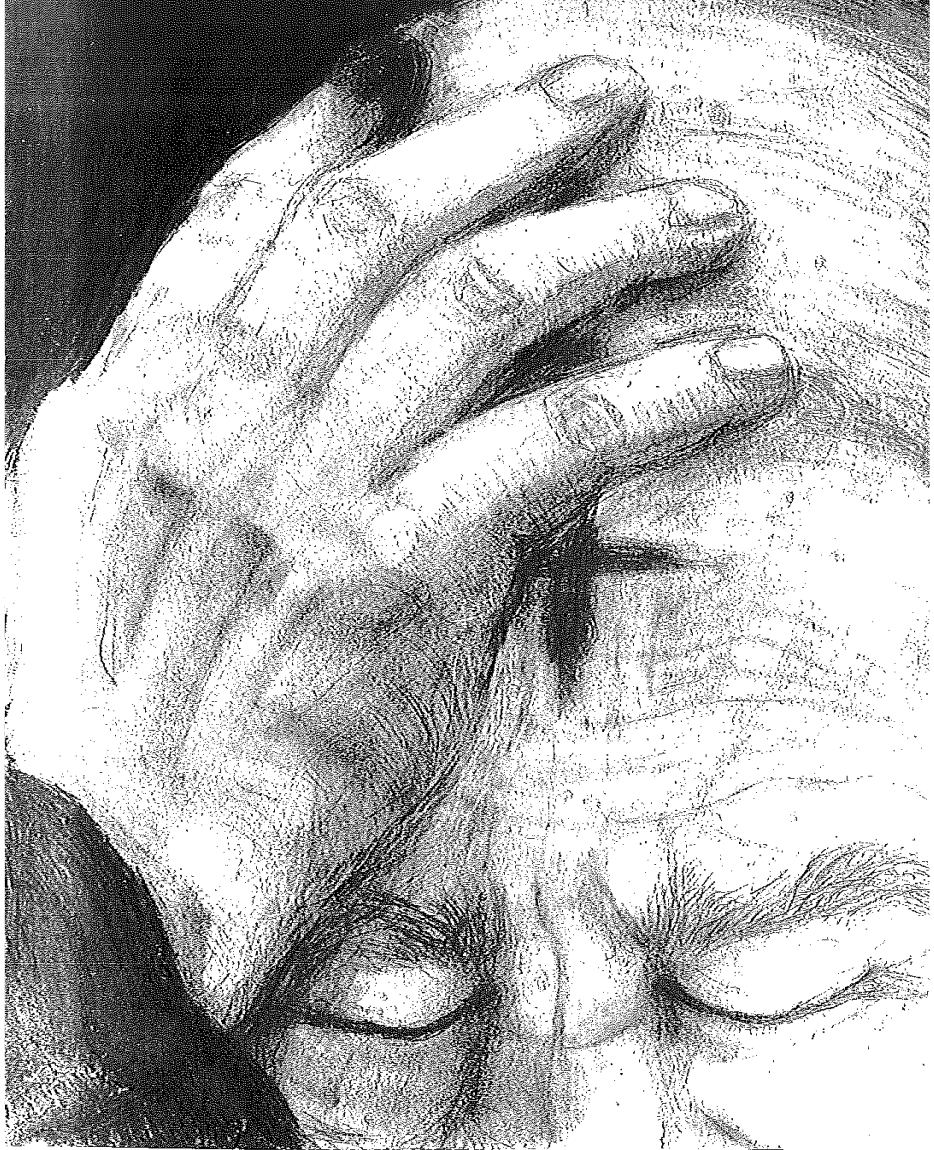




2021 Lenten Devotionals

Encounter Jesus

10th Anniversary Edition



Drawing by Lisa Kill

Encounter Jesus
2021 Lenten Devotional Booklet
10th Anniversary Edition

Abiding Savior Lutheran Church

In the year 2011 our theme for this Season of Lent is *Encounter Jesus*. The devotions in this booklet were written by members or former members of our congregation. Most of these people are still worshipping with us, some have moved away, and others we remember with gratitude in our hearts. As we enter Lent still under the restrictions of this pandemic, we thought this Lenten Devotional would remind us of a different time and also of better times ahead.

In this devotional there is a devotion for every day of Lent starting with Ash Wednesday and ending with Easter Sunday. Every Sunday in this devotional there is a gospel text where Jesus encounters someone or something including the devil, Nicodemus, a Blind Man, the woman at the well, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and finally, the cross.

Every week in this devotional booklet we hear from others who encounter Jesus and we reflect upon how we have encountered Jesus in our lives as well through events and encounters with other people. It is truly inspiring to grow closer to God through the experiences, thoughts, and words of our friends and neighbors who have shared the pews with us on Sunday mornings!

Enjoy this Lenten Devotional and the profound reflections of members of your own church family. As we journey through Lent together, we hope that you encounter Jesus, and Jesus encounters you, on every page of this devotional booklet.

God's blessings!

Pastor Ryan, Pastor Lisa and Deacon Brad

Wednesday, February 17

Ash Wednesday

As we begin our Lenten journey together, it is not begun with a celebration. Rather, it is begun with a humble reminder. At the Ash Wednesday worship services as the ashes are placed on our foreheads we hear the words, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” Wow! Those are words that will put us in our place. In those words we encounter our own mortality. None of us wants to die, but as this phrase tells us, we all will. And when we do, our bodies will return to dust. But our souls did not come from dust, our souls will live forever. And our hope lies in our faith and the promises of our God that for those who believe, after this life there will be eternal life in heaven.

But in these words we also encounter our Creator. Just as Adam was made from dust, we have been crafted and created by our God. By admitting that we are dust, we admit that we are not God. We humble ourselves before God and we swallow our own pride. Too often we think we know better than God. We do what we want to do instead of what God wants us to do.

So today, on Ash Wednesday, we remember that we are dust and to dust we shall return. We humble ourselves before God, admitting that we are in need of grace and forgiveness in our lives and admitting that we do not know better than God. Today we prepare our hearts and minds for the days and weeks ahead in this season of Lent.

*Lord, help me to be humble living a life of service toward you and toward others.
Amen.*

Thursday, February 18

One does not live by bread alone

Matthew 4:1-4

“One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Being dependent isn't a popular place to be. From a toddler who says, “Me do it myself,” to the high school-age student living at home and craving independence, most all of us have had a negative experience when it comes to being in the place of dependence. We want to be in charge and in control.

Maybe that is the highest hurdle when we read “One does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. To embrace it, is to declare our dependency. “I need you Lord for all my needs for daily living. In everything from food and shelter, work and friends to forgiveness and protection, I am dependent on You.

Jesus is famished and yet he lives into God's will, fully dependent on the Father.

Like Jesus, the tempter challenges our trust that God provides. We lay our burdens on Jesus. But, just when we think we have surrendered everything, something happens and we realize that we are holding on tightly to yet one more thing we'll solve ourselves.

What are you holding onto today? What problem or issue or worry has a grip on you?

Remember again, “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Lord Jesus thank-you for being our Bread of Life. Thank you that we can trust you for all we need. Thank you Lord that we can surrender everything to you and find peace and joy that passes all understanding.

Pastor Carol Sinykin
Former Pastor at ASLC

Friday, February 19

Do not put the Lord your God to the test.

Matthew 4:5-7

Prior to being led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness Jesus had been baptized by John the Baptist, with God the Father publicly acknowledging Him as His beloved son. What joy must have filled his heart as he prepared to begin his ministry. But to do so Jesus had to resist the temptation to assert his power as the Son of God. Satan was trying to entice Jesus into demonstrating his authority in spectacular ways, even quoting scripture to cast doubt on God's word and their relationship. But that wasn't God's will for Jesus' redemptive work on earth.

Jesus was facing these temptations in human flesh and blood. He was alone in the desert, poor, and weary after fasting for many days. It must have been very tempting to answer Satan's "If you are the Son of God..." with an, "I'll show you" type of response. Instead Jesus prevailed through his knowledge of scripture, the power of the Holy Spirit, and complete trust in His heavenly Father.

During this Lenten season we need to ask ourselves if we don't also "test" God.

Do we become so preoccupied with our busy lives that we neglect the spiritual nurturing we need to stand firm when challenges and temptations come our way? Do we sometimes end up misusing the very gifts and abilities God has given us in a way that causes imbalance in our lives? Then we "test" God by expecting Him to take care of us and "fix" things.

