



# Meditations

for Lent 2007

Board of Worship & Music  
TRAC Malaysia

# ***PREFACE***

What is Lent?

Lent is a time to “return to the Lord”.

During these 40 days, we return to the Lord through prayer and silence, through reading and meditating on Scriptures, through our self-examination, confession and repentance, and through a firm resolve to live once again for God wholeheartedly in every area of our lives.

Last year, we had an all-women clergy-lay team writing for the meditations and this year the desire was for an all-men clergy-lay team but, it did not happen! And since ‘all things work together for the good of those who love God’ – we hope these meditations by 4 men and a woman will continue to enable ‘the people called Methodists’ to deepen their relationship and walk with God and grow in their self-understanding and that of our fellow brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ and those in the world.

Therefore it is with grateful hearts to God (Who has enabled us to write through all our heavy schedules, ‘trials and tribulations’ writers’ block, etc.) we offer these meditations to you as a gift from our very own selves. May you as you are transformed through these meditations go on to gift others with yourselves.

SHALOM!

*Rev Peggy Seow*  
*The Editor*

## **Foreword**

Greetings in the name of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ!

The season of Lent begins on 21 February, a day we call Ash Wednesday. Lent reminds us of who we are, who our God is, and our relationship with Him. With time, space and a mind to make choices, 'all we like sheep have strayed away, each and everyone to his own way'. We say what we want, we do what we want, and we live lives that we want – often in ignorance and defiance of the words, wisdom and ways of our God. Though an ever gracious and loving God, He is not pleased. Our errant ways strain our intimacy with Him, even drawing us away from Him.

'Return to me', calls our God, who is our Father and Lover. Turn from your crooked ways, and come back to me. Come home ... I am waiting for you. Come ... I am waiting to embrace you. Come ... let us live together and walk together. Come ... let us be one again! Will you turn, and return home to the One who loves us and is calling you?

A big 'thank you' to Rev. Peggy Seow (Editor), Rev. Dr. Chew Tow Yow, Dr. Herbert Tan, Mr. Tan Har Yong and Mr. Daniel Ong for enriching our lives with these meditations for Lent 2007. Thank you, fellow pilgrims, for sharing your Spirit-inspired wisdom and lives with us as we make the journey to return to our God!

Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!

Dr. Samuel Ong Boon Leng  
Chairman,  
Board of Worship and Music, TRAC

## **Ash Wednesday, February 21**

Joel 2:12-18; Psalm 51:1-4; 10-12, 15;  
2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

### **“Come To Me”**

We are created for God to be loved by God. Our very existence depends on our being in relationship with God. As you begin your time of communion with God this Lenten season, may you be favoured with God’s presence in some real and heart-warming ways.

God has never stayed away from us. It is we who have chosen to stay away. Still, God waits patiently for us to return. Let us return to God with repentance in our hearts and expectancy in our spirits.

### **Over to you**

Examine where you are in your relationship with God now.

Where are the areas in your life you have been negligent with God? Start today with what you believe to be your greatest neglect and begin your journey back to God. If you are already close to God, begin this Lenten season with thanksgiving.

### **Prayer**

Pray as you are led – with words of repentance or thanksgiving.

## **Thursday, February 22**

Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm 1:1-4, 6; Luke 9:22-25

### **Choose God**

Our closeness to God is a matter of personal choice. Freedom of choice is God's gift to humanity. We are God's because God chooses us to be God's precious children. However God leaves us to choose God in response. Our closeness to God is only as we choose to be submissive to God. God's commands are not meant to be burdensome to us. They are there as guides for our life with God. In fact God has given us God's Holy Spirit so that we can keep God's commands (Ezekiel 36:27). Choosing God is choosing to be led step by step in our daily living as Christians. It is choosing to listen to the inner voice of God in us as we make the commitment to obey God implicitly.

### **Over to you**

Is there an area of your life now which you need to give over to God as you choose to follow God?

### **Prayer**

Pray a prayer of surrender - surrendering your will to the Will of God.

**Friday, February 23**

Isaiah 58:1-9; Psalm 51:1-4; 16-17; Matthew 9:14-15

**Sincerity in Seeking the Lord**

God abhors double-mindedness and half-heartedness in our relationship with God. Remember always that God knows our heart better than we do. To find God we are to seek God with our whole heart. False outward piety like fasting without repentance and a change of heart for God is condemned. Likewise lukewarmness in our serving of God or attending worship services displeases God.

**Over to you**

Examine carefully your heart now. How sincere are you in doing these Lenten meditations? Are you doing it because you feel it is “fashionable” to do so or just to satisfy your conscience or to appear to be pious? If you have insincerity in your seeking of God, repent now and ask God to purify your heart and help you to walk faithfully with God.

**Prayer**

Pray a prayer of repentance and recommitment to be sincere in your relationship with God.

## **Saturday, February 24**

Isaiah 58:9-14; Psalm 86:1-6; Luke 5:27-32

### **The All-Merciful God**

Levi, the tax collector, was probably the most unpopular member of his community. Yet when contrasted with the self-righteous Pharisees and the learned teachers of the law, he was blessed because he saw his unworthiness and submitted to the grace of Jesus' call to him. A repentant sinner's prayer is music to God's ears and a repentant sinner's acts of total obedience (*"and Levi got up, left everything and followed him"* Luke 5:28) calls forth God's blessings.

### **Over to you**

Recall the ways you have heard Jesus' call upon you. Too many Christians have bought the lie that it is all right to follow Jesus casually. Examine the "casualness" in your walk with Jesus.

### **Prayer**

Heed Jesus' call to repentance. Pray for the Holy Spirit to enable you to do as Levi did – total obedience of Jesus' call to follow Him. Pray for the Holy Spirit to enable you to be consistent as a follower of Christ.

**Sunday, February 25**

Deuteronomy 26:4-10; Psalm 91:1-2, 10-15; Romans. 10:8-13; Luke 4:1-13

**Dwelling in God's Presence**

During the last few meditations you have dealt with your commitment to the Lord. Today just dwell in God's presence. Bring before God's presence the "first fruits of your faithfulness to God – your thanksgiving for God's love for you. Spend this time resting "*in the shadow of the Almighty*". The temptations and threats of the devil cannot overcome you because God is your Refuge and Fortress.

**Over to you**

Review the ways God has delivered you from the devil's temptations. Declare aloud with your lips your praises and thanksgiving, whilst allowing your heart to soak in the abiding presence of God.

**Prayer**

Pray for the blood of Jesus to cleanse and cover you and members of your family against the works of the devil. Declare your victory in Jesus Christ who intercedes for you day and night.

## **Monday, February 26**

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Psalm 19:7-9, 14; Matthew 25:31-46

### **Be Holy in All You Do**

Holiness is a fundamental characteristic quality of God – God’s uniqueness ..., God’s moral perfection. To be holy is to conform to this particular nature of God. Holiness is not native to our nature which is sinful. We are declared holy by Christ’s work for and in us. The indwelling Holy Spirit is our spiritual identity and our source of grace to be holy. Holiness is progressive. Growing in holiness is to be transformed in our character to be more and more like Christ. This happens as we respond in thought, word and deed to the Word of God and the promptings of the Holy Spirit. God does God’s holy willing in us, we do our holy obedience in the worship of God and in the acts of charity and love in the world.

### **Over to you**

Think of one act of charity / love you can do today in the Name of Christ and your love for another.

### **Prayer**

Pray for God’s guidance as you learn to live out your holiness in God in the world today.

**Tuesday, February 27**

Isaiah 55:10-11; Psalm 34:3-6, 15-17; Matthew 6:7-15

**Effectual Prayer: God's Faithfulness**

The psalmist affirms God's faithful and prompt deliverance of all his troubles. God knows our needs better than we do. In our ignorance as well as in our greed, we have often asked inappropriately. Jesus reminded His disciples that they did not have to pray long and loud. Prayer is being in intimate fellowship with God. There is no need for dramatics in prayer. It is a sincere heart that gets answers to pray.

