What is Lent

The word “Lent” (originally another word for the Spring season) can mean different things to different people. Depending on your personal experiences and history, Lent might carry a negative meaning: like begrudging penance, works righteousness, or cold loveless religion. If that is the case, I want to encourage you that Lent at Redeemer Christian Church will feel nothing like that, and I sincerely hope that in the future Lent will carry a new Christ-centered, grace-saturated meaning to you and your family.

The purpose of Lent is worship, not works. In the same way Advent is a season of worshipful preparation for the Christmas holiday, Lent is simply a season of communal preparation, focus, and worship leading up to Easter. It is an ancient tradition that has been practiced by Christians of every tribe and nation and denomination to help eliminate distraction and foster awe for the triumph that is the cross and the empty grave.

Why we encourage you to practice Lent

This will be the first time that Redeemer Christian Church has observed Lent as a family. With the increasing busyness and noise of our culture, our elders have seen the value of certain rhythms of the old Christian liturgical calendar in the spiritual formation of our members. Without seasons of intentional preparation, Christian holidays can devolve into nothing more than days that sneak up on us that may or may not include a decent meal. For the last two years we have observed Advent as a church to shepherd and prepare us to celebrate the miracle of the coming of Jesus. Now, we will also incorporate Lent into our worship in order to shepherd and prepare us to celebrate the miracle of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

How we encourage you to practice Lent

Lent shouldn’t be reduced to a theologically sanctioned diet or list of regulations that you think will make God love you more. If you are tempted to view or practice Lent in that way, I encourage you to forego practicing fasting until you have allowed the Holy Spirit to reveal his grace to you in a deeper way. But if you feel like a season of fasting and prayer would lead into a deeper love for God, there are certain “Lenten” practices that we encourage you to adopt as we approach Easter.

First and foremost, give yourself to prayer, the study of Scripture, and worship. The reason we have produced this study guide is help you in this aim. Each weekly section of this Lenten guide includes a devotional theme, weekly prayer, daily scripture readings, and a recommended verse to memorize and teach to your family. These prayers and passages (borrowed from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer) are structured in a way to lead you to an awareness of your need for salvation that can only be found in Jesus Christ. They are designed in a way to help you confront, confess, and forsake your sin and draw closer to
God through the perfect work of Jesus. After all, it is only when we know the weight of our sin that we will know the true worth of our Savior.

Secondly, we encourage you to fast. At the most basic level, this might mean setting aside a meal or two a week and praying and using that time to pray and read Scripture. However, we encourage you to consider sacrificing other things that might help you focus on God as well. This might mean giving up television, social media, comfort food, or habits that draw your affections away from Jesus. Let the Holy Spirit lead you to the best way to press into God during this season. Again, your motivation in this practice matters. Fasting is not a way to earn God’s favor (Isaiah 58 exposes this lie). It is a means by which we can draw closer and become more aware of a God who has already loved us and saved us by grace.

May this devotional guide help you and bless you as you draw near to our Lord in this season!

-Lead Pastor David Ritchie, Redeemer Christian Church
Ash Wednesday

*Almighty and everlasting God, who hates nothing that thou have made and forgives the sins of all those who are repentant: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Sin and Death

Man faces an intractable problem; death and decay. We each live our lives knowing that our loved ones – our parents, our siblings, our spouses, our children – will die. Their physical bodies will cease to function and they will be removed from what Shakespeare called “the mortal coil.” And each of us knows that our death is a certainty. Afraid to confront the reality of the grave, we do our best to ignore death’s grip over our lives. Ash Wednesday serves to remind us that our lives do not last forever, that we will meet our maker. Ancient church tradition had the Ash Wednesday celebrant dab ashes on the heads of his congregants while he commanded them from Genesis 3:19, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

But death is merely a symptom of a larger problem. If death has his hand on the whip, sin is the slave master who pays him. God commanded our first father, Adam to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil “for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gn 2:17b). However, when Satan convinced Adam that he and his wife Eve could replace God by defying his command, Adam ceded the rule God had given him over the earth and instead became a slave to sin and sin would drag him back into the earth from which he came.