Temptation will come, the Bible is clear about that. But we have the same tools Jesus had to meet them: God's Word, prayer, the power of the Holy Spirit, and our relationship with a loving Heavenly Father. During this Lenten season take a moment to seek God's will for your life. Then make the changes, even small ones, moving toward being better equipped spiritually to meet the challenges you will inevitably encounter.

Take comfort in that Jesus has been there and knows what you are going through. God doesn't have to "prove" his love for us, that work is already done on the cross. Such pure grace on our behalf!

Dear Lord,

During this Lenten season help us reflect on all that Jesus has endured on our behalf because of your love for us. In thankfulness, help us to be more diligent in seeking your will for our lives and using the gifts of your Word, prayer, and the Holy Spirit as we journey through our daily lives here on earth.

Cheryl Bornhorst

Saturday, February 20

Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.

Matthew 4:8-10

(8-9) For the third test, the Devil took him to the peak of a huge mountain. He gestured expansively, pointing out all the earth's kingdoms, how glorious they all were. Then he said, "They're yours—lock, stock, and barrel. Just go down on your knees and worship me, and they're yours." (10) Jesus' refusal was curt: "Beat it, Satan!" He backed his rebuke with a third quotation from Deuteronomy: "Worship the Lord your God, and only him. Serve him with absolute single-heartedness."

This is the Devil's world and he will test us every chance he has. Even Jesus was not exempt from these temptations. The Devil may not offer us all the earth's kingdoms, as he did Jesus, but if he did, would we really be able to resist? Instead we are offered, time and time again, chances to turn our back on God. Chances to deny our neighbor. Opportunities to fall in love with things and other people instead of God. The question is, when tempted with such intriguing opportunities, what will you choose to do? Will you choose to walk into that temptation or will you follow Jesus' lead and tell Satan to "Beat it!"?

Jesus knows what it feels like to be tempted and so He enters into this time in the wilderness with us and helps remind us to rebuke the Devil and instead worship and serve God alone. This Lenten season gives you the opportunity to take a step back and look at where the Devil may be tempting you and allows you the chance to tell the Devil to back off and remember that we are made to worship and serve God alone, the creator of all we have and know.

Creator God, We thank you for this time in the wilderness and the chance for reflection and preparation. Help us to see the temptations in our lives and instead of clinging to them, help us to cling to you. Amen .

Pastor Kate Longtin
Former Seminarian at ASLC

Sunday, February 21

Sunday Temptation

Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus encounters the devil and goes to battle in the wilderness and the devil cannot win! The Holy Spirit gave him strength to stand fast by the power of God's Word to defeat the devil and all his empty promises.

On this first Sunday in Lent as we hear of Jesus encountering the devil in the wilderness, we are mindful that the devil, the evil one, the tempter comes to us in our own wilderness. He comes sneaking up on us when we are most vulnerable to try to lead us to despair, thinking that God cannot help us and doesn't care about our lives, or to pride, thinking that we can rely only on ourselves and our own strength. The evil one tries to pry us away from what God intends for our lives to take us away from God's Word and promise.

But the good news, the great news is that the devil can't win! Jesus battled the devil and all his empty promises on our behalf. Jesus has won the victory for us through his faithfulness. We don't go through life on our own strength; we go through life with the strength and faithfulness of our Lord who went to the cross and was raised from the dead to give us life in his name.

Hymn 229 A Mighty Fortress is Our God. "Though hordes of devils fill the land all threatening to devour us, we tremble not unmoved we stand, they cannot overpower us....Though life be wrenched away, They cannot win the day. The Kingdom's ours forever."

Lord Jesus you will never leave us in the wilderness alone. You encountered temptations on our behalf and you encounter us with your strong Word and promise to overcome the temptations we face. We pray in the Lord's prayer, lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen

Pastor Lisa Richardson Engen

Monday, February 22

Where have you encountered Jesus in your life?

I truly believe that I encounter Jesus at various times throughout each day, but it is definitely when I am struggling or going through tough times that I feel His presence most. Maybe it's because that is when I call on Him, or maybe it's because He recognizes his people's pain and knows He needs to intervene. Whatever the reason, it's not for me to know.

In a world that is so broken, and in a world where each person struggles daily with their own problems, it is very easy to focus on all the negatives in life. We wake up each day wanting life to go the best for us, but sometimes it's just not the way it works. We quickly point fingers and wish for a better life anytime a problem faces us head on. I am guilty of this, and if you are being truthful with yourself, I am guessing you are the same way at times.

I recently heard a song on KTIS that has changed my outlook on life-especially when things are not going the way I want them to. It's called *Before the Morning* by Josh Wilson.

Do you wonder why you have to feel the things that hurt you, if there's a God who loves you, where is He now? Maybe, there are things you can't see and all those things are happening to bring a better ending someday, somehow, you'll see, you'll see.

Chorus:

Would dare you, would you dare, to believe, that you still have a reason to sing, 'cause the pain you've been feeling, can't compare to the joy that's coming so bold on, you got to wait for the light press on, just fight the good fight 'cause the pain you've been feeling, it's just the dark before the morning My friend, you know how this all ends and you know where you're going, you just don't know how you get there so say a prayer, and hold on, cause there's good for those who love God, life is not a snapshot, it might take a little time, but you'll see the bigger picture.

In this song, we hear of the “bigger picture” God has for us, and in that, we must trust our God is looking out for us. God, through his son Jesus, enters our life at the most difficult times. It is in these times that we must cling to our faith and know how much He loves us.

There are many times, especially in our trials and tribulations, that we feel helpless and empty. The next time you feel this way, I challenge you to focus on where Jesus is in your life. If he is not a priority, make him one! The sense of peace and joy you will find in this is one of the most comforting feelings you will ever have! “So hold on, you got to wait for the light, press on, just fight the good fight, because the pain you’ve been feeling, it’s the dark before the morning.”

Andy Pothen

Tuesday, February 23

Tell about someone who helped you to encounter Jesus.

As the youngest of 8 children, I had the opportunity to spend lots of time with my mother.

In the winter my father would go to work on Monday morning and come home Friday evening. Because we had no roads, he would pull a 14 foot toboggan with food and other supplies for ten of us home every Saturday night. I watched and waited for him to appear. We were 8 children so it was quite a task to pull that toboggan four miles across the hills.

During the week the seven older children were in school. I was alone with my mother during the days. During that time, she would sing the songs that were to become the center of my life. "Have thine own way Lord", "Blessed be the Tie that Binds." "I need thee every hour." "Beautiful Savior" and many more. She told me that by the time I was eight years old I could sing twenty songs (I think she exaggerated a bit there.)

When WWII started, all five of my older brothers were in "Service". All but one was overseas. All survived.

During those years, there were many other folks that encouraged me to be "just who I am". My mother showed me how to be strong and trust in the will of God. During drought, war, sickness, aloneness and grief, my mother would lead me and the others who happened to be home, in prayer. Her prayers pointed me and the rest of my family to the strength of prayer, and to Jesus.

Harvey Glommen

Wednesday, February 24

Have you encountered Jesus through the gift of parenting?

Parenting children is tough but rewarding at the same time. We never expected to learn a lesson from our youngest daughter, Joy, when she was in the first grade. Johanna was being teased on the bus by three older girls. She would come home upset and didn't know what to do. Our first response was to call the school and demand that they make this little girl stop teasing our daughter. Then one day the kids came home on the bus and said that everything was fine. "What happened," we asked? Joy said that she sat with the girls that were bullying Johanna. She introduced herself and then introduced Johanna as her sister. From this point on the girls didn't bully or tease Johanna. When we asked Joy why she did this, she said that if they were friends with these girls, then they wouldn't tease Johanna anymore.

Joy taught us that sometimes making friends with our enemies can clear up any misunderstandings that exist between people. It was the easiest solution and in this case best for both sides.

Isaiah 11:6

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.

In your prayers tonight, pray for your enemies and those who are against you.

Janelle Schauer

Thursday, February 25

Jesus says we are to be “born of water and Spirit.
What does that mean to you?

Something is stirring. It’s still early, but there are seeds out there under the snow right now ready and waiting. They are safe while they are dormant; no worries, but they are filled with a life principle that defies explanation. It’s always ready to overcome difficulties and to burst into bloom.