**Over to you**

What is the nature of your fellowship with God now – distant and cool or intimate and warm? Check what is lacking in your relationship with God.

**Prayer**

Pray the Lord's Prayer slowly, meditating prayerfully on the words. These are the Words of Jesus Christ. They will not return to you empty as you pray them from your heart.

## **Wednesday, February 28**

Jonah 3:1-10; Psalm 51:1-2, 10-11, 16-17; Luke 11:29-32

### **Effectual Prayer: A Contrite Heart**

We live in two existential realities: in God and in a fallen world. We are alive in Christ and dead to sin (Romans 6:11). As we continue to live in the presence of sin in and around us, we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12b.) We continue to suffer from the distorting power of sin. Prayer can be distorted by ignorance of God's ways (Mark 10:35-40) and our own selfishness (James 4:3). Consequently, in our prayer fellowship with God, we must live a life of continuous repentance, allowing God's compassion to flow into our contrite hearts.

#### **Over to you**

Examine your heart and see how sensitive it is to the sinful tendencies in you.

#### **Prayer**

Pray for God to soften your heart that it will always remain repentant.

## **Thursday, March 1**

Esther 4:15-17; Psalm 138:1-3, 7-8; Matthew 7:7-12

### **Effectual Prayer: Persistence**

It has been argued that since God knows our every need, there is no need for us to be persistent in asking God to answer our prayers. Our persistence in prayer is not because God is hard of hearing or is reluctant to bless. Our persistence is the expression of our sincerity and the depth of our desire to dwell in God's presence. In the unburdening of our concerns to God, we open ourselves to be ministered to by God. God not only answers the object of our prayer, whatever that concern is, but God also deals with us as God children.

In our persistence to share with God our deep longings, God flushes out the rubbish from our souls and let God's rays of hope filter through our very being.

### **Over to you**

Recall your own prayer life. What is it that is hindering you to stay in fellowship with God each day?

### **Prayer**

Pray that God will help you be an intercessor for your church, that is, if you are not one yet. If you are already an intercessor, spend the time to intercede for your pastor.

## **Friday, March 2**

Ezekiel 18:21-28; Psalm 130:1-8; Matthew 5:20-26

### **Effectual Prayer: A Pure Heart, Clean Hands**

We have said that since sin is ever present in and around us we need to be vigilant against the distorting power of sin. Our protection against sin is not to pay attention to the presence of sins but to God in and with us. Our gaze must always be on God and God's holiness. We watch over our hearts, our expressed and hidden desires. As we learn to gaze on God's holiness through God's Word, our hearts will also learn to beat in rhythm with God. Our hearts, purified by Christ's cleansing blood, must remain pure as we deliberately and persistently deny the inroads of the power of sin.

#### **Over to you**

Can you identify what you think are the persistent impure thoughts that seem to make your heart impure? On a blank piece of white paper, write in black pencil what you consider to be your impure thoughts.

#### **Prayer**

Pray Psalm 130 as your prayer. After you have prayed, rub off with an eraser, the impure thoughts you have written on the white paper. Then ask God to help you keep a watch over your heart constantly.

## **Saturday, March 3**

Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Psalm 119:1-8; Matthew 5: 43-48

### **Effectual Prayer: An Obedient Life**

Praying the Christian way and living the Christian life are one. Hearing (knowing) God's Word and doing God's Word go together. We do not go into our closets, our prayer meetings and our church to pray Christianly, and go out to live without any consideration of the commands of God. Our way of life as Spirit-filled and Spirit-directed Christian is crucial in our fellowship with God (i.e. prayer). For example, when we ask God to forgive our sins but we choose not to forgive those who have hurt us, we are hypocrites in the sight of God and fellow humanity. Your attitude should be like our Lord Jesus Christ Who humbled Himself and became obedient to death

(Philippians 2:5-8) He came not to do His will but the Will of the Father. We obey God's commands not legalistically but in the way we live as redeemed people of God.

### **Over to you**

Gauge your level of obedience to God today. Is there an area in your life where you have often disobeyed God?

### **Prayer**

Pray over your disobedience and ask for God's grace to help you be obedient to God's ways.

## **Sunday, March 4**

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18; Psalm 27:1, 7-9, 13-14;  
Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 9:28-36

### **Glory and Sacrifice**

The Transfiguration. Here's a remarkable event, difficult to understand and hard to visualize. In fact, it's not easy to know what this event is all about or why it occurred. Was it for Jesus' sake, or for the sake of His disciples?

The transfiguration narrative confirms the importance of listening to Jesus as He confirms the call to suffering for Himself and for His followers (see Luke 9:23-27); but it also confirms His anticipation of the glorious outcome of travelling this difficult road. It is God's reminder that while sacrifice and duty will mark the lives of the faithful, so will the splendour of God's presence.

We are called twice: to give up all to follow God, and to enter freely into God's glorious presence. The one experience tempers and sustains the other. Whenever we opt for glory over sacrifice, we abandon the true vocation of the Christian. As the cloud descended and Peter heard God's voice, this was not to be the sum total of his experience of the Kingdom, but it must have heartily confirmed the choice he had made to put his hand to the plough and not take it off or look back. This is our vocation: to walk daily in sacrificial obedience to Christ, inspired regularly by experiences of God's greatest sacred presence in our lives.

As puzzling as it is illuminating, the experience reduces the privileged disciples to silence.

**Over to you**

When you think of Jesus, how do you picture Him?

In stillness, bring your thoughts to God, asking God to give you a clearer image.

Have you ever felt silenced by a glimpse of God?

**Prayer**

Almighty Father, Whose Son was revealed in majesty before He suffered death upon the cross: give us faith to perceive His glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with Him and be changed into His likeness, from glory to glory. Amen.

(Collect for Lent 4, *Alternative Service Book*)

## **Monday, March 5**

Daniel 9:4-10; Psalm 79: 8-9, 11, 13; Luke 6:36-38

### **The Power of Love**

The atrocities associated with ethnic violence or terrorism are all too familiar in our world. Despite determined political action, nothing seems to be able to break the cycle of hatred and revenge. We might not all face the terrors of rape and murder, but the unkind words of a fellow Christian or family member, or the unjust actions of our employer, can provoke within us powerful reactions of anger and revenge. The finest Christian finds it incredibly hard to express the kind of love which “keeps no record of wrongs” (1 Corinthians 13:5).

In essence, Jesus calls us to behave towards others in the way in which God has acted towards us (Luke 6:36). One of the evidences of God’s love is God’s mercy, and this means we will be hesitant to criticize others and keen to forgive. There is no question that Jesus’ teaching has a radical edge that requires extraordinary restraint and persistent generosity. It can only be as, living under God’s rule, we are supernaturally empowered by God’s Holy Spirit. It is only through the example of Jesus that we can pray, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing...”

In Psalm 79 the psalmist expresses his raw, mixed emotions - both the desire for God to deliver God’s people, and that the Name, character, and faithfulness of God Himself should be honoured. In the psalmist’s mind, this involved others suffering for the evil they had done. There are times when we do wrong and dishonour God. Yet, in Jesus, the Father always

welcomes us back with open arms for a fresh start, and we are assured of His love and favour once again.

### **Over to you**

Is there a person who needs your help, your forgiveness or your apology? When have I fallen short of God's glory? How have I experienced God's displeasure? God's reconciliation?

### **Prayer**

This is Your love, O God. You are merciful and kind to all people. But I cannot love this way without Your help. I can do this only because I have received mercy and forgiveness from You.

By the power of Your Holy Spirit, extend Your grace through me so that I can offer Your mercy and forgiveness to others. Amen.

## **Tuesday, March 6**

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20; Psalm 50:8-9, 16-17, 21, 23; Matthew 23:1-12

### **Who Do You Think You Are?**

Some may belittle the newspapers for using strong language in stories about hypocrisy in the Church. The literal meaning of hypocrisy is “acting the part.” Hypocrisy is generally frowned upon in every walk of life.