But as you read the Scriptures this week, as dark as it is, as painful the captivity, listen for God’s promise of a better world created by his “Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love” for his children. Despite our rebellion, we have a Redeemer who frees us from our bondage. This story is told throughout the Bible, as God unceasingly pursues his wayward people. We will see in the pages of Scripture Adam and Eve exiled from the Garden, the children of Israel enslaved to Egypt’s Pharaoh, a king who knows his sin is against God and God alone, and a nation waiting for it’s Messiah.

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1 *The Book of Common Prayer.* New York: Seabury Press, 1979. (We have used modern verb tenses while retaining thee and thou usage for divine pronouns. Additionally, we replaced the word *penitent* with *repentant* to bring the prayer in line with historical Reformed Protestantism’s emphasis on repentance from sin enabled by grace and rejection of added penance necessary on the part of the believer.

Scripture Memory:

Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.
Psalm 51:4

Wednesday

Genesis 2:15-3:24

What did God give to Man?
What was his only command?
What was the lie Adam and Eve believed that led them to sin?
Identify the hope God gives Adam and Eve?

Thursday

Exodus 1:1-2:25

To whom are the Hebrews captive?
How is this like our captivity to sin?
Is God ignorant of the Hebrews plight?
What is the implication for believers?

Friday

Psalm 51

Psalm 51 was written in the context of David’s adultery with Bethsheba.
How do you think that influences the psalm?
What metaphor does David use to describe his sin?
Who is the most offended party of David’s sin?
Who is the one who can cleanse David of his sin?

Saturday

Romans 3:9-27

How many people have escaped slavery to sin and death?
Are any racial groups or ethnicities more privileged in our captivity?
Who are the biggest agents of deception in our lives?
Through whom can we be justified from slavery?
First Sunday in Lent

Almighty God, whose Blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted of Satan: Make speed to help thy servants who are assaulted by manifold temptations; and, as thou knows their several infirmities, let each one find thee mighty to save; through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. 

Temptation

Sin has a certain attractiveness to it. If we’re honest, the sweet siren call of sin beckons to us constantly, only to reveal itself as a rocky shore, dashing against its cliffs all that fall prey to its snare. Additionally, because sin is internal to every human being, the Bible says, “Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire” (Jas 1:14). Last week we saw the connection between death and sin and sin and slavery. This week we will look at the lie sin casts to woo its victims.

Satan’s fundamental lie to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was that if they rebelled against God their “eyes would be opened, and [they would] be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gn 3:5, emphasis mine). It’s a big lie, to say a person could be like God, but our first parents bought the story. Now before our indignant selves accuse our parents of naivété, keep in mind that this is the lie we believe every time we allow temptation to sin to win us over. Our every act of rebellion tells God that he is not worthy of our worship, and that we should have veto privileges if we don’t like how he calls us to holiness and righteousness.

Even as God had saved Israel from its slavery to Egypt, and was leading them to the Promised Land, the people complained against him and his designated leaders, Moses and Aaron, claiming that God had lead them into the wilderness to let them starve. Their bellies caused them to think they knew better than God and long for the “meat pots” they nostalgically recalled having while enslaved to a hateful pharaoh worshiping the false god’s of Egypt. Mike Wilkerson points out that the Israelites’ basic desire for food wasn’t sinful, but “they wanted it on their terms, and they disbelieved God would provide.” Food had become more important to them than God; it was, in that moment, their idol.

Contrast Israel’s unbelief with Jesus’ time in the wilderness. Satan attempts to cajole Jesus into relying on himself rather than the Holy Spirit by telling him, “‘You are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.’ But he answered, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Mt 4:3-4). Jesus knows that the core of temptation is the desire to ascend to God’s throne and be our own provider.

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4 Mike Wilkerson, Redemption: Freed by Jesus from the Idols We Worship and the Wounds We Carry (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 107.
This week consider the end of both of these stories. Does God provide bread for Israel? Does God provide bread for Jesus? Yes and yes. God is gracious to us when we are not deserving of his grace and when we yield to temptation, allowing our hearts to carry us to sin. While we are like Adam or Israel, only Jesus can be Jesus and as the ancient church fathers saw, the temptation of Jesus in the desert is the turning point. It is the first salvo fired on Jesus' rescue mission, rebuffing the Enemy in the wilderness when each and every one of us would have succumbed.6

Scripture Memory:

For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.
Romans 5:17

Monday

Exodus 16

Of what does Israel accuse God?
How would you have responded to Israel?
How does God respond to Israel?
What does this say about God?