That’s a mystery, but it has happened so often that we think we understand it. It’s what we call physical life.

Once when Jesus was talking to a man who had big questions, a man named Nicodemus (John 3), he spoke of another kind of life, the life of the spirit. Jesus said, “You enter the kingdom of God by being born of the Spirit.” (John 3:5) It’s not the same as physical life. It’s another dimension altogether. It’s real. It’s “More.” It is an awareness that there is a stupendous, magnificent, wonderful “More.” Jesus means at least this when he says Spirit. He says it takes Spirit to allow that spiritual life principle lying dormant in each of us, to burst into bloom.

Encountering Jesus in Lent clearly reveals the “More,” the spiritual, once again.

For more than twenty years among wonderful friends at Abiding Savior Bev and I helped plant seeds that eventually blossomed and bloomed. Some of them were our own children who in turn have planted and now see their children blossoming and blooming. We have all been born of the Spirit and now live in the kingdom of God that deals with injustice, oppression, hunger and homelessness.

Something is stirring. It happened to Nicodemus when he encountered Jesus. It’s happening now to us.

Pastor Stan Satre
Former Senior Pastor at ASLC

Friday, February 26

Nicodemus came to Jesus at night because he was afraid of what others might think.

Ho do we sometimes do the same today and why?

John 3:1-2

In the passage John 3: 1-2, Nicodemus, a Pharisee, goes to see Jesus at night and tells God that his followers (the Jews) and himself know Jesus is “the teacher who has come from God”. But what had me confused about this verse was, why did Nicodemus visit Jesus at night? Was he afraid of what others might think? Concerning his faith to Jesus? I thought, no way, this guy; the leader of the Jews is scared of what others might think about him visiting Jesus?

Although, surprisingly, this theory was quite relatable to me because I also, struggled with what people thought about my faith and how it defined me as a person. Although I’m not that important in terms of the responsibility that Nicodemus carried, the basic principle of how others can affect your judgment is the piece that I think everyone can relate to especially me.

There was a story that Pastor Lisa shared with me called “*You are Special*” by Max Luccado that sprang into my head when I realized Nicodemus’s and my problem. It was a story about a town where the people would give out stars and dots. The stars were given to those that were cool and dots were given to the boring or losers. There was one boy in the village that was given dots no matter what he did, until he had so many dots, that they were giving him dots just because he had dots! Then one day, he goes to meet the creator and the creator tells him that he is not dull and that he created him in likeness to him. He told the boy that if you believe in that, the dots will fall off. And they did.

God made us all perfect, and we shouldn’t be worried about what others think about when we pray or worship God. We should celebrate and rejoice! And that is why I no longer worry about the dots people place on me.

Thank you God for the good times and the bad times, and never let me forget how blessed I am to be your creation. Amen

Colin Owens

Saturday, February 27

Tell us about the way you felt at the baptism of your children.

"I was there to hear your borning cry, I'll be there when you are old. I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold."

When preparing for our first son Adam's baptism, my dad (a retired ELCA Pastor) asked if there was a special song we wanted incorporated into the worship service. Without hesitation I told him "Borning Cry" by John Ylvisaker. Every time I've heard and sung this song powerful emotions have swelled up in me. Knowing that God is with us every step of our lives - from the first cry we take to the last breath we take - brings such a feeling of serenity and wonderment. Listening to the words being sung during Adam's baptism (and two years later at Aaron's baptism) made me reflect on the gift God was giving both of these precious children.

On March 9, 2006, our third child was born. Unfortunately, unbeknownst to us or our doctor, our baby's lungs had filled with fluid. Once delivered Leah wasn't able to take a breath and we never heard her 'borning cry'. My father was present shortly after Leah's birth and once again baptized one of his grandchildren. During this special sacrament and after Leah's death, the words of "Borning Cry" echoed through my head. Leah never took a breath but God was with her and welcomed her into His arms. God was with Andy and me and the rest of our family during this terrible, unexpected loss.

God gave us the strength to attempt to have more children and we've been blessed now with Ryan and Rachel. At each of their baptisms we've had "Borning Cry" sung -- a powerful reminder that God is with us always.

Connie Clausen

Sunday, February 28

John 3:1-17

I remember when we didn't have any artificial light on our farm. The darkness could strike fear into one's heart. For example, the evening shift for milking was normally a pleasant interlude, but sometimes it turned into an uneasy journey because of the dark. Simple water buckets and feed bunks seemed ready to strike out of the shadows. Little wonder that my sister and I would sometimes race up the stairs in order to beat the shadows at their game.

My mother didn't like the darkness either. When the REA came to give us lights, much of the darkness went away. They claimed that the main bulb in the center of our farm yard would never go out. It was still a problem however; we knew that the lights including the main bulb could still go out victimized by a prairie storm. So mother lived with the knowledge that the lights which she treasured so much could go out any time. On the one hand she would turn off light bulbs that weren't being used. On the other hand she would sometimes scold me for using too little light while reading.

That's the real problem with our faith. We know that the lights that we depend on can sometimes darken and go out. There's still plenty of darkness that can fall on us. We need a light that will never go out.

John testifies that Jesus is the light of the world, a light which never goes out. His light keeps burning even when your dark thoughts sink too deeply into your "everydays." It can get to the point that you can't see any light at the end of the tunnel. But we must remember that John testifies that Jesus is THE light, for you and for the world. Even when we think we are lost, the eternal light waits to illumine our path and to lead us home.

Pastor Sheldon Tostengard
Former Pastor at ASLC and Seminary Professor

Monday, March 1

Never be thirsty
John 4:13-15

When I read these verses I thought of a great song we sang at Bible camp: "Fill My Cup Lord". The song is a prayer, one we can all pray today and everyday.

*Like the woman at the well I was seeking
For things that could not satisfy;
But then I heard my Savior speaking:
"Draw from the well that never shall run dry".*

*Fill my cup Lord, I lift it up, Lord!
Come and quench this thirsting of my soul; Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more-- Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole!*

*There are millions in this world who are craving the pleasures
earthly things afford; But none can match the wondrous treasure
That I find in Jesus Christ my Lord.*

*Fill my cup Lord, I lift it up, Lord!
Come and quench this thirsting of my soul; Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more-- Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole!*

*So, my children, if the things this world gave you Leave hungers
that won't pass away, My blessed Lord will come and save you,
If you kneel to Him and humbly pray:*

*Fill my cup Lord, I lift it up, Lord!
Come and quench this thirsting of my soul; Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more-- Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole!*

Tuesday, March 2

What does it say to you that Jesus is tearing down cultural walls by speaking to this Samaritan woman?
John 4:7-10

I've come to the conclusion that kids of today are much deeper thinkers than I was, at their age. Of course, they're exposed to more experiences in today's world and bombarded with many more ideologies.

Several years ago, my granddaughter Jessica, spent the weekend with us. At bedtime, after listening to her prayers, the conversation became quite thought-provoking. She asked, "How do we know our God is the right God?" (WOW !!) I stalled for a moment by discussing the freedom to worship as we choose. That led to the beliefs of Muslims, Hindus, Native Americans, etc. I know we need to be open to diversity of all religions and cultures, but we also need to be strong in preserving our Christian heritage.

I didn't want to come across judgmental nor did I want to appear prejudiced. I attempted to be respectful of all religions and still present a strong case for Christianity. She seemed satisfied. (I think she, silently, felt she got much more information than the question required.)

It is the walls of hate and prejudice, built for centuries, that have caused suffering, wars, and deaths. Just as Jesus tore down the cultural walls by speaking to the Samaritan woman, we need to reach out to people who may look, think and pray differently than ourselves. We may never know what influence we could have in a persons life until, in Christian love, we reach out to them. We are all Gods children.

Connie Johnson

Wednesday, March 3

Who was a role model in your life that helped to shape your values ethics?

It is nearly impossible for me to say that there is one specific role model in my life. With numerous states visited, hundreds of people encountered, and friendships made and broken, I believe that every single individual I had connected with could be a role model to me. Eighteen years later, I think it is safe to say that the people I look up to the most are my parents.

Whether I may be sick, angry, sad, ecstatic, or even confused, my parents have always been there for me. Not only are they there for support, but they are there to love. Each time I go to my parents, they teach me a new lesson or give me a new insight on a way to look at a situation. With all of their wisdom and sometimes unwanted anger, I believe that they have helped me shape my values and ethics and without them I would not be where I am in life.