Jesus begins His most devastating sermon on hypocrisy by exposing the Pharisaic way of doing things. The Pharisees were highly respected and greatly feared, but they were hard of heart and devoid of spiritual understanding. He is obviously so angered by this religious “lording” over people that He holds nothing back. His particular problem with them stems from their love of show and desire to impress others with their public piety. His language is hard-hitting.

In a world where image matters we want to be thought well of by others. There is nothing wrong with that, for we are intended to gain the respect of others and in so doing commend the Gospel (see 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12). The problem comes when the reality of our lives does not match the claims that we make. There is always the danger that we take much pleasure in the position rather than carry out the responsibility. Respect is earned and cannot be commanded. Those who push themselves forward are likely to find that in human terms they will probably suffer a fall. They will certainly find that in Kingdom terms (Matthew 23:12).

If Jesus was so angry about what was happening in His day, what does He think about us today? The warning is still very relevant for us. Leaders of the Christian community today must resist the temptation to capitalize on perceived power and status. Following Jesus means leading a life characterized by service and humility, not by titles, positions and distinctions.

### **Over to you**

Review your Christian service, asking God to show you those points where your motives aren't all that they should be. Acknowledge any failure and ask for the grace to do things simply out of love for God.

### **Prayer**

“May the love of Jesus fill me,  
As the waters fill the sea;  
Him exalting, self abasing,  
This is victory.”

(Stanza 4 of hymn, *May the Mind of Christ My Saviour* by Kate B. Wilkinson)

**Wednesday, March 7**

Jeremiah 18:18-20; Psalm 31:4-5, 13-16; Matthew 20:17-28

### **What Jesus Can Offer**

In the Gospel passage a mother, wanting the best for her sons, sees what she thinks is an opportunity to get them the best seats in heaven. They are quick to say they are ready to suffer with Jesus. Most of us have harboured similar longings, haven't we? If there are "freebies" on offer why not get the best deal that we can?

Such a normal human tendency which led to this mother's request for special privileges from Jesus, is also likely to be a special temptation for us as our society has an insidious emphasis on getting our rights. Were not the disciples simply asking for something that was their right as Jesus had made special use of them? Is it not ours for being good and reading our Bible?

In their ambition to be first James and John showed themselves to be "blind". To be full of ourselves is to be "blind" to the glory and love of God and to the true meaning of life itself. When we are "blind", we blunder into other people and collide with the hard facts of life, imagining that the world was made for our convenience.

Only Jesus can give sight to the "blind" and only by means of the cross. By His death Jesus has paid the price of our sins, but not without also changing our hearts and opening our eyes.

**Over to you**

If you have a leadership role or aspire to one, commit yourself to earning respect by being willing to put yourself out for those you are serving. What favour would you like to ask of the Lord?

**Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, please teach me the ways of Your Kingdom. Your Kingdom is so very different from the kingdoms of this world. Grant me the grace to place myself last in a society where everyone scrambles to be first. I desire a servant's heart like the one I see in You, Lord. I surrender to You all position, power and wealth for the sake of becoming more like You. Please grant me a heart to care, ears to listen, and hands to serve and help and heal. Amen.

**Thursday, March 8**

Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalm 1:1-4, 6; Luke 16: 19-31

### **Care-less Consumption**

The story in Luke's Gospel brings together two strands of Jesus' teaching – a proper attitude to money and the continuing validity of the Law (Moses) and the Old Testament.

To the Pharisees, wealth was a sign of God's favour, while poverty showed God's judgment. Here Jesus shows the opposite to be true in the Kingdom of God. The rich man lived in selfishness and flamboyant luxury every day, and showed no concern for Lazarus at his gate. His sin was not being wealthy but failing to serve God by using his resources to minister to the sufferings of others. His highhanded attitude continued into the afterlife, where he considered his right to receive compassion from Lazarus even though he had never given him a crumb. He was totally oblivious of the error of his ways, and in his reply to Abraham showed that he did not accept responsibility for his actions. Instead he blamed others by implying that he had not been sufficiently warned of God's judgment, and implied that if someone had come back from the dead then he (or his brothers) would have believed. Only at the last did he come to understand the reality of God's truth, and he was left to the consequences of his choices. Justice was finally done.

Jesus is not here giving a "Quick Guide to Heaven and Hell". He is using a story to convey a warning. It is about how we live here. It constitutes a warning to all who are rich, and promises blessing to the poor. The gap /

chasm was created first by the rich man's greed and indifference – attitudes that proved to have eternal consequences. The Pharisees and the rich man failed to appreciate the connection between faith, compassion and our eternal destiny. Affluence brings responsibility.

### **Over to you**

We live in a world which is deeply corrupted by greed and materialism. Take time to consider your assets, thank God for them and ask God to show you how you can use them to God's glory.

Ask God to speak to you about your level of commitment to the poor of this earth.

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, help me to keep my life free from the love of money and to be content with what I have. Give me eyes to see the hungry and courage to bridge the gap. Amen.

**Friday, March 9**

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13, 17-28; Psalm 105:16-21;  
Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

**The Rejected Cornerstone**

Landowners properly expect a return on their investment. They know the risks of bad weather, disease, and insects, but they do not expect their tenants to steal their crops and beat and kill their representatives. But that's exactly what happened in the story Jesus told as recorded in the Gospel passage.

The religious leaders – represented by the tenants – are shown to be not only disobedient, but murderers as well. Their failure to hear and understand climaxes in the removal of the One Who is truly the Messenger of the Father. Instead of assuring their inheritance of the Kingdom by this action, they in fact will be rejected.

As tensions rose in Jerusalem – leading up to His crucifixion – Jesus did not avoid those who had rejected Him, but like a skilful surgeon He tried to expose the root causes of their rejection. He shows us how important it is for us to understand the causes of people's behaviour.

Jesus also warned of impending doom for those who had rejected Him. His critics thought they could do away with Him, but in the end He would be the cornerstone. He would become the stone of stumbling, to crush His enemies.

Judgment is unpleasant news, but there is no good news in the Gospel unless we first admit the bad news about ourselves. We have all rejected God's rule in our lives. God rents our lives to us and rightfully expects fruit in return. We all deserve to be crushed, as it were, but God's mercy extended in Christ delivers us from judgment; one aspect of which is to give us the opportunity of bearing fruit.

### **Over to you**

How quick are you to respond when you sense the Lord is speaking to you? Are you willing to give God all that is due to God, or do we like to retain some credit for God's work in us, some control over the life of our church, for example? Can you hand over that credit and control now?

### **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, I thank You for protecting me with the wall of Your grace. Thank You for guarding me with the watchtower of Your Word. Thank You for testing me in the winepress of Your discipline. Now help me to tend well the vineyard of my soul. Give me hearing ears, a receptive heart and open arms to welcome the servants You send my way, those who carry with them the Words of Life. May I bear a bountiful harvest for You, full of the good fruit of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **Saturday, March 10**

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Psalm 103:1-4, 9-12; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

### **Genuine Worship**

The language of adoration does not always come easily to our lips, but we can make Psalm 103 our own at any time.

This Psalm is a demonstration of genuine worship. It turns us straight to God, expressing love and praise because God is our God and we are God's children. Then we can remind ourselves of all God does for us. God can remove any crippling guilt from our souls and minds; God can heal us from anything obstructing our relationship with God; God saves us from despair and covers us with God's divine love. Forgiveness, healing, reclamation, loving-kindness and mercy are not simply theological concepts but are God's gifts to God's people.

As we read, we are struck not merely by what God does for us, but by what God does not do for / to us. God does not treat us as our sins deserve, and God will not always accuse. It is all too common for the Christian who has sinned grievously to be plagued by an accusing conscience long after he has repented and been forgiven. Once the Lord has convicted you and brought you to repentance and forgiveness through the cross, God accuses you no more.

All of us long to be special to someone, but not everyone has had good experiences in their basic relationships. If, however, we look to the Lord as the perfect parent, what do we find? Someone Who knows us through and

through, Who loves us just as we are, Who will bring us to perfection in eternal life. Surely this is God the Father to Whom we turn in adoration. Bless the Lord, all that is within me, bless God's holy Name.

