



LENT

TIME TO FOCUS ON JESUS



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Lord Jesus,

You are my righteousness,
I am your sin.

You took on yourself what was mine;
yet set on me what was yours.

You became what you were not,
that I might become what I was not.

— *Martin Luther*



INTRODUCTION TO LENT

Lent is a time of refocus. We lift our eyes off of ourselves and our own desires and place them firmly on Jesus' cross. For the past 1700 years, the Church has set aside the time between Ash Wednesday and Easter as a time of preparation for the Jesus final work of salvation. Lent is a time of repentance and renewal.

During Lent, we mute our rejoicing as we are confronted with the culmination of Christ's arrival on earth: his suffering and death. In the moments leading up to holy week we are also confronted with the many paradoxes of Christ's work. As he faces trial he looks weak but he is the very Son of God. He is condemned to die though he is innocent. On the cross he looks defeated, but his death leads to victory. And there we stand at the foot of his cross as sinners, but in his work we are also saints.

Lent comes from an Old English word which means to lengthen. It's a reference to the time of year as spring approaches and the days grow longer. Just as the light shines longer and the earth is renewed is plant life is renewed so also is it time for the Christian to focus on our Light, Christ, and to be renewed spiritually.



THE SEASON OF LENT

Sometimes there is a certain eagerness to just get to Easter, but following the trail which leads to Easter helps us to prepare our hearts and minds for the Easter celebration.

That trail is the season of Lent.

Lent is a period of 40 days, not counting Sundays, between Ash Wednesday and Easter. There are five Sundays of Lent, which are celebrated as mini-Easters, leading up to Holy Week. Holy Week opens with Palm Sunday and is capped with the Triduum: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter.

March 1	–	<i>Ash Wednesday</i>
March 5	–	<i>Lent 1</i>
March 12	–	<i>Lent 2</i>
March 19	–	<i>Lent 3</i>
March 26	–	<i>Lent 4</i>
April 2	–	<i>Lent 5</i>
April 9	–	<i>Palm Sunday</i>
April 13	–	<i>Maundy Thursday</i>
April 14	–	<i>Good Friday</i>
April 16	–	<i>Easter Sunday</i>



A TIME OF REPENTANCE

Lent is certainly a time of repentance and renewal. God encourages lives of repentance when he said,

“Return, faithless Israel,” declares the LORD,
“I will frown on you no longer,
for I am faithful,” declares the LORD,
“I will not be angry forever.
Only acknowledge your guilt—
you have rebelled against the LORD your God,
you have scattered your favors to foreign gods
under every spreading tree,
and have not obeyed me.”
declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 3:12-13)

The concept of repentance has two main parts. First is sorrow over sin because our consciences have been terrorized by the realization of sin. Second is faith which clings to the promise that in Christ our sins are forgiven and so the terrors of conscience are silenced.

In order to gain further clarity it may be helpful to further break down these two main parts. Repentance may practically look like this:

- CONTRITION 1. Acknowledge our sin(s).
- 2. Confess sin to God.
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- 3. Trust in God’s forgiveness.
- FAITH 4. Make a 180 degree turn from sin.



USING THE READING PLAN

The reading guide begins on Ash Wednesday and is intended to help guide you through the subsequent weeks of Lent. Each week (including the half week of Ash Wednesday) includes a primary reading from one of the Gospels, supplementary readings which we covered that week in church, and a prayer.

Begin your readings on Sunday. Read through the provided Gospel passage and begin to consider the passage as it pertains to your life. Use the passage to guide your prayers. On the opposite page of each passage is space for you to journal thoughts and prayers or to just jot down notes. As you consider each passage ask yourself the following questions:

1. What does this passage teach me?
2. For what does this passage lead me to repent?
3. For what does this passage lead me to give thanks?
4. For what does this passage lead me to pray?

This reading plan is intended to be used more than just on Sundays. Re-read the primary passage throughout the week. Dive into the supplementary readings. Continue to pray and repent and to put your focus on Jesus.



MARCH 1 HUMILITY

Ash Wednesday

Luke 18:9-17

⁹ To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector.

¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

¹³ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

¹⁴ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

¹⁵ People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁷ I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

Prayer

Oh my God, grant me your Holy Spirit, that I may learn to know my sin, seek forgiveness depending on your grace in Christ and thereupon amend my ways, keep myself unspotted from the world and its sinful ways, love my neighbor and deal with him faithfully and honestly and according to the standards of love, diligently attend to my calling, and expect the blessing from you alone; for you bless those that walk in your ways. Hear me for Jesus Christ’s Sake! Amen.

—*C.M. Zorn, 1846-1928*

Supplementary Readings

Numbers 21:4-9; 2 Corinthians 7:8-13; Psalm 32



MARCH 5 TEMPTATION

Lent 1

Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

⁴ Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:

“ ‘He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”

⁷ Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Prayer

We are weak and sick, O Father, and the temptations of the flesh and the world are great and many. O Father, keep us, and let us not fall again into temptation and sin. Give us grace that we may remain steadfast and fight bravely to our end. Without your grace and help we can do nothing. Amen.

— *Martin Luther, 1483-1546*

Supplementary Readings

Genesis 2:7-17, 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-19; Psalm 130



MARCH 12
MERCY
Lent 2

John 4:11-26

“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?”¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?”