My parents can irritate me at times, but in the long run, I realized that it is only for the best. They have taught me to always chase after my dreams and aspirations, treat others with respect, have manners, do well in school and everything that I do, but I think you get the point I'm trying to get at here. No matter what time of the day it is, where I am, my parents are always there for me. Without all of the life lessons they have taught me, and the motivation to always push me so I can be the best I can be, I would not be who I am today.

Thursday, March 4

When we encounter Jesus, we are changed. How has knowing Jesus changed you in your life?

Having Jesus in my life has brought me good and bad memories but most of all joy. I was born in a Christian home. My grandfather, who I knew as my dad until I was 8 years old was a pastor of a Presbyterian Church in Sumbe Village in Cameroon. When I left the village to live with my birth parents in the city, they never went to church. But I continued going to church every Sunday even though the house maids said the only reason I went to church was to run away from picking greens. That brought me a lot of pain. I confided to one of the babysitters in our house that I wanted to run to the convent to become a nun. She told my mom and she made my life miserable.

I attended a Presbyterian secondary school. There was a lot of praying and Bible studies. I excelled at school, but little did I know no boy would ever ask me out because I was a “born again Christian”. I was religious and liked music. In my senior year even my girlfriends did not want to hang out with me because their boyfriends would think they are also “born again”. I was lonely inside and said, “why me”. But whenever I studied the Bible or sang a song from our hymnal the words comforted me within.

When I entered the University. I hid my beliefs so that I could fit in with my friends. One evening a friend handed me a paper that said, a musical group from America will be singing at the Baptist Church and she asked me to go with her. I responded yes. While at the concert I “Encountered Jesus” when the group sang “O’ Master Let Me Walk with Thee”. The words made me cry and from then on I was not hiding anymore. Now those same people who made fun of me for my faith needed me to share my faith and pray for them.

O Master, let me walk with thee in lowly paths of service free; tell me thy secret; help me bear the strain of toil, the fret of care.

Help me the slow of heart to move by some clear, winning word of love; teach me the wayward feet to stay, and guide them in the homeward way.

Teach me thy patience; still with thee in closer, dearer company, in work that keeps faith sweet and strong, in trust that triumphs over wrong;

I hope that sends a shining ray far down the future’s broadening way, in peace that only thou canst give, with thee, O Master, let me live.

Frida Etta

Friday, March 5

How do you tell others about the love of God?

John 4:28-30, 39-42

How do you tell others about God? When I was in Confirmation and I was asked this question I was always afraid to say anything because I knew that I was not doing a very good job of sharing my faith with others. Now that I am older, I realize that I didn't openly talk about my beliefs, but, the way I acted reflected my faith.

I learned this the first time I went on a mission trip, in the summer of 2009. On the bus down to Mississippi I was really nervous and had almost wished that I had not signed up for this trip, I mean, who was I kidding, how was I supposed to help build a house or paint things without causing damage to the house or myself? When we stopped in Mississippi I realized that it was too late to turn back and I tried it anyways.

While on this mission trip I formed a really meaningful relationship with Francis, a woman whom we helped clear out her house so they could fix it. She told us parts of her story and we just listened and told her about us. Later on in the week she told us that she was on Facebook, once we found her we read her page it said that she had been visited by angels that week. Reading that post made me feel really good about what I was doing and I realized that, through my actions and behavior I was sharing the greatness of God with everyone around me.

Dear God, thanks for working through me to share your greatness with others, and please help others find their special way to show your love and goodness as well. Amen

Hayley Bahnemann

Saturday, March 6

Where have you encountered Jesus in your life?

It was a quiet evening in September 1975, I answered a call to a private home in the city of Mounds View, it was a medical call. I was about half way there when I received a call for #720 my call number advising me that there had been a shooting there, and that the police were notified and I should be careful. As I drove, I prayed to the Lord to be with me. When I was a short distance from the house I turned off my red lights and siren to attract as little attention as possible. I took my First Aid case and walked up to the front door and knock and entered.

Three people greeted me. One was sitting on a stool and the other two looking in his mouth. I looked around and saw a woman lay on the floor she had been shot in the head and I knew that she was dead. I then walked into a bedroom where there was a man lying in bed, he also had been shot in the head. I checked for any signs of life but found none.

I then went back to talk to the other three to find out what was wrong with his mouth. Was something stuck in this mouth? I told him to pull it out. It was a bullet. At this time the police arrived and I showed him what I had found and asked that he would give me a report for my records and Fire Department.

When I was finished and was leaving the house, I said a prayer of thank you to God for having given me the strength and courage to do my job in the face of such terrible circumstances. No doubt, as I worked that day, Jesus was right there with me.

God of love, we know that you are always with us. Give us courage, patience, wisdom, and strength to live you will. Amen.

Sunday, March 7

Samaritan Woman

John 4:5-42

This nameless woman from Samaria came alone in the heat of the day. Jesus met her at the well as he was walking from Galilee to Judea. Most Jews avoided going through Samaria at all costs, for Jews and Samaritans hated each other even though they shared the same roots.

Jesus asked her for water as she was drawing water from the well. Jesus could see her pain. Jesus tells the woman about living water. "Sir, where do you get that living water?" Jesus answered, "The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." She answered, "Sir, give me this water so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming back here. I know the Messiah is coming, when he comes he will proclaim all things to us." "I am he," Jesus answered, "the one who is speaking with you."

Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman at the well and her life was changed. She ran to the village with joy and wonder, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" Come and see! The Samaritans in the village asked Jesus to stay with them and many believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony and they too encountered Jesus and proclaimed "we have heard for ourselves and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

Lord Jesus, thank you that you meet us as you met the woman at the well. You know our sin, brokenness, hurts and the burdens we carry. In the waters of Baptism you give us water gushing up to eternal life, you feed us at your table of grace with forgiveness, life and salvation. You send us out in our daily lives to tell others with our words and actions, 'come and see' Jesus, the Savior of the world. He will give you springs of water gushing up to eternal life.

Pastor Lisa Richardson Engen

Monday, March 8

Tell us about someone who helped you to encounter Jesus.

Do you remember who introduced you to Jesus? I do. It seems like only yesterday I was playing ball with friends at the park when a new kid asked if he could join us. Some of us didn't mind and others were hesitant. After a few moments it was agreed to let the new kid play, he introduced himself as Philip.

Little did I know this was the beginning of my faith journey and it was Philip, who would introduce me to "Jesus." Throughout the summer when I felt things weren't going well, Philip would always say, "keep the faith brother!" I heard this phrase throughout that summer and beyond. One day I said, why are you always saying "keep the faith brother" and his response was in order for us to develop a relationship with Jesus, we needed to keep the faith.

His answer led to many questions I had about Jesus and his role in our lives. Philip seemed to always have an answer that made sense. Even though some of my friends felt it was odd someone our age would talk so freely about Jesus, I was always hungry to ask more questions and hear what he had to say. People even started to call him a "Jesus Freak" but it never deterred him from believing in what he had to say.

When I look back, I am so grateful I was able to make a lifelong friend. I wonder what would have my life been like if Philip, a true disciple, had never entered my life and introduced me to Jesus. Do you remember who introduced Jesus to you? I do!

Tuesday, March 9

How does our faith help us to see the world better?

John 9: 24-25

In this passage, the Pharisees are interrogating a man Jesus recently healed of blindness. Because Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath, the Pharisees are pushing the blind man for details about the healing so they can show Jesus to be a sinner for healing someone on the Sabbath.

They say to the blind man, “Give glory to God! We know this man [Jesus] is a sinner.” The Pharisees aren’t telling the blind man to praise God when they say “Give glory to God.” Instead, they’re actually commanding the blind man to “tell the truth” (or at least the version of the truth they want to hear.) The Pharisees say they know Jesus is a sinner, but the blind man simply says he doesn’t know whether or not Jesus is a sinner, but what really matters is that his vision has been restored.

As a Christian, it’s natural to have questions about God, our faith, and our world. Even though we don’t have all the answers, we (like the blind man) can say, “It doesn’t matter that I don’t have all the answers. What matters is that I believe in God and have experienced God’s presence in my life.” When others question our beliefs, we can respond the same way. It’s our experience of God that matters, not knowing the answer to every question we encounter. In this way, we can see the world through the eyes of belief and faith.