### **Over to you**

Take time in quiet worship. Sing / memorize this hymn:

“Praise, my soul, the King of heaven,  
To the throne thy tribute bring;  
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
Evermore God's praises sing.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise the everlasting King.”

(Stanza 1 of *Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven* by Henry F. Lyte)

### **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, bring to my mind all the good things that have happened, the people I have met, the emotions I have felt. Bring to my mind also the things for which I need to repent. So may my days be entrusted into Your hands and my nights enfolded in Your peace. Amen.

## **Sunday, March 11**

Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15; Psalm 103:1-4, 6-8, 11;  
1 Corinthians 10:1-6,10-12; Luke 3:1-9

### **His Story In Our Lives**

How do you read the word ‘History’? Some see it as “His Story”, i.e., God’s story of Himself woven into our time and space.

The Jews see God revealing Himself in their history through His actions and words.

In 1 Corinthians 10:6, the Bible urges us to learn about God from the ways God has revealed Himself in history. God has not left Himself without witness. God wants us to know God. God is calling out to us to return to God, not as to a stranger, but as to our loving Heavenly Father.

This is true, not only on the big scale – in nations and cultures, but also right at the personal scale – in our lives. God writes “His Story” into our lives. God’s Footprints are there in the sandy beaches of our past.

#### **Over to you**

Think back. How has God been active even in the lives of your parents (or grandparents) and now in you? What is “His Story” in your life?

#### **Prayer**

Sovereign God, You reached out to me even before I knew You.

I bow before that love, praising You for Your acts in my life, surrendering to Your continuing Guidance.

## **Monday, March 12**

2 Kings 5:1-15; Psalm 42:1-2; Psalm 43:3-4; Luke 4:24-30

### **So Near, And Yet...!**

How can a person find God? The Psalmist asks the question in Psalm 42:2 – “where can I go and meet with God?”

So we debate, we discuss, we talk – and come up with theories and strategies and methodologies. The trouble is – everyone is talking and no one is listening to God!

Naaman came to the doorstep of healing and almost threw it all away because the healing procedure did not correspond with his mind-set. The folks in Jesus’ hometown knew Him so well that they could not see Who He really was. Even when He said it, all they could hear were their own conclusions.

What an irony! So near and yet so far! Everyone is talking - totally absorbed with the view through their own colored lenses - but not listening!

Listen, please! God is speaking!

### **Over to you**

Thirsting for a deeper relationship with God? Wait! Listen to God! God is speaking!

### **Prayer**

Lord, I am still before You. I wait for Your Voice. Speak, Lord, I am listening!

**Tuesday, March 13**

Daniel 3:28, 4:3; Psalm 25:4-9; Matthew 18:21-35

**Teach Me Your Paths!**

God is teaching us. God instructs sinners in God's Ways (Psalm 25:8). God is calling out to us all to be in God's class. God is telling us the way to Life. God is showing us the Truth. God is revealing the reality of the spiritual and temporal world. 'Return to me,' God calls out. In God's presence, there is eternal life. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." (John 14:6).

Are we in class? Or are we playing truant? And if we do end up in class, are we listening to the Teacher?

**Over to you**

You never graduate from this class. Be a good student and listen. God is calling you. God is teaching you.

**Prayer**

Lord, forgive my wayward ways and thoughts! I come back to You. Hold me tightly in Your Love.

## **Wednesday, March 14**

Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9; Psalm 147:12-13, 15-16, 19-20;  
Matthew 5:17-19

### **Obey and Live**

We tend to be New Testamenters, right? That is to say we regard the Old Testament and its many laws and rituals as out-of-date and irrelevant.

But remember that Jesus said He came to fulfil the Law (Matthew 5:17). So we had better re-think.

The laws of a country tell us much about what is important to that country. For example, we are amused by the littering laws of Singapore and respectful of the death penalty here in Malaysia for drug trafficking. Both tell certain things about what is important in these respective countries.

So God's Laws tell us about God – Who God is and what God desires from us. That is the spirit of the Law. It is the self-revelation of our God. When we obey God's Laws, we become more and more like God. That is what God wants because that is the best God wants for all of us.

### **Over to you**

Choose one of the Ten Commandments. See Exodus 20:1-17. Meditate on the spirit of that Commandment and listen to what the Holy Spirit is telling you.

### **Prayer**

Lord, I desire to obey Your law in my innermost being. I come to You for Your Strength to do so.

## **Thursday, March 15**

Jeremiah 7:23-28; Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9; Luke 11:14-23

### **Take Care Of Your Heart!**

We find a host of spiritual ailments in today's readings. There is the 'deaf ear' (Jeremiah 7:24), which does not pay attention to God's commands. There is the 'stiff neck' of insistence on one's own ways rather than God's ways (Jeremiah 7:26). There is the 'dumb lips' that will not answer to God (Jeremiah 7: 27). The worst? The hardened heart (Psalm 95:8)!

The hardened heart affects the whole being. The affected person will even attribute the very obvious manifestations of God's power to evil forces. The life giving blood does not seem to be able to flow through. Death follows.

Are we due for a spiritual check-up?

### **Over to you**

Examine ourselves. Are we always insisting on our own ways? Do we still hold on to control of our lives? Return to God. Let God take charge. God has the right and the power to do so.

### **Prayer**

Dear God, let the healing balm of Your Spirit cure my hardening heart. Today, I surrender all to You, Loving God.

## **Friday, March 16**

Hosea 14:2-9; Psalm 81:6-10, 13-16; Mark 12:28-34

### **Love The Lord Your God!**

The Heavenly Father is wooing us back to Himself. God shows up the uselessness of other 'saviours'. God brings up the advantages of being with God. God promises to heal and to love us. God guarantees vital growth. We will be all that we are meant to be!

That is why Jesus summed up the greatest commandment as the commandment 'to love God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and with all our strength' (Mark 12:30). This is only the logical response to God's great and sacrificial love for us all.

Come back to the Heavenly Father Who is watching out for our return to His arms. Enter God's Joy and God's Love. Love God.

### **Over to you**

Have you forgotten your first love for God? Has the Quiet Time become dreary and dutiful? Has church worship become a routine? Has witnessing to God's Love and Faithfulness become lost in the busyness of everyday life? Return to God who loves you.

### **Prayer**

Loving Heavenly Father, I surrender to Your Love.  
I love You, my Heavenly Father!

## **Saturday, March 17**

Hosea 6:1-6; Psalm 51:1-2, 16-19; Luke 18:9-14

### **Deep Repentance**

Have you heard of or participated in such a conversation?

*“You know your remark really hurt me!”*

*“Oh, if that is so, sorry lah!”*

*“Is that all you can say?”*

*“I said ‘sorry’. What else do you want?”*

We feel such a show of ‘repentance’ is too shallow. We are probably right to suspect it is not even real. Our sins have hurt God. Are we too ‘chhin-chhai’ with our repentance? Do we think that maybe just a bigger offering to God will sort of wipe the slate clean and settle the balance?

God never thinks of sin that way. For God, it took the precious shed blood of Jesus to fully atone for that horrible darkness. It has always been a ‘dying matter’, never a ‘laughing matter’, to reconcile us.

The tax-collector in Luke 18:13 could not even look up but in deep sorrow for his sins, called out to God to have mercy on him, a sinner. Can we do that?

#### **Over to you:**

No pretences now. Let the searchlight of the Holy Spirit shine through us. Let God reveal and let God heal.

#### **Prayer:**

Lord, Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner. Just as I am, I come into Your presence, Lord

## **Sunday, March 18**

Joshua 5:9-12; Psalm 34:1-8; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Luke 15:1-3,11-32

### **Reconciliation ... Home**

What did you see up there? Some words? In Luke 15, Jesus shows us a movie. Let us look at the concluding segments.