¹³ Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”¹⁶ He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”¹⁷ “I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband.¹⁸ The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”¹⁹ “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet.²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

²¹ Jesus declared, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”²⁵ The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”²⁶ Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.”

Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, the Brightness of faithful souls, fill the world with your glory, we pray you, and show yourself, by the radiance of your light, to all the nations of the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

— *Gregorian Sacramentary, c. 6th Century*

Supplementary Readings

Isaiah 42:14-21; Ephesians 5:8-14; Psalm 143



MARCH 19
TRUTH
Lent 3

John 3:10-21

“You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”

Prayer

Give me, O Lord, purity of lips, a clean and innocent heart, humility, fortitude, patience. Give me the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of knowledge and godliness, and of your fear. Make me ever to seek your face with all my heart, all my soul, all my mind; grant me to have a contrite and humble heart in your presence. Most high, eternal, and ineffible Wisdom, drive away from me the darkness of blindness and ignorance; most high and eternal Light, illuminate me; most high and infinite Mercy, have mercy on me. Amen.

— *Gallican Sacramentary, c. 8th Century*

Supplementary Readings

Genesis 12:1-8; Romans 4:1-17; Psalm 121



MARCH 26 SERVICE

Lent 4

Matthew 20:17-28

Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them,¹⁸ “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death¹⁹ and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!”

²⁰ Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. ²¹ “What is it you want?” he asked.

She said, “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.” ²² “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said to them. “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?”

“We can,” they answered. ²³ Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.” ²⁴ When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵ Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Prayer

Blessed Lord, who has commanded us to love one another, grant us grace. Having received your undeserved bounty, may we love everyone in you and for you. We implore your mercy for all; but especially for the friends who your love has given to us. Love them, O Fountain of love, and make them to love you with all their heart, they they may will, and speak, and do those things only whihc are pleasing to you. Amen.

— *Anselm of Canterbury, 1033-1109*

Supplementary Readings

Hosea 5:15-6:3; Romans 8:1-10; Psalm 42



APRIL 2

LIFE

Lent 5

John 11:17-27, 38-44

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

¹⁸ Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁹ and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

²¹ “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” ²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴ Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” ²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” ²⁷ “Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”

³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ “Take away the stone,” he said. “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.” ⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” ⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

Prayer

O Lord, rescue us from the captivity of the sins which have oppressed us, so that we may attain the dwellings of the heavenly Jerusalem; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

— *Sarum Breviary, c. 13th Century.*

Supplementary Readings

2 Kings 4:18-37; Romans 8:11-19; Psalm 116



APRIL 9
SAVIOR KING

Palm Sunday

Matthew 21:1-11

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.” ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

⁵ “Say to the Daughter of Zion,
‘See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

“Hosanna to the Son of David!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Hosanna in the highest!”

¹⁰ When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” ¹¹ The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Prayer

O Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, look upon us and have mercy upon us; you are yourself both Victim and Priest, yourself both Reward and Redeemer, keep safe from all evils those who you have restored, O Savior of the Word. Amen.

— *Irenaeus of Lyons, d. c. 200*

Supplementary Readings

Zechariah 9:9,10; Philippians 2:5-11; Psalm 24



APRIL 13

LOVE

Maundy Thursday

John 13:1-15

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.² The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"⁷ Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."⁸ "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."⁹ "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"¹⁰ Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."¹¹ For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them.¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am.¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Prayer

O God, by your great love for this world, you did reconcile earth to heaven through your only begotten Son. Grant that we who, by the darkness of our sins, are turned aside from brotherly love, may—by your light shed forth in our souls—be filled with your own sweetness, embrace our friends in you, and our enemies for your sake, in a bond of mutual affection.

— *Mozarabic Liturgy, c. 7th Century*

Supplementary Readings

Exodus 12:1-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28; Psalm 115



APRIL 14 SALVATION

Good Friday

John 13:17-22,25-30

Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).¹⁸ Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.¹⁹ Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.²⁰ Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek.²¹ The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.”²² Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”²³ Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.²⁴ When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Dear woman, here is your son,”²⁵ and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.²⁶ Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.”²⁷ A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips.²⁸ When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.²⁹

Prayer

O Lord, I am not worthy to have a glimpse of heaven, and I am unable with my works to redeem myself from sin, death, the devil, and hell. Nevertheless, you have given me your Son, Jesus Christ, who is far more precious and dear than heaven, and much stronger than sin, death, the devil, and hell. For this I rejoice, praise, and thank you, O God. Without cost and out of pure grace you have granted me this boundless blessing in your dear Son. Through him you take sin, death, and hell from me, and grant me all that belongs to him. Amen.

—*Martin Luther, 1483-1546*

Supplementary Readings

Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9; Psalm 22



APRIL 14 SALVATION

Good Friday

John 20:1-17

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” ³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to their homes, ¹¹ but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³ They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?” “They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ “Woman,” he said, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Prayer

You, Christ, are the King of glory, the eternal Son of the Father. When you became man to set us free, you humbled yourself to be born of a virgin. You overcame the sting of death and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. You sit at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father. We believe that you will come to be our judge. Come then, Lord, and help your people, bought with the price of your own blood, and bring us with your saints to glory everlasting. Amen.

—*Te Deum*, c. 4th Century

Supplementary Readings

Isaiah 12:1-6; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57; Psalm 30