Gracious God, be present in my life. Let others see your love and grace through me in every way, even when I don’t have all the answers. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Wednesday, March 10

In the Lenten Play for this week, Samuel Jacob learns from the faith of a blind viola player. Who in your life has taught you through the example of their faith?

I am thankful to God for placing people in my life, at just the right times, who led me to discover my gifts. As I look back over my life, I know that God was watching over me, helping me nurture my dreams. He gave me two parents who encouraged me as I became a musician. My mother sat beside me as I practiced the piano. I grew up listening to my father play the trumpet which made me want to learn to play an instrument in the band. They found good music teachers for me. My elementary, junior high, senior high and college band directors were fun, had a passion for music and high expectations which pushed me even further. My parents never missed a concert. The handbell directors at Abiding Savior introduced me to a new way to express myself musically.

God also placed people in my life that led me to share my faith and love with children. The Sunday School coordinator at the church in which I grew up was (and still is) a wonderful, encouraging and loving woman. I learned so much from her when I first started teaching Sunday School at the age of 23. That continues at Abiding Savior where I am now helped and encouraged by Linda Weiner. My husband's former co-worker was a day care provider prior to working at Western Bank. When I met her, I was looking for a way to be at home with my new baby, yet still contribute to the family income. She was a mentor to me as I became a licensed day care provider in 1988.

Ten years ago this March, I lost my brother Chris, who died suddenly and unexpectedly at the age of 35. While still submerged in grief, my first "normal" activity after Chris's funeral was going back to handbell rehearsal. There, I was greeted and comforted by the loving and caring people I had been ringing with for 13 years. As I struggled, I was told that music, once my joy, would now be my solace. Indeed.

Dear Lord, Thank you for showing me the way to fulfill your plans for me. Thank you for bringing people into my life who have helped and encouraged me as I discovered where my strengths lie. May others know the joy that comes from being open to the dreams that you have for us and to the people who help us realize them. Amen.

Jackie Peterson

Thursday, March 11

Jesus healing of the blind man was nothing less than a miracle.
Does God still perform miracles? What are they?

The devotional reading and meditation of this week continues with the gospel of John, Chapter 9. Our thoughts are directed to the story of Jesus healing the blind man. This certainly was a Miracle. Jesus preformed a Miracle right there on the road. The disciples asked Jesus as to whose sin had caused this disability. It was the belief of the time that sinning caused such disabilities. Jesus answered that neither this man nor his parents had sinned but that he was born blind so the God's works might be reviled in him.

Miracles, what are they? The answer was given by Jesus in this story.

Miracles are those events that are unexplainable, that happen. In a dictionary it states that miracles are occurrences that do not have scientific bases to their explanation. In my thinking we use the word frequently and for a variety of reasons. Maybe it was getting a project completed before the deadline. A news reporter says that it was a small miracle that happened. Maybe it is the healing of the sick. As I write that I need to say 'me'. It is nearly ten years ago that I recovered for an illness that often has another outcome. Others as well as myself say that my recovery was a miracle. In my situation so many people were instrumental in my recovery, from the highly trained doctors and other medical personnel, to the many prayers that were said, to the many people who cared for me when I could not be alone, and to my family. God reviled His works in all who helped me.

Does God still perform Miracles? Yes, of course He does.

Heavenly Father, Help us to see the Miracle of You in our neighbor. Amen.

Friday, March 12

“Was blind, but not I see” is a famous line from the hymn Amazing Grace. What does this hymn mean to you?

Not unlike the author of this most enduring hymn, before his conversion, I too was awash in sin, living life as an infidel devoid of faith. Because I was spiritually blind I was unable to realize that the grace of a loving God had all along been bringing me “through many dangers, toils and snares.”

For me and many others, I’m sure, pride is the biggest stumbling block that prevents us from recognizing the need for a savior in our lives. It’s humiliating to have to admit we are sinners helpless to solve our human problem through our own efforts. After 53 years my pride was finally overcome during a persistent physical affliction that brought me to my knees as I contritely cried out to Jesus, acknowledging Him as my Lord and Savior and pleading for His mercy and healing. Even though I didn’t experience instant healing in a physical sense I benefited spiritually. For I’m no longer “lost but now am found” in Christ and no longer “blind but now I see” led by the Spirit of God. What a joy it is to know that the sacred verses of this beloved hymn now apply to me at long last.

So when around us we see the decay of our life, when every earthly hope of redemption has failed us, when those who we love cannot help us, when we have tossed our last log on the fire and all the embers have flickered out, it is at this point that God’s hand reaches out to us, offering His most magnanimous gift of AMAZING GRACE. All we have to do is accept it.

*Merciful God, thank you for the gift of your grace. Remind me that I belong to you.
Amen.*

Jim Hesselgrave

Saturday, March 13

Encountering Jesus: how do I experience Sabbath in my life?

Last summer in Galveston, Texas, our daily objective was relationship! Even if we accomplished little of the physical goals of the mission trip, we were commissioned by the leadership to get to know people. The relationships within our work groups flourished. Every one of us stretched outside of our comfort zones and got to know people we had never met. Relationships, big and small, are what made the trip meaningful.

So what does God want with us more than anything else? Relationship! The most important relationship we will ever need and want is with our Heavenly Father. In John 9, the Pharisees were upset; claiming Jesus sinned by healing on the Sabbath. The Sabbath, (our Sunday) was the day the Pharisees insisted people were not to do any work, of any kind. They did not understand that the healing love of Jesus supersedes all human law. For God's highest law is to love and honor Him, followed by loving our neighbors.

The 3rd commandment is "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy". I have heard that in Hebrew, holy means to be "set-apart" (different from the rest).

So how do you experience Sabbath in your life? How do you set-apart or make Sunday different? Is it a day to get stuff done and get caught up? Is it a day to rest and watch TV? Do you go to work or to practice? Is it the day to get homework done? These things are not themselves right or wrong; I've certainly used Sundays to do these things.

What is most important is how we use this day to honor God and to grow our relationships with Him and our neighbors.

My suggestions is to start Sunday (and every day) asking God "I want to know you. How may I best honor and serve you Lord?" ...then, listen!

Curt Johnson

Sunday, March 14

Blind Man

John 9:1-41

In the text for today we hear of the healing of the man born blind. He receives not only physical healing but also the miracle of the healing gift of faith and what it means to live life in Jesus' name. We know the saying "seeing is believing" but in this text we hear "believing is seeing". It is through the gift of faith that our eyes are opened to see Jesus as the light of the world.

Jesus came to the blind man in his darkness to take away the darkness and bring the light of faith. The Pharisees condemned and mocked the blind man claiming they could "see" because they kept all the laws and regulations yet they were the ones who remained blind and in the dark. They could not see Jesus among them.

The blind man's eyes continued to be opened to see Jesus. After he had been cast out, Jesus found him and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" The blind man answered, "who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him and it is he who speaks to you." He said, "Yes Lord, I believe."

*Open our eyes Lord, we want to see Jesus. Open our ears Lord and help us to listen.
Open our eyes Lord, we want to see Jesus.*

Pastor Lisa Richardson Engen

Monday, March 15

Jesus visits Mary and Martha

Luke 10:38-42

When Dave told me the Bible verses I had been assigned I had to ask him if he had bribed Pastor Lisa. You see I AM Martha. I am the one in the extended family who NEEDS to be sure all the details are taken care of. I organize the family gatherings and events. I am the eldest of 3 children. I am a nurse. It is my job to take care of others.

In researching for this devotional I read many sermons and commentaries. One writer noted that at this time in history women were not permitted to study scripture with a rabbi, yet Jesus considers Mary to be a worthy student and obviously approves of her interest in his teachings. In the story that proceeds this in Luke 10 Jesus tells of the good Samaritan and admonishes us to care for others. Isn't this a little confusing? It's OK for Mary to study with him but when Martha tries to prepare a meal she is told she worries too much!

I can relate to Martha when she feels resentment that Mary is not helping with the chores. After all Jesus has just arrived at her home, likely with his disciples. Who wouldn't be hard pressed to "whip up a meal" for 13 guests on the spur of the moment? Yet here Mary is sitting at Jesus feet. It appears that she is going to leave all the details of hosting Jesus and his disciples to Martha.

Martha becomes frustrated and TELLS Jesus to have Mary help her. Jesus response is to tell Martha not to be so distracted and to follow Mary in making the good choice, that which can not be taken from her. Truth is there is a little of Mary and Martha in most of us. The church needs us both. Our job is to figure out how to balance Mary with Martha.