A man, depressed, looking dirty, sits with pigs. His face tells us that the dirt inside him is just as bad as the dirt outside him. Suddenly, he remembers! He remembers his home. He remembers the servants eating around the table – food galore! He ‘comes to his senses’. He will return to his father. He resolutely gets up. He walks away from the pig-sty ... towards his father, towards home!

The next scene. The father waits. His anxiety is written all over his face. He looks into the distance – now, a daily ritual. Suddenly, a familiar shape emerges. “Wow, is that so?” And then the father’s face breaks into joy. He runs towards the son. His heart is beating hard. He is panting.

The father and son meet. The father embraces the son. The son’s words of repentance are lost in the embrace of his father’s arms. Tears, laughter, hugs, shouts, reconciliation ... home.

### **Over to you**

Don’t call this the Parable of the Prodigal (nameless) Son. Call it the Parable of Prodigal (insert your name!). Recall that scene again. This time, you are that returning child.

### **Prayer**

Abba Father, the very word ‘father’ means so much to me.

Dear Father, I come back to You, just as I am. I return to Your matchless love. Amen.

## **Monday, March 19**

Isaiah 65:17-21; Psalm 30:1,3-5,10-12; John 4:43-54

### **Changes**

The only constant in life, someone said, is “change”.

But change can be two-way – it can be ‘change for the better’, or ‘change for the worse’.

In Christ, we can experience ‘change for the better’. The Isaiah 65 passage tells of “new heavens” and a “new earth”! No more tears – life abundant! Psalm 30 speaks of ‘rejoicing in the morning’, a welcome change after a ‘night of weeping’. And the day of rejoicing continues. John 4 tells of the sick son of the royal official. He got better just as Jesus said. And this miraculous change brought the whole household to faith in Jesus.

All these changes for the better come because of God. God is the One who creates newness. It is the experience of God’s favour that brings rejoicing. It is the demonstrated power of God through Jesus that sickness yields to health.

### **Over to you**

What wonderful changes has God brought into your life since the day you put your faith in Jesus? Praise God for God’s goodness. Count your blessings.

### **Prayer**

I give thanks for Your bountiful blessings to me, God of Providence.  
I praise You for the ways You have changed me for the better! Amen.

**Tuesday, March 20**

Ezekiel 47:1-9,12; Psalm 46:1-2,4-5,7-8; John 5:1-16

### **Streams of Living Waters**

How sad! John 5 tells us of the poor man, invalid for 38 years, who is patiently waiting, waiting, waiting for the waters of the pool to be stirred so that he can be the first to enter, and be healed. It did not happen.

One day, Jesus the Healer, stood before him and spoke wellness and strength into his body. 'Streams of living water' flowed powerfully through his once-weakened limbs.

There is a river that flows from the throne of God (Ezekiel 47). It is water that brings life and healing. Where the river flows, there is life, abundant life.

This is the life that Jesus brings to us. It is the refreshing new life that the Spirit breathes into our revived spirits. Drink your fill! Be satisfied with wholeness! Experience life, fresh new life!

#### **Over to you**

Is your Christian life bland and joyless? Come to God and drink your fill! Be revitalized by drinking from God's streams of living waters.

#### **Prayer**

Fill me, Lord, with your refreshing streams of living waters till I want no more. Amen

## **Wednesday, March 21**

Isaiah 49: 8-15; Psalm 145:8-9, 13-14, 17-18; John 5:17-30

### **The Lord Does Not Forget!**

People build monuments in order to be remembered long after they are dead and gone. We have streets named after well-known people. There are buildings bearing the owners' names. Even towns are named after some statesman or philanthropist. We want something more lasting than our lifespan to remember us by.

Because we forget, we think God also forgets. But that is not so! God never forget! God remembers God's covenant with us. No, even when we are in the most difficult of times, do not think that God has forgotten. God has not. Even a nursing mother may forget (and even this is already absurd!) but not God (Isaiah 49:15)! God is faithful to God's promises. There will be a judgment at the end of the times. Those who have done good will be rewarded with life (John 5:29). That is a promise! The Lord remembers!

### **Over to you**

You may forget God but God does not forget you. You may play down God's covenant with you but God keeps God's Word – every Word!

### **Prayer**

Thank you, Lord, for always remembering me even when I forget so easily. Let me ever remember Your great love for me.

**Thursday, March 22**

Exodus 32:7-14; Psalm 106: 19-23; John 5:31-47

### **The Example of Moses**

Moses stood in the gap and interceded for the people of Israel when they rejected the God who delivered them out of slavery in Egypt. God in God's wrath would have wiped them completely from the face of the earth had not Moses intervened. So God relented and did not bring about the disaster God had threatened (Exodus 32:14).

This is what Jesus has done. He too, stood in the gap for us. Rightly we would have been cast away by the Holy God because of our sins. But Jesus hung there – at the cross – reconciling sinful humanity and the Almighty God. With His blood He took away our sins and satisfied the wrath (extreme anger) of God fully. Jesus Christ did it. He intervened on our behalf and bought our salvation.

Jesus, the One greater than Moses has come and completed His task. We can return to God on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord!

### **Over to you**

Recall what Jesus did. Repent of your sins. Return to God. Remember God's love. Rejoice in the deliverance God offers in Christ.

### **Prayer**

Thank You, Jesus, for what You have done for me.  
I come back to You, God. Amen.

## **Friday, March 23**

Micah 7:7-9; Psalm 27: 1, 7-9, 13-14; John 9:1-41

### **Light and Darkness**

The Pharisees majored in the minors. When confronted with the formerly blind man, miraculously healed by Jesus, they could not see beyond the issue of the Sabbath (John 9:16). Human rules of conduct so engrossed them that they could not see the light of God's action. They continue to live shallow lives, picking at little inconsistencies of behaviour.

Now, we may think, who are the people who are really blind?

Only in the light of God can we see what really is. We see God as the stronghold of our lives (Psalm 27:1). We willingly wait for God's rescue in times of distress. We see beyond present circumstances to the great acts of God in history. We see God's goodness right now (Psalm 27:13). And because of what we see in the light of God, we are strong and confident in God.

### **Over to you**

Are you walking in darkness? Here is a test – do you get irritated by little things? In the darkness, you stumble over all these. But in the light of God, you walk confidently because the whole scene is clearly set before you.

### **Prayer**

Lord, bring me into the light and I will see Your righteousness (Micah 7:9)!

## **Saturday, March 24**

Jeremiah 11:18-20; Psalm 7:1-2, 8-11; John 7: 40-52

### **God Is My Refuge**

The limitations of our humanity prevent us from protecting ourselves from all possibilities. There are things dangerous to us that we just cannot know because we do not know the minds of evil people or the future. So do we always live in fear and insecurity?

Praise God! God is our Refuge (Psalm 1:7). God will protect us from evil people as Jeremiah confidently found out by experience (Jeremiah 11:18 - 19). The Psalmist says the same thing. God is his shield and God will save the “upright in heart” (Psalm 7:10). God will judge the wicked.

At times, the rule of evil seems so strong and so overwhelming. But take heart, Christian, the Lord Almighty is your refuge. The example of Jesus is given in the gospels. The people and the temple guards who meant to harm Him could not do so (John 7:44, 45).

### **Over to you**

What is threatening you at this moment? An uncertain future? Lack of finance? An oppressive environment in the office? Abusive situation at home? Come to the Lord, our Refuge.

### **Prayer**

Lord, You are my Refuge. Thank You. My heart is at rest in Your Presence. Amen.

## **Sunday, March 25**

Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126:1-6; Philippians 3:8-14; John 8:1-11

### **Can't Believe, But It's True!**

Life is hard! Life is messy! Often it is painful to look back to the days of our lives that have gone by.

There are regrets for the days where we wish we had not made those decisions. There is the shame of life lived wrongly and relationships strained. There are the fears that someone today may know about our folly during those immature years of our life.

There are those visions that picture our hearts like a worm-infested rotten apple. There are those days we feel like the dirt of the earth. There are those moments we feel there is nothing lower than where we had fallen.