Tuesday

Matthew 4:1-11

Who accuses God?
How does Jesus respond to the accusation against his Father?
Ultimately, God feeds Jesus. What is the difference between Satan’s lie and reality?

Wednesday

James 1

How are trials to be met?
Did Israel meet their trials appropriately? What about Jesus?
According to James, where does temptation originate?

Thursday

Romans 1:16-32

What exchange do people make that leads them to sin?
According to Paul, where will sin eventually lead people?
Does Paul leave the reader hopeless? If not, what hope does he offer?

Friday

Romans 5:12-21

How did Adam’s failure to resist temptation affect Mankind?
How does Jesus’ victory over temptation affect Mankind?
What is the cost to the believer for Jesus’ obedience?
If temptation leading to sin is failure to trust God, what is failure to believe in Jesus?

Saturday

Luke 17:1-10

Jesus lays out a heavy punishment for the one who tempts God’s children.
How is this a warning? How is this a comfort?
Is resisting a temptation a one-man war?
Does the master of the unworthy servants owe them anything?
Does God owe us anything?
Second Sunday in Lent

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from thy ways, and bring them again with repentant hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of thy Word, Jesus Christ thy Son; who with thee and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, forever and ever. Amen.7

Grace

We are slaves of our own choosing to sin and our own hearts entice us to temptation. Even though it’s easy to blame other people, Satan, the world — or even God — for our sin, we personally bear the responsibility for our rebellion against God. The cost of our treason is death and because our treason is against an infinite God, infinite death is demanded (Rom 6:23). While Hell is often reduced to PG curse word or B-movie comedy plot, we aren’t all that comfortable with the idea of God’s wrath distilled in a real place in real time. But the truth is, we all face Hell because of our rebellion.

But God’s wrath isn’t why the Bible was written, Jesus came to Earth, or anyone hears the message of hope. God’s wrath by itself is an incomplete picture but it serves to illuminate God’s grace. Grace — often referred to as favor in the Old Testament — is the motivation for Jesus coming to save sinners from their deserved fate. God freely gives his grace to the believer. The believer cannot earn God’s grace, he cannot merit it in anyway and grace does not originate with the believer. Justin Holcomb writes, “Grace isn’t a personal virtue at all; rather, it is undeserved favor lavished on an inferior by a superior. Grace is unmerited favor or a kindly disposition that leads to acts of kindness.”8 It is this “unmerited favor” that causes God to sympathize with us, for Jesus to condescend to become like us (Phil 2:6), to live a life we should have lived, to die a death we deserved to die and for the Father to accept Jesus’ death as propitiation (Rom 3:25), or blood sacrifice worthy to cover our rebellion, and his resurrection to guarantee ours (1 Cor 15:20-21). By his irresistible grace, the Holy Spirit transforms hearts from stone to flesh, from death to life (Ez 36:26).

As Holcomb points out, grace is an uncomfortable concept and “religion tries to domesticate grace.”9 We try to reign in grace for fear that it will be abused. This fear isn’t entirely unjustified; even the Bible makes it clear people will try to use grace as an excuse to sin (Rom 6:1-14, Jude 4), but the opposite reaction is to replace grace with work and duty with delight.10 Grace, then needs to be rightly understood. It originates with God, but causes a joyful response on our part (1 Jn 4:10, 19). Through his grace, God leads us to repentance of sin, to holiness, to unity with each other, and to generosity that doesn’t love things, but

9 Ibid, 15
10 Mark Driscoll, Religion Saves: and Nine Other Misconceptions (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 115.
loves people and gives up wealth for them. Through grace, and hopefully during the season of Lent, God calls us to “abandon the world of our pharisaic religion, to stop pretending we are righteous, to come to grips with the reality of our own phoniness, and to break through to a faith that is real and genuine.”

Scripture Memory:

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.
Ephesians 2:4

Monday

Genesis 6-8

Which comes first: Noah finds favor with God? Or Noah is blameless?
Read Genesis 9:21. Is Noah without sin?
Does he earn God’s favor or is it given to him?
Why does God show him favor?