Oh Lord, give us the discernment to listen to your teachings. Help us to clear the busyness of our lives to be receptive to your teachings. Give us the understanding to know when to be Mary and when to be Martha. Amen

Sheryl Rogge

Tuesday, March 16

Mary washes Jesus Feet John 12:1-8

Even though Jesus knew there was a plot against his life, he returned to the area near Jerusalem, Bethany, to visit with his good friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. During supper Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure lard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The fragrance filled the house.

Judas (who was to betray Jesus) complained that the ointment should have been sold and the money given to the poor. He was a thief and did not care for the poor. He pilfered from their treasury for himself. Judas' reaction is a sign of his defection. His heart did not care for the poor or for Jesus.

Mary's heart overflowed with love and she wanted to show her love for Jesus by this spontaneous action. Jesus foresaw his death and said, "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial. The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me." The anointing is the last rite in preparation for burial. Her loving actions in no way neglected the poor.

Let us prepare our hearts in love as we now think of Jesus' life, his death and his resurrection. What acts of love can we do in his name? What burdens can we carry? What spirits can we lift? What can we give because we care?

Dear Heavenly Father, help others to see Jesus in me! Amen.

Wednesday, March 17

Share with us about one of your life teachers.

When I was asked to write about one of my life teachers, I had no idea who my life teacher was. I know God gives us many. Some we don't even realize, but who were mine? Then my mom and I started to think about some life teachers at church. Then I realized my former confirmation leader is one of my life teachers!

When I first found out who my leader was I was scared. I'd never heard her name before or even saw her at church. But when we did meet, I met a kind, happy, wonderful woman with a very strong faith. She helped my faith grow by answering my questions about God, sharing with us her faith and really just listening to what we had to say. I learned from her and the confirmation program that God is always with us and God is listening to us. He wants us to pray to him and tell him both the good and bad things in our lives. She also inspired the whole group to use our talents of acting. I'm so lucky to have her as a life teacher and I hope you have met life teachers that strengthen your faith.

Megan Sangren

Thursday, March 18

At the death of his friend Lazarus, Jesus wept.

What does it mean to you that Jesus was not only God, but fully human living here among us and experiencing our human emotions?

This is the shortest verse in the Bible, but this is one of the most powerful as well. For me, this message gives me the help that I need to get through the tough things that life throws at me. The God that I believe in feels my pain, shares in my struggles, identifies with my losses, even weeps at the death of a loved one. I can go to him at any time with anything that gets me down, makes me sad, frustrates me, confuses me, worries me, angers me...He has been through all of this, and He will be with me, comforting and sharing in my struggles. After all, he wept over the death of his friend, even when he knew the promise of eternal life for this friend. He knows our every need. We have all that we need if we call on Him for help.

Friday, March 19

Jesus experienced grief at Lazarus death. This shows us that God Grieves with us in our lives as well.

How has your faith helped you to deal with grief in your life?

Losing someone very close to you is an overwhelming grief. Life without them is almost unthinkable. Jesus seems very remote and you wonder where He is.

Then you begin to experience the expressions of sympathy in words and acts of others—relatives, friends and neighbors—and you realize that you are not alone and that Jesus is manifesting Himself through those words and acts. He expresses His grief by calling others to minister to you.

Although you have now encountered Jesus through the actions of others, you have still not yet encountered Him inside of yourself. When you are alone, you still wrestle with the same question - “How can I go on with my life without my partner?” It is then that we encounter Jesus within ourselves by remembering what we have read in the Bible and been taught as the foundation of our faith. Death is not the end of existence for those who believe in Christ. Our loved one is with God as we will also be when we die. It is our task to continue living our life and allow others to encounter Christ through our actions.

Lord, we pray that we may remember our grief when we see others grieving and that remembrance will spur us to minister to them just as You have ministered to us in our grief.

Saturday, March 20

Tell about someone who helped you to encounter Jesus

A second slice of pizza, keys locked in a car, I don't even know her name yet she helped me encounter Jesus.

Julene and I had just finished sharing a slice of pizza at the snack bar at Costco when we decided we wanted one more slice. As I sat waiting for Julene to order it, a woman came up to me and asked if I had cancer (cap on head is a dead give-away). She then proceeded to ask if I believed in prayer and if it would be okay to pray with me. I have never been in a situation like that before, but I told her that yes, it would be okay. She sat down, placed her hand on my arm and prayed for complete healing of my body right there in the snack area of Costco. After we were done praying, she told me that she doesn't normally go to that Costco, but she was visiting someone in a nearby hospital and decided to run in quickly for a few items. She accidentally locked her keys in her car, so she was sitting in the snack area waiting for someone to come unlock her car.

Had she not locked her keys in the car, or had we not still been hungry we would've not met this woman who unknowingly helped me encounter Jesus on a Saturday afternoon in the middle of Costco. It was a powerful reminder that Jesus is ALWAYS with us and we can encounter Him anywhere.

Sunday, March 21

Jesus Encounters Mary, Martha, and Lazarus John 11:1-41

We have all experienced deep sadness at the loss of a loved one. Sadness not unlike that of Mary and Martha at the death of their brother, Lazarus. Lazarus was a friend of Jesus', and Jesus was even moved to tears at the death of his friend. How comforting to know that Jesus, our Lord and Savior, knew the same grief, the same loss, the same pain we feel at the loss of a loved one. Jesus knows our grief and our loss.

In this text for the Gospel of John, Jesus raises his friend Lazarus from the dead. How often we would like to have Jesus appear and bring a loved one back from the dead? However, Jesus doesn't do that for us. Partly because Jesus didn't bring Lazarus back from the dead to eliminate his own personal grief. Instead, he brought him back as a sign for the people so that they might believe.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 14 that "whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." Dying is a part of life. Our goal and purpose is not to live forever, but to live lives devoted to God and when we die, to be raised again in heaven with God. While we are here on earth, we will lose loved ones and experience grief. But we can also take comfort in knowing that God will raise us, and raise our loved ones, just as Jesus raised Lazarus.

Lord, comfort us in our times of grief and strengthen us with your promises of eternal life with you. Amen.

Monday, March 22

Triumphant Entrance into Jerusalem

Matthew 21:1-11

Jesus was coming to Jerusalem!! The disciples went to the next village to get the donkey and her colt. They announced to the people that Jesus, the King, was coming. Clothes were put on the donkey for Jesus to sit on. People spread clothes and branches on the road. There was much preparation for the arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem.

Jesus will be coming again as our King. What preparations are you making for His arrival? Are you getting yourself ready? Are you making the road clear for Jesus to arrive?

There were people meeting Jesus on the way to Jerusalem. There were people following Him. They were all shouting “Hosanna, Hooray, Save us!! Praise Him who comes in the name of the Lord!”

When Jesus comes to us, what will you be shouting? Will you be asking Him to save you? Will you shout praises in the name of the Lord?

Everyone was excited when Jesus reached Jerusalem. Some asked, “Who can this be?” Others answered, “This is Jesus!!”

Are you excited about Jesus coming again? Will you proudly tell others, “This is Jesus, my King!”

During Lent we are reminded about the events that lead up to the crucifixion of Jesus, but it is also a time for us to prepare for His return. It is a time for us to get our hearts ready.

Heavenly Father, We know you are coming again. Help us to be watching, waiting, and preparing for your return. Help us to clear the road of other distractions, and focus on our relationship with you. Come into our hearts, and guide us to do your will. Help us to reach out to others and tell them about you, our wonderful Lord, our King, and our Savior. In Jesus name we pray, Amen

Tuesday, March 23

Teaching in the Temple

Matthew 21:12-17

v. 13 – “It is written” he (Jesus) said to them, “My house will be called a house of prayer”.

Herod’s temple and the sacrificial system of the Old Testament and in Jesus’ day no longer exist for us. Jesus was our once and for all sacrificial lamb when he died on the cross for our sins replacing the old sacrificial system. All believers in Jesus are told in I Cor. 6:19 “...your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you...”. So now all of us who believe in Jesus are “temples”. What does Jesus see in my “temple” that offends him? What does he see in your “temple” that offends him? Jesus wants to cleanse our “temples” just as he cleansed Herod’s temple in his day. He wants our bodies to be places of prayer, worship and openness to him. He wants to rid us of all that interferes with our relationship with him—such things as dishonesty, taking advantage of others, covetousness, pride, anger, an unforgiving spirit, stubborn self will, impure thoughts, etc.