Yet there is our heavenly Father there ready to restore us ... Who tells us, "Do not call to mind the former things or ponder things of the past" and Who promises "rivers in the desert" restoring us to joy in place of sorrow and weeping ... "like those who dream" – too good to be true.

Our Heavenly Father loves and accepts us totally because in Christ there is now no condemnation. We can walk tall and free in His forgiveness and restoration, "forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead." He takes our brokenness, wanderings, and sin, and restores to us new beginnings totally at His own expense!

**Over to you**

Human beings like to earn their keep and are suspicious of freebies. Here's one (God's grace in restoration) that requires us to stop trying to earn our keep in striving against our weariness in life's wanderings, and let God hold us in God's arms of love. Will you recognize your own helplessness and believe God for new beginnings in your life? Are there areas in your life that you need to present to God for a new beginning?

**Prayer**

Lord, help me to know that I will never realize the joy in life until I come to recognize my helplessness in trying to reset my life, and draw near to Your grace in restoring me to new beginnings.

## **Monday, March 26**

2 Kings 4:18-21, 32-37; Psalm 17:1, 6-8, 15; John 11:1-45

### **Giver of Life**

We want very much to be in favour with God. We dress our best for Sundays. We put on our best behaviour for religious days. We pray our best prayers prepared and inspired.

Then something happens and we feel we are not “spiritual” enough. We feel we backslided and are not good enough to be in the company of God’s people. We lose interest in prayer and the reading of the Word of God. We begin to stay away from church and Christian friends.

Often we feel we need to get things straightened out before we come back to church or to God. So we stay away. We feel we need to get our spiritual disciplines in place, otherwise, we will not be accepted if we come back. Actually, we are really thinking we need to be back from the dead before we can come before the Giver of Life! What a contradiction!

God does not ask us to come to God only when we have sorted out our life. God does not ask us to raise ourselves from the dead before we come to God. We just need God to come to us, just as we are ... dead or half dead, and let God give us life.

We are precious to God and God keeps us “as the apple of the eye” and God will keep coming to us to give us life if we let God.

**Over to you**

When our lives go wrong, we keep moving away from God quite naturally. We begin to take responsibility for a number of areas of our lives that we think we need to straighten out before coming to God. But we are going the wrong direction. When life is dying, all the more we need to come to the Giver of Life, not move further away. Are there areas of your life that you need to simply surrender to God and allow God to visit those areas with God's abundant life?

**Prayer**

Lord, take the death and dying areas of my life and touch them with Your life-giving Spirit that I may live again to be joyful in You, the Giver of Life.

**Tuesday, March 27**

Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 102:1-2, 15-20; John 8:21-30

### **Believe and Live!**

Human beings are naturally selfish creatures. Given a free choice, we would make decisions and preferences advantageous to ourselves. We would do things our own ways, feel a lot more comfortable if others adjust to us than we adjust to them, and in the extreme, expect the whole world including our bosses to revolve around us.

But God comes to us and bids us learn God's peace and joy in the midst of turmoil and storms of life. The road to the promise land is through the wilderness. For some moments, we lose sight of where God is taking us and grumble about the journey as though it was the destination. In the grumbling and sin, we set ourselves for death and walk the road of condemnation, a place outside of the joy of God.

Yet God in God's goodness and love, comes to "hear the groaning of the prisoner; to set free those who were doomed to death" calling us not to allow ourselves to die in our sins but to believe Christ and live. We need to look at our lives and circumstances in light of Who Christ is, not look at our circumstances and question Christ. Life's starting point is Christ.

### **Over to you**

How easy it is for us to be short-sighted in our journeys and complain about the apparent bad deal we are getting from God as though God is our debtor. It is almost as though we have forgotten how far we ourselves have walked away from God in the desert place of life. We may have grumbled about giving up on God but God has not given up on us. God bids us to look to

Christ, believe and live. Are you placing your life in Christ and coming to Him in a trust relationship or are you losing sight of Who Jesus Christ is?

**Prayer**

Lord, restore to me the joy of Your salvation and renew a right spirit within me. Lead me in the way everlasting.

## **Wednesday, March 28**

Daniel 3:14-20, 24-25, 28; (Ps) Daniel 3:29-30; John 8:31-42

### **Freedom in Righteousness**

By nature, we seek to be free people that we may not be in chains or submit to any other except what is legitimate. But sometimes, we see the legitimate as something that is an unnecessary burden. And God often falls in that category where coming to God in humble obedience means a “loss” of freedom and losing the joy of life.

When is a train really free? When it is travelling on its track and moving on the “restrictions” where it will fulfil its role and maximum potential.

We were made to be free and Christ came to set us free. But true freedom only comes when we are rightly aligned with God’s purposes of righteousness in our lives. That’s when we can experience the fulfilment of our maximum potential as God intended. True freedom (and power) for God’s people comes about when they have “yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God” Yahweh.

When we yield ourselves as “slaves to righteousness,” and come to Christ, we shall be able to make our stand in life’s challenges and experience the freedom He came to give.

**Over to you**

We yearn for freedom in the many struggles and sin of our lives. Some are real and some are imaginary because we have not experienced true freedom in our minds. We need to be clear of who we are in Christ and come to Him in total surrender to His will. Will you sign ALL rights to your life over to Jesus Christ, the Lord of freedom and joy Who is also the Creator God?

**Prayer**

Lord, take my life and let it be wholly yours that I may experience the joy of freedom found only in You.

**Thursday, March 29**

Genesis 17:3-9; Psalm 105:4-9; John 8:51-59

### **Keeping Your Covenant**

God on God's own initiative extended a covenant with Abraham which brought them into an extremely special relationship like none other on earth. This relationship would be one that would transform Abraham into a recipient of God's tremendous blessings and full realization of God's purposes and dreams in his life – the fulfilment of his destiny. In a very real sense, God does not need the benefits of the covenant as God already is self-sufficient. It is more for the Abraham and God's physical and spiritual descendants.

As spiritual descendants of Abraham, we are in a covenant relationship with God. All God's promises are renewed to us daily. God keeps us in God's total love in a priority standing with God. But God calls us on our part to keep God's Word. Again, this is not to God's benefit as God is self-sufficient, but to our joy that we "shall never see death."

What a tremendous motivation and an expression of God's personal interest in our lives as mere mortals. Who are we that the Creator God should want to self-initiate a covenant of relationship with us? And in what ways are we worthy of such a covenant?

**Over to you**

God keeps God's covenant and calls us to keep ours. God has never moved away from God's commitment in the relationship. Reconciliation to God is about us moving back in commitment to that covenant relationship that we may rightly place ourselves in the centre of God's will and God's joy. How have you moved away from your covenant relationship with Christ? Is there a need in your life for reconciliation and restoration of this relationship?

**Prayer**

Lord, I've wandered far away from You and now I'm coming home. Take me and make me like You.

## **Friday, March 30**

Jeremiah 20:10-13; Psalm 18:1-6; John 10:31-42

### **Strong Deliverer**

When a tsunami hits, nothing can actively deliver though some may be defended passively by the mangrove forests that grow at the edge of the tide.

Life is full of tsunamis that seek to swallow us up – friends that become enemies for political or religious reasons; enemies and strangers that terrorize our hearts in a world hostile to our worldview; and close associates who secretly hope for our fall.

The worst of tsunamis is ourselves and it begins in our minds – the deceptions, the lies, the false beliefs. And those, if not dealt with, begin to take root and bring forth a fruit of unbelief in God and personal imprisonment in the valley of the shadows of death in every area of life. Joy gets sucked out of our lives and we live in constant fear and insecurity.

God defends us from these. True security lies in being positioned in God's truth (God's Word) and God's presence (time with God). God does not deliver us in a passive way, but God is our active strong deliverer – our strength, our rock, our fortress, our refuge, our shield, our stronghold, and the horn of our salvation.

