disciples arrived, several days had passed and it is clear that Lazarus was beyond human help. This makes me ponder other possibilities: Was Jesus testing the faith of the sisters and His followers? Or was He creating a situation that couldn't be explained away - even two thousand years later?

In the end, the reasoning behind it all does not diminish the magnificence. Jesus went to Bethany and restored Lazarus to the living in a way that foreshadowed His own death and resurrection. In this little town just outside of Jerusalem, such a "loud" miracle couldn't but put the authorities on the path towards seeking Jesus' death. I wonder if this maybe helped reinforce the faith of his loved ones and followers, giving them hope and comfort in the dark times that they will soon find themselves in.

### A Vision *Wendell Berry*

If we will have the wisdom to survive,  
to stand like slow-growing trees  
on a ruined place, renewing, enriching it,  
if we will make our seasons welcome here,  
asking not too much of earth or heaven,  
then a long time after we are dead  
the lives our lives prepare will live  
here, their houses strongly placed  
upon the valley sides, fields and gardens  
rich in the windows. The river will run  
clear, as we never know it,  
and over it, birdsong like a canopy.  
On the levels of the hills will be  
green meadows, stock bells in noon shade.  
On the steeps where greed and ignorance  
cut down

the old forest, an old forest will stand,  
its rich leaf-fall drifting on its roots.  
The veins of forgotten springs will have  
opened.

Families will be singing in the fields.  
In their voices they will hear a music  
risen out of the ground. They will take  
nothing from the ground they will not  
return,  
whatever the grief at parting. Memory,  
native to this valley, will spread over it  
like a grove, and memory will grow  
into legend, legend into song, song  
into sacrament. The abundance of this place,  
the songs of its people and its birds,  
will be health and wisdom and indwelling  
light. This is no paradisaal dream.  
Its hardship is its possibility.

# HOLY WEEK

## **PALM SUNDAY – APRIL 2**

8am: Spoken Eucharist in the Chapel  
10am: Sung Eucharist in the Church  
(both services begin on the Labyrinth Patio)

Palm Sunday moves from triumph to quiet reverence. We begin each service with a re-creation of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem using palms as a symbol of our worship and joyful hope. However, the mood turns somber, for he who is acclaimed is then judged as criminal and arrested. We tell the Passion Story, reminding us of the reality of human injustice and suffering, which leads us to the other services of Holy Week.



This Eucharist commemorates Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples in the tradition of the North African desert monasteries. It reflects Jesus' bittersweet farewell, in which he tells them of his love and makes one last attempt to illustrate the ministry to which he calls them by doing the work of a menial slave in washing their feet. It is this focus that gives the day its name. Mandatum, commandment in Latin, became "Maundy" in English. "A new commandment I give, that you love one another as I have loved you." The service begins in silence, with the Liturgy of the Word. We then process, chanting, to the church for the Eucharist. The altar is stripped and all ornamentation removed from the church in preparation for Good Friday. We depart in silence.

## **MAUNDY THURSDAY – APRIL 6**

6:15pm: Meal, Eucharist, and Stripping of the Altar  
(service begins in the Parish Hall)

## **GOOD FRIDAY – APRIL 7**

12 - 2pm: Prayer and Reflections on the Companions and Adversaries of Christ  
2 - 3pm: Rite of Reconciliation and Labyrinth Meditation  
4 - 6pm: Interactive Stations of the Cross for Children and Families

From noon to 2pm we will remember the people Jesus' encountered in his Passion, with prayers, music, and meditations offered by parishioners. At 2pm people are invited to walk a devotional Labyrinth Meditation, or engage the Rite of Reconciliation individually with a priest. At 4pm, a self-led Stations will be open, designed particularly for young people.

## **EASTER SUNDAY – APRIL 9**

5:30am Vigil: Holy Eucharist with Renewal of Baptism Vows

The Great Vigil begins on the patio with a fire, and continues with Baptism Renewal and Eucharist in the church.

This is the principal liturgy of the Christian year, the fullest act of Christian worship. It is the Christian Passover, the Paschal feast of the People of God. We gather in darkness and silence on the patio for the rekindling of the New Fire from which the Paschal Candle is lit. There we hear the history of salvation, told in dramatic presentations by various parishioners. We process into the church to remember our baptisms and to celebrate the first Eucharist

of Easter. And so, we are raised to new life with Christ. We reach the finale of the liturgical drama, and what happened to each of us when we were baptized is renewed in us together. We are part of the incredible story of God's salvation that has been going on throughout history.

8am: Breakfast

9:15am: Egg Hunt

10am: Holy Eucharist with Baptism  
The Feast of the Resurrection continues with a festive celebration of the Eucharist. The choir and a string quartet will lead us into a joyful proclamation of new life. Alleluia!



## Prayer and Image Credits

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Lent 3: “Living Water” by the Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Lent 4: “Son, Rise” by T. Denise Anderson

Lent 5: “Unbind Him” by Hannah Garrity

Holy Week Passion: “Why Have You Forsaken Me?” by the Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Holy Week Easter: “By Our Love” by Hannah Garrity

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