Are we willing to open our “temples” up to Jesus today, ask him to show us those things he wants to cleanse from our lives and then work with Jesus to rid our “temples” of all that keeps us from a good and faithful relationship with him?

*Lord Jesus, Help me to be willing to allow you to cleanse my temple today and every day of all that is offensive to you and keeps me from a right relationship with you.
Amen.*

Wednesday, March 24

Who has been a life teacher for you and what have they taught you about God?

Do you remember your first encounter with Jesus? Perhaps it was when you attended Sunday School and heard Bible stories. Maybe it occurred during your confirmation days or while you listened to a particular sermon that had special meaning for you. If you were baptized as an infant (as I was); you likely do not remember the first encounter.

If you've attended the mid-week Lenten services at Abiding Savior, you have seen the pageant series of "The Life Teachers of Samuel Jacob". This fictional man is a lonely resident in a nursing home... lonely that is until high school student, Kelly, visits him on a "chance encounter". At first, Kelly comes alone and as she and Samuel Jacob engage in conversation, he reveals a story of a life teacher from his past. Every week, Kelly returns with a friend and Samuel Jacob shares a store of another life teacher. Each of the first four weeks we learn of four individuals who made an impact on his life. The fifth week concludes with a visit from Kelly, her friends and a pastor. Samuel Jacob dies during this visit; but not before all share in prayer and he receives communion. Just as Samuel Jacob revealed four of his "Life Teachers" to us, so have I considered the four individuals to be my life teachers: They were a co-worker of mine in my first job after graduation, my boss in Syracuse, New York, and a 94 ½ year old former league baseball player.

The fourth one was Reverend Emerson Urelius. He was my pastor at Redeemer Lutheran (1947-1954). On November 26, 1950 I was confirmed. Through the years moves and miles separated us. But about 12 years ago I discovered his address in Austin, Texas and Christmas correspondence began. Shortly after New Year's this year, I wrote asking if he would be open for a visit the weekend after Easter. There was no immediate answer, then I receive a reply on February 8 from his wife. In the envelope was a funeral bulletin with a letter. Pastor Urelius died January 25, 2011 at 94 ½ years of age. I am fortunate to have received Christian guidance from him.

Thank you Lord for being my Savior. May I continue our encounter through daily devotions, prayer and by communion. Amen.

Warren Woods

Thursday, March 25

Let the Little Children Come Matthew 19:13-15

Scripture: “Then little children were being brought to Him in order that He might lay His hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; [14] but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” [15] And He laid His hands on them and went on His way.”

In my mind’s eye, I picture the framed print of “Jesus and the Little Children” whenever I read this scripture. His gentle touch, His gentle smile and the gathering of children around His feet remind me of our God who tenderly cares for us all...young and old ...for we are all called “Children of God”! We need not be a little child to gather around his feet and gaze into His loving eyes and feel His gentle touch. He is the shepherd who tends to His flock with unconditional love and unconditional terms. ... and, through that love, we know He will always be by our side with each breath we take.

God blessed our family with a beautiful little girl, Abigail Marie. I know she is a Child of God, for I see Abby at the feet of Jesus in her smile, in her eyes, and the way she folds her little hands when we pray. I hold her in my arms and, as she sleeps, marvel at the wonderful miracle God has given to us. We sometimes become so involved in day-to-day tasks that we forget to stop and remind ourselves what beautiful miracles our children really are. We become frustrated when they misbehave and anxiously await bedtime when quietness can occur. There is something about being a grandparent that makes one overlook those frustrations...we learn how rewarding it is to give them our time, take them in our arms and feel their gentle hug. ...a true gift of love. “See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God.” ... and, so we are.

Friday, March 26

Jesus washes his disciple feet
John 13: 1-20

In the Old Testament, as the people of God approach what will become their homeland, they are repeatedly told to set a good example so that those who see them will be attracted to the God they serve. In the New Testament, Paul cautions his readers to set a good example so that those who see them will glorify the God they serve. In today's text from John, Jesus tells his followers to take note of the example he has set and do likewise. Time after time this notion of "setting a good example" is scripture's way of teaching us how to live our lives.

In this classic Maundy Thursday text Jesus washes his disciples' feet. It is the perfect example of a master doing a task normally reserved for a servant. It is the ultimate humble action, performed here by the King. And Jesus calls what he has done an **example that the disciples' themselves should follow**.

Folks, if it's good advice for a first century disciple, it's also good advice for us!

So here is your challenge. Take an inventory of your life to determine what kind of example you are setting. If you discover that you are falling short (and that's exactly what everyone should discover), here's a remedy. In his *Explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed*, Luther reminds us that it is the job of the Holy Spirit to "call, gather, enlighten and sanctify us." In a sense, this means that part of the Spirit's work is to help us be a "good example" with our lives. Use this prayer as a way of beginning to make that possible: "*Holy Spirit, make my life an example that is worthy of one who names Jesus as Savior. Help me to be a servant, as Jesus was. Amen.*"

Pastor Larry Gedde
Former Senior Pastor of ASLC

Saturday, March 27

A new Beginnings
John 13:31-35

The excited young bride and groom . . . the heart transplant recipient . . . the college student on graduation day. What can these people possibly have in common? The answer is ‘an end and a new beginning.’

“Therefore, when he [Judas] was gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.’” Judas’ departure to begin his betrayal of Jesus is a sad scene. Yet Jesus’ brief pronouncement of glorification takes on the opposite tone! Why? Jesus is pronouncing the end of His work on earth and the beginning of the Passion. Judas’ betrayal catapults His and God’s redemptive work. It is a new beginning.

Then Jesus speaks of another new beginning. He commands, “. . . as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

Jesus’ command is the beginning of a new love no one but the disciples has ever experienced. Their daily walk with Jesus taught them this love. Now, with Jesus’ passion, the disciples will be bound by this unique love. It is a love associated with Christ and recognized by others as embodied in Christ. It is a love that opens believers’ hearts to others. It is a love that we, too, can experience if we love as Jesus loved. It can be a new beginning for each of us at any point in life.

Heavenly Father, thank you for being my new beginning. Help me to love others as you love me. Lead me to walk in your love and share it with others. Amen.

Sunday, March 28

Palm Sunday
Matthew 21:1-11

The puzzle piece that is so often missing in Palm Sunday is the why. Why would Jesus come quietly, humbly seated on a donkey into the place that he knew was going to be the place of his own destruction? Why does he choose to live his life boldly, peacefully riding into the heart of the greatest storm of destruction this world has ever known? Why does God in human form ride on a beast of peace, carelessly into the jaws of death? There can only be one reason. It is the same reason God allowed a child to be born in an obscure little wooden manger surrounded by the humble of the earth. Pure and simple LOVE.

Love that the world will never fully understand. Love that the world needs in its' entirety. Love that I need, personally. Love that proclaims just who this Jesus really is. "Who now is this that comes sitting on a donkey, riding through the streets of our town?" He is the carpenter from Nazareth, the Prophet and He is the Holy Son of the Most High God.

Juxtaposed to his divinity, is his humanity. When we humbly acknowledge the divinity of Christ, we find the missing puzzle piece to our own humanity. And the mystery is, that in acknowledging Jesus is Lord of our lives and we are not, we find ourselves falling into the Grace of God's great love for each of us, and for all of us. So much for climbing the ladder of success.....

Thank you God, that in Jesus You come to us, humbly, riding on a donkey to bring peace to our hearts and peace to this world. Help us to follow your example and do likewise. Amen

Pastor Dave Rogge
Member of ASLC and former ASLC Pastor

Monday, March 29

When we encounter Jesus, we are changed. How has knowing Jesus changed you in your life?

The question I was given to reflect upon was “How has knowing Jesus changed you in your life?” It’s an interesting question to ponder since Jesus has been “known” in my life since the day I was born and dedicated to Christ through baptism. I cannot remember a time when I didn’t know Jesus in my life.

That being said, knowing Jesus all my life hasn’t guaranteed me a trouble free path. Like many of you, I have had challenges thrown my way - a miscarriage, a failed marriage, lost jobs, guilt, anxiety, and loneliness – just to name a few. Through it all, I have been able to persevere and look to the future knowing that Jesus has promised to be with me during these difficult times and give me the strength and courage I need to look beyond the “crisis” of the day and trust in the plan he has for me. Jesus in my life gives me hope and I cannot imagine my life without Jesus.