**Over to you**

Fears are one of the most crippling emotions in our lives. They paralyze us and drain us of our energies that could be productively used for God, others, and ourselves. They may originate from past events, others, or from ourselves. Are there fears in your life that you need to bring before God and let God be your strong deliverer?

**Prayer**

Lord, may I return to You so that I may find deliverance in the centre of Your presence and find security in Who You are.

## **Saturday, March 31**

Ezekiel 37:21-28; (Ps) Jeremiah 31:10-13; John 11:45-57

### **Gathering the Scattered**

The people of God were scattered but God would bring them together again in some form of restoration.

Another way to look at being scattered is that the people are not together. A family can be scattered because of broken relationships or sin. A community can be scattered because of war or conflicts. A church family can be scattered because of divisions and personal interests.

But in Christ, all things hold together and the scattered will be gathered into one. No longer will a family be scattered but God will heal broken relationships and forgive their sin. No longer will communities be scattered but God will bring healing and restoration. No longer will the church family be scattered because God brings unity and reconciliation.

However, this happens when the people of God draw near to God in repentance, seeking God's forgiveness and restoration. The Family, Church, and Community need God's forgiveness and restoration so that there may be joy again in the gathering of the scattered.

**Over to you**

We live in a broken world full of scattered communities from the family to society. Until and unless we learn how to come before God with our brokenness, we will never see the healing and restoration take place. The gathering of the scattered really begins with us as individuals as we personally come before God with our brokenness seeking God's restoration. Are there scattered communities related to your life? How will you personally respond to God in your own brokenness in order that God may restore whole communities related to you?

**Prayer**

Lord, take the shattered hearts in my life and those around me. Heal them and may they be to You the hearts that You would gather into a restored community that is safe and joyful.

## **Passion Sunday, April 1**

Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22:7-8, 16-19, 22-23;  
Philippians 2:6-11; Luke 22:14 – 23:56

### **“I set My face like flint”**

Today is the beginning of Holy Week.

The holiest week in the Christian calendar.

It is the week where we see human beings at their worst  
and the human Jesus at His best.

We see those closest to Jesus in their betrayal, denial, cowardice ...

We see those opposing Jesus relentlessly trumping up charges ...

We see those indifferent to Jesus letting Him suffer needlessly ...

What was Jesus' response?

Through Isaiah He says, “I have not drawn back.

I offered My back to those who beat Me,

My cheeks to those who pulled out My beard;

I did not hide My face from mocking and spitting

... I have set My face like flint ...”

What does Paul say in Philippians about the Christ Jesus?

He says, “Who, being in very nature God, ...

made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant

... He humbled Himself, and became obedient to death

– death on a cross!”

What did Jesus have that enabled Him to set His face “like flint”?

(That is 'to endure with great determination'.)

He had God's Will in mind.

His heart burned to do God's Will.

Thus we find Him saying, "I have not drawn back." (Isaiah 50:5)

He had spent hours listening to the Sovereign Lord.

Morning by morning. Day by day.

He had humility. He had trust.

That's why He could in the end go on to the Cross!

### **Over to you**

How about you?

Is there anything that the Lord is asking of you?

Is there anything that you are about to give up

– because of the mounting difficulties?

### **Prayer**

Lord, help me to know that with You by my side

"I will not be put to shame."

Lord, "be not far off." Be "my Strength, come quickly to help me."

## **Monday, April 2**

Isaiah 42:1-7; Psalm 27:1-3; 13-14; John 12:1-11

### **“The Light”**

2,500 years ago God spoke to a Jewish prophet.

He was living in exile in Babylon in 550 B.C.

Jerusalem, the Holy City had been destroyed.

The temple had been burnt to the ground.

Whatever the Jews thought about God’s blessing

– land, king, temple – was gone!

Into this apparent abandonment by God, the prophet spoke.

The prophet spoke about ‘the Servant of the Lord’.

The Servant Whose life is dedicated to God.

The Servant Whose sufferings for God would bring about,  
for the people, forgiveness and restoration.

The Servant Who will be “a Covenant” for the people.

The Servant Who will be “a Light” for the Gentiles”.

Who is this “Servant”?

What is this “Covenant” ... this “Light”?

The unwritten word of the act of creation is that

it brings forth a Covenant between God and human beings.

The Servant, Who is the embodiment of this Covenant has come.

He has come in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ will put God’s plans for God’s people into full effect.

He will be God’s Word for the people.

He will make known to all the Sovereign Lord.

Jesus Christ has also come to open our 'blind eyes'; to set us free from our 'captivities' ... 'liberate us from our dungeons' ...

He has come to give us light!

### **Over to you**

Ask yourself these questions:-

- Is God the Lord of my life?
- What are the spiritual blindness, captivities, dungeons in my life?
- When was the last time I loved God "extravagantly"?
- What fears are holding me back from living a life pleasing to God?

### **Prayer**

Lord, I pray with the Psalmist,

'You are my Light and my Salvation – whom shall I fear?

You are the Stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?

In the face of evil foes and forces – my heart will not fear, I will be confident'. Only let me ever seek Thee – the Light of my life.

## **Tuesday, April 3**

Isaiah 49:1-6; Psalm 71:1-6, 15,17; John 13:21-33

### **Stay Close to Jesus**

It is the night of the Last Supper.

The disciples are gathered there with Jesus to celebrate the Jewish  
Passover. They are eating and drinking.

Suddenly Jesus pierces the celebration with a statement.

Jesus says, "... one of you is going to betray Me."

The response of the disciples?

They "stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them  
He meant" (John 13:21).

And then is mentioned "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23).

Where was he? He was "reclining next" to Jesus.

And then Peter spoke to this disciple, "Ask Him which one He means."

What did the disciple do?

"Leaning back against Jesus, he asked Him, "Lord, who is it?"

How close is this disciple to Jesus?

Physically, in this instance, very close.

Emotionally? He is "the disciple whom Jesus loved".

And Jesus trusted him with the information  
of the identity of the betrayer (John.13:26).

What did he do with the betrayer? Nothing.

What did he do? He continued to stay close to Jesus.

When Jesus was arrested and taken to the High Priest,  
this disciple was with Jesus.

When Jesus was on the cross, this disciple was at the foot of the cross.  
He stayed close to Jesus. Why?

Because that was where he found his strength and consolation.

The only thing that mattered to him was to stay close to Jesus.

### **Over to you**

Are you relying on Jesus to give you the strength to meet the challenging situations in your life?

Do you desire to experience that divine love  
that will enable you to persevere whatever comes your way?

### **Prayer**

Lord, be my Rock of Refuge, my Fortress, my Hope, my Confidence.  
Help me begin anew this Holy Week - return to You  
... stay close to You.

## **Wednesday, April 4**

Isaiah 50:4-9; Psalm 69:7-9, 13, 20-21, 30, 32-33; Matthew 26:14-25

### **“And It Was Night”**

It is the night of the Last Supper.

And Jesus says, “ ... one of you will betray Me.”

How did the disciples respond?

- “They were very sad and began to say to Him one after the other,  
“Surely not I, Lord?” (Matthew 26:22)
- “They were saddened, and one by one they said to Him,  
“Surely not I?” (Mark. 14:19)
- “They began to question among themselves  
which of them it might be who would do this.” (Luke 22:23)
- “His disciples stared at one another,  
at a loss to know which of them He meant.” (John 13:22)

And then Judas said, “Surely not I, Rabbi?”

When Judas said that, he had already gone to the chief priests and asked,  
“What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over to you?” (Matthew 26:14-15) The price they paid for Jesus, 30 pieces of silver, is the price for a slave accidentally killed by an ox (Exodus 21:32).

And even when Jesus said in response to Judas’,

“Surely not I, Rabbi?” - “Yes, it is you,” Judas still went on and led

“a large crowd armed with swords and clubs” to the Garden of Gethsemane. What was his signal to them?

“The One I kiss is the Man; arrest Him.” (Matthew 26:48)

Judas approached Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane to kiss Him. Before he could do it, Jesus asked him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man (i.e. the Messiah) with a kiss?” (Luke 22:48) Judas’ response? “Greetings, Rabbi! And kissed Him.” (Matthew 26:49)

After Jesus was arrested and condemned what happened to Judas? “He was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. “I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.” ... Then he went away and hanged himself.” (Matthew 27: 3-5)

So much of darkness in Judas’ life that John could say of Judas after the Passover meal that, “as soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.”

### **Over to you**

What are the “darkness” in your life?  
Can you hear what God is saying to you right now?  
Or are you refusing to listen?

### **Prayer**

Lord, let my ears be willing to listen “like one being taught”.  
Let me not be rebellious.  
Let me seek You.  
Let my heart come alive for You and Your Kingdom!

## **Thursday, April 5**

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14;

Psalm 116:12-13; 15-18;

1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13

### **“I don’t know The Man!”**

It is the night of the Last Supper.

“Jesus knew that the time had come for Him to leave this world and go to the Father.” So, He got up from the meal, poured water into a basin and washed the disciples’ feet. And then Jesus makes two predictions. He predicts His betrayal. He predicts Peter’s denial. Just before this prediction of Peter’s denial Peter had said to Jesus, “I will lay down my life for You.” (John 13:37); “Lord, I am ready to go with You to prison and to death.” (Luke 22:33);

“Even if all fall away, I will not.” (Mark 14:29);

“Even if all fall away on account of You, I never will.” (Matthew 26:33)

After Jesus predicted Peter’s denial, how did Peter respond?

“Even if I have to die with You, I will never disown You.” (Matthew 26:35; Mark 14:31)

And then what happened?

In the High Priest’s courtyard, we hear Peter saying,

“... I don’t know Him.” (Luke 22:57)

... “I don’t know This Man you’re talking about.” (Mark 14:71)

... “I don’t know The Man! ... I don’t know The Man!”

(Matt. 26:72, 74)

Accordingly at his third denial, the rooster crowed – just as predicted by Jesus. “ ... before the rooster crows, you will disown Me three times!” (John 13:38) “ ... you will deny three times that you know Me.” (Luke 22:34).

It’s a long night. It’s a terrible night – both for the Master and the disciples. One betrayed Him ... most ran away.

Only two had followed after Him to the High Priest’s residence. And of the two, one who had spoken such brave and courageous words, just hours before, had in the end, denied Him.

When Peter had spoken his third denial, the rooster crowed and Jesus had “turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown Me three times. And he went outside and wept bitterly.” (Luke 22:61-62)

What had he just said? “I don’t know The Man!”

### **Over to you**

Try and recall the times you have denied Jesus or your Christian faith.

What do you want to say to Jesus about those times?

What do you think Jesus would say to you about those times?

### **Prayer**

Lord, forgive me for those times I have denied You and my Christian faith in my words and in my actions. I know You would say to me as You have said to Peter, “ ... when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers and sisters.” (Luke 22:32) Therefore, I will ever thank You, ever call on Your Name, truly be Your servant, and with Your help, fulfil my vows to You. Help me live as one who is eternally gratefully that You are my Lord.

## **Friday, April 6**

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12; Psalm 31:1, 5, 11-12, 14-16 Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9;  
John 18-19

### **“I have become like Broken Pottery ... it must happen this way ...”**

Arrested, Jesus was led to the high priest and the Sanhedrin (Jewish court).

When He said, “Yes ...” to the high priest’s question,

“Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God.” (Matthew 26:63-64)

“ ... they spit in His face ... struck Him with their fists ... slapped Him ...”

(Matthew 26:67). The Jewish guards “beat Him” too. (Mark 14:65)

Then Jesus was led to Pilate. What did Pilate do to Him?

Pilate had Him flogged. (John 19:1)

How about Pilate’s soldiers who were guarding Jesus?

“The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head ...

they struck Him in the face.” (John 19:2-3) “They spit on Him, ... took the

staff and struck Him on the head again and again.” (Matthew 27:30) They

mocked and beat Jesus, and said many insulting things to Him. (Luke

22:63-65)

What else did Jesus have to experience?

He was nailed to the Cross.

So, how would Jesus look like after this?

Isaiah says, “ ... many ... were appalled at Him – His appearance was so

disfigured beyond that of any human being ... His form marred beyond

human likeness ... One from Whom others hide their faces.” The Psalmist

had Jesus speaking these words, “I AM a dread to my friends – those who see Me on the street flee from Me ... I have become like broken pottery.”

Why? Why?

Why would Jesus allow such things to happen to Him?

Jesus provides the answer in Matthew 26:53-54.

He says, “Do you think I cannot call on My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than 12 legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way?” (A Roman legion has 6,000 soldiers. So – 72,000 angels!)

“It must happen this way ...”

For what purpose?

To take up our infirmities. To carry our sorrows. To be pierced for our transgressions. To be crushed for our iniquities. To bring us peace. To heal our wounds. To justify us. To become our source of eternal salvation.

### **Over To You**

Fix your eyes on Jesus today.

What do you see?

Do you see Him giving His life for your life?

Kneel in silent gratitude.

Gaze on the Cross and pour out your love to Jesus.

### **Prayer**

Lord, give me the courage to look into Your eyes  
so that I may see how much You love me.

**Saturday, April 7**  
Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

**In the Silence ...**

It is Saturday.

Christ is dead.

So much has happened.

Too much has happened.

It is the Jewish Sabbath.

A day where all activities cease.

That's what "Sabbath" means – "to cease ... to stop ..."

Today, let us stop to ponder on all that has happened.

Ponder on Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet.

Ponder on the Last Supper.

Ponder on how Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Ponder on His arrest.

Ponder on the sufferings He went through.

Ponder on His crucifixion.

Ponder on His death.

Let this be a day of silence.

Silently pray and meditate in quiet awe and wonder at the extent of God's love for you.

Isaiah says, "... the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all  
... for the transgression of My people He was stricken  
... He poured out His life unto death,  
and was numbered with the transgressors  
... He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the  
transgressors."

Today, Jesus is resting from His labour of love.

He is resting in silence.

For us to speak is to break this silence.

Let Jesus sleep while we pray in the silence.

### **Over to You**

Read ... Meditate ... Contemplate ... on the following:-

- Matthew 26 - 27
- Mark 14 – 15
- Luke 22 – 23
- John 13 - 19

### **Prayer**

Lord, in the silence reshape my heart.

Make my heart a sanctuary of Your love.

## **Easter Sunday, April 8**

Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23;

Acts 10:34, 37-43;

Colossians 3:1-4;

John 20:1-9

### **He is Risen! He is Risen indeed!**

When Mary Magdalene “saw” that the stone at the tomb had been removed she had come running to Peter and John. Upon hearing about it, both had run to the tomb. Peter had gone into the tomb first. He “saw” strips of linen and Jesus’ facial burial cloth. And then is recorded, John went in ... “saw and believed.” What did John see?

It is not what John saw. It is how John saw. He saw with his heart. He saw the truth. Indeed, Jesus had to die, and on the third day, rise to life! That’s what John saw - he saw the truth of all that Jesus had said.

Today, we are reminded by Paul to ‘set our hearts on things above’; to ‘set our minds on things above, not on earthly things’. Why?

Because ‘we have been raised with Christ’. Because ‘we have died, and our life is now hidden with Christ in God’. When we can understand this in our hearts and live thus, then we shall be able to “see” as John “saw”. We shall be able to “see” that indeed today is a day of rejoicing. Today, is a day of victory, of triumph, of the defeat of Satan, sin, and death. We shall be able to “see” that “In Christ”

all darkness separating us from God has been remove. ...  
that, we are reconciled with God forevermore! ...

that, we are empowered to live as Christ lived.

Today, let us place our faith in Jesus.

Today, let us believe that all that He had accomplished through His Life, Death, and Resurrection, can break the power of sin and death in our lives.

He is Risen!

He is Risen Indeed!

### **Over To You**

Today, ask God to give you the faith, strength and courage to live a holy life.

### **Prayer**

O Lord, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You.

## *Contributors*

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