Tuesday, March 30

What does Jesus death on the cross mean for you?

When I was a girl of about 9 or 10, our church's Lenten services included a series of films depicting the events of Holy Week. I was excited – movies at *church!* This was in the days of reel-to-reel projectors that never worked very well, however, and my enthusiasm waned a bit after the first film, a dim and jumpy presentation, sound so distorted it was almost unintelligible. I remained hopeful, though, and on the final evening, despite the sound quality, I heard Jesus utter, "It is finished." In the darkness filled with fidgeting, whispers, snores, and the clicks of the hiccupping projector, I saw Jesus die. The sight made it real to me in a way words never had, and I felt my heart lift. It was a fleeting feeling, and quite wrong, I was sure. Ashamed, I quickly put my mind to the somber reflection I felt more appropriate to the Lenten season. I've rarely thought of the incident since.

Like most people, I journey through Lent looking inward, singing hymns in minor keys, contemplating my mortality, my sin, and my relationship with God. I am moved to great sadness at Jesus' suffering and death, and my part in it. But I realize that brief moment of joy in my childhood, far from shameful, is with me still. Jesus' death is my redemption, my freedom, and in it I see perfect faith, obedience, and sacrifice, a perfect love. Jesus proclaimed, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

Jesus died for me. Jesus loves me. I am saved. How can my heart not be lifted?

Patty Mesenbring

Wednesday, March 31

How do we still betray Jesus and run from him today?

Matthew 26:47-56

We can do so by acts of omission or commission. By word or deed we can betray him every day.

If you hear his name taken in vain do you defend him or go silently away?

When I was young my father worked construction. One day he came home and confessed he had an altercation with a young brick layer at work. He told him he was tired of hearing him take his Lord's name in vain and if he didn't stop he was going to take him to task. The young man slowly stopped and even joined Dad's lunch bible study. Years later he came to our door to thank Dad and ask him to come to his ordination as he was a big part of his turning his life around and becoming a minister.

I realized very young what courage of convictions meant.

Dear Lord,

The possibility of betrayal lives within us and is evident in our actions, our communications and our deeds. Please give me the courage not to betray you and to let my love for you show in daily life.

Amen

Thursday, April 1

Maundy Thursday
John 13:1-17 & 31-35

On this night our Lord Jesus was betrayed, he laid aside his garment and washed the disciple's feet. He laid aside his life, to give us life. As Jesus shared the Passover meal with his disciples, he took the bread, broke it, gave thanks and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Take and eat, this is my body given for you for the forgiveness of sins." After supper he took the cup, gave thanks and gave it to the disciples saying, "take and drink, this is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of, of sins, do this for the remembrance of me." Jesus invites us to this meal. It is our Lord Jesus who joins us together in forgiveness and love as one body. Jesus knows that we are beggars in need of forgiveness and love. He says it us with great love, I am the bread of your life. I am your good shepherd. I am the light of your life. I am the way and the truth and the life. I am the vine and you are the branches. I am the resurrection and the life.

Having loved his own, he loved them to the end. Having loved you, Jesus loves you to the end. He will never leave you or forsake you. He promises to feed you and give you daily bread. He promises daily to forgive you, wash you, to wash you, to free you from the grip of sin and death. Jesus brings healing and raises you up to make you anew. He puts love in our hearts and eyes to see a neighbor who is hurting. At the foot of the cross Jesus joins us together in his love. He goes to the cross for us! Jesus sees our broken lives and hungry hearts and to you, "This is my body, given for. This is my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sin. For you-it is for you! Thanks be to God.

Lord Jesus, we pray for the fourth graders and all the children who will be receiving their first communion this night. We pray it will be the beginning of a lifetime of gathering at your table of grace to be fed and nourished with the gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation.

Pastor Lisa Richardson Engen

Good Friday, April 2

John 18:1-19:42

The somberness of Good Friday sometimes overwhelms us. Jesus offers himself as a lamb to be slain for the sins of all people. Jesus suffers at the hands of those whom he loves. Jesus is betrayed, abandoned, denied, convicted, mocked, abused, humiliated, and nailed to the Cross. On the Cross, Jesus lifts from our shoulders the oppressive yoke of shame, guilt, and sin, bearing the weight himself. Jesus willingly suffers our death.

In 2006 I attended a Via de Cristo retreat. During the retreat, following the Stations of the Cross, they re-enacted the crucifixion in the dark sanctuary. Afterwards we were each invited to write on a slip of paper the sin that most held us captive, tormenting us. In the front of the altar was a rough-hewn cross illuminated by candlelight. As I tearfully came forward in procession, I received my nail and a hammer. Through the violence of my own arm driving the nail into the cross, I crucified my willing Lord with my sin. I winced as my ears rang and my arm reverberated with each blow of the hammer. My tears overcame me as I returned to my seat. But slowly profound gratefulness began to replace my tears. As I released my sin, my hands were freed to grasp Christ's gift of forgiveness. With forgiveness came healing and transformation.

As children of God, we have received the gift of forgiveness. No sin is too great for Christ to bear. Let us continually confess our sins so that we may be healed and transformed by forgiveness.

Gracious Lord, please forgive, heal and transform me. Turn my somberness to joy. Amen

Pastor Tricia Mattson
Former Seminarian at ASLC

Saturday, April 3

Matthew 26: 69-75
Peter's Denial of Jesus

Poor Peter, always seems like he's the one out in front of a lesson learned, but in this case he had fair warning and didn't believe what he was told.

Closest common day scenario that comes to mind:

If you were a High School student at a rival's school after a game waiting for a ride and you just happened to have been involved in a penalty in the game that caused an injury to an opposing team member.

You'd stand out pretty good with your letter jacket and such, plus with the events that just occurred; the rivals might be looking for some revenge. I'd think it would be hard to defend yourself and your School with there being a chance of getting punched in the nose. Plus if there were any other students from your school around that you looked up to like Peter looked up to Jesus, well then you'd might have to defend yourself on the "home turf" sometime soon or worst yet go face to face with a friend or team mate.

Peter's relationship with Jesus must have been much deeper than just "School Spirit". So it must have crushed him to finally realize what he had done. The key is though he bounced back and became the "Rock".

Lord, We now we will do right and we will do wrong, but you know our actions even before we do, please use whatever we do for the Good of your Kingdom and help us to learn from our actions. AMEN.

Easter Sunday, April 4

Matthew 28:1-10

Alleluia! He is risen!

Hopefully just reading these words makes you want to shout out “He is risen indeed!” All throughout this Lenten Devotional Booklet, we have been headed toward the celebration of Jesus resurrection at Easter. Today we celebrate victory over the grave, we celebrate life after death, we celebrate the life changing power of God.

But we remember today also that his death was not just to prove God is more powerful than death. Jesus died because of us. He died because of your sinfulness and mine, and he did so willingly out of love. And because of his death and resurrection we have been set free from the power of sin and made right again with God. Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice to atone for our selfishness, our lack of self control, our inability to listen to God and to live out God’s will for us in our lives.

Although we might not feel like celebrating the reason for Jesus death, we certainly can celebrate his resurrection, his victory over death, a victory that we share with him through his promises of eternal life. And this Easter Sunday, God celebrates with us. God celebrates that we are wanting to show our love and devotion, no matter how broken we might be. God loves that we are longing to live lives that are pleasing to God by loving our neighbors, offering our worship and praise, and spreading the good news to others. This Easter Sunday we can all cry out from the bottom of our hearts:

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! (He is risen indeed!)

*God of love, we are Easter people, loved, freed and forgiven through the blood of Christ.
Amen.*

Pastor Ryan Brodin



Easter 2021

WEDNESDAY EVENING LENTEN SERVICES AND HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

Ash Wednesday	6:30 pm (Online Worship)
Wednesday Lenten Services	6:30 pm (Online Worship)
Maundy Thursday	TBD
Good Friday	TBD
Easter Sunday	TBD



Abiding Savior Lutheran Church
8211 Red Oak Drive
Mounds View, MN 55112
Phone: 763-784-5120

E-mail: office@abidingsavior.org
Website: www.abidingsavior.org
Facebook page: www.facebook.com/abidingsaviorlc