Tuesday

Exodus 32

What did Israel communicate to God by making the Golden Calf?
How many Israelites did God tell Moses he could consume for their idolatry?
Did he allow all the Israelites to die?
What does that tell us about God’s purposes?

Wednesday

Luke 15:11-32

What does the younger brother value most?
What sort of position does that put the father in?
Does the father need to welcome the younger brother home?
Does the father exclude the older brother?

11 Webber, Ancient-Future Time, 107.
Thursday

Romans 6

_Does grace give us permission to sin?_  
_Why or why not?_  
_From what are we freed?_  
_To what are we enslaved?_  
_What does this purchase cost the believer? (v. 23)_

Friday

Ephesians 2

_What was your state before you were saved? (v. 1)_  
_What does this say for your ability to save yourself?_  
_Why does God save people? (v. 4)_  
_How does God save people? (v. 8)_  
_How does this affect believers’ relationships with one another?_

Saturday

Galatians 5

_Why has Christ set us free?_  
_What is our freedom not for? What is it for?_  
_When you abuse your freedom, what “works of the flesh” do you find yourself following?_  
_What “fruit of the Spirit” do you need to grow in?_
Third Sunday in Lent

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

-Book of Common Prayer

Protection

Grace has freed us from slavery to sin and death because Jesus lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died. Grace helps us resist temptation because Jesus resisted the temptations of Satan in the desert. But now that our slave master has lost his slave and our enemy is enraged, how can Christians withstand the attacks that are inevitable (1 Pt 4:12)? A few options present themselves. We can lash out in anger and fear those who would seek to oppress us and God for his perceived dereliction of duty; we can run and hide, retreating into a Christian ghetto of PG movies and “Christian” coffee shops, thinking that avoiding our call as missionaries to a dying world will save us; or we can rely on the Holy Spirit to go with us, defend us, protect us, and equip us for forward movement because we are seeing Jesus’ glory go forth (Mt 28:20, Acts1:8, 1 Pt 4:13).

Like us on most occasions, Israel chose the first option. After God had led his people out of Egypt and to the shore of the Red Sea, he hardened Pharaoh’s heart and Pharaoh pursued the people of Israel into the wilderness (Ex 14:4). When his army drew near, the Israelites became afraid – forgetting the power Yahweh had displayed as he liberated them from captivity – and became more afraid of Pharaoh. They asked Moses, God’s servant, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?” (v. 11). The Israelites though that perhaps it would have been easier for them to stay in captivity; they did not trust God or his intentions. They did not trust his power. They did not trust his servant Moses and their sudden nostalgia for Egypt blinded them to all the suffering that was in that place.

But God was bigger than their unbelief. God commanded Moses to move his people forward and as they went, God split the sea, creating a path of escape for the Israelites. Again, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart (v. 17) so he pursued them into the Wilderness. As Israel left the sea, and Egypt was in the middle of the sea, God had Moses stretch out his hand and the waters collapsed, destroying the pursuing army and saving Israel from their enemies (vv. 30-31). Israel’s history from that point on would be an exercise in remembering that it was God who protected them from their enemies. When they turned to him, he would save them (ie, Gideon versus the Midianites in Judges 7 or the Assyrian Invasion in 2 Chronicles 32:1-23). When they fought in their own strength or
allied with foreign powers, such as – ironically – Egypt, they would be defeated (2 Chronicles 26).

For the believer in Christ, the same principle governs us. If we attempt to manage the pressure by aligning ourselves with the world, the compromise will cause the church great harm. James says that friendship with the world is enmity with God (Jm 4:4). However, if we withdraw from the world, we aren't able to help the hurting and lost. But James reminds the believer

“'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you (Jm 4:6b-10).”

Therefore, as we press into Lent, edging ever closer to the cross, draw near to God and humble yourself. This season is about looking to Jesus, the Man who was God, for the provision of our salvation in a world that says you can save yourself and demands your loyalty in exchange for this faulty advice.

Scripture Memory:

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
James 4:7-8

Monday

Exodus 14

Why did God harden Pharaoh’s heart? (v. 4)
The Israelites romanticize Egypt, but is slavery better than what God has promised? Why or why not?
How does Moses respond to the Israelites?
Even though they don’t trust him, does God protect Israel?

Tuesday

Judges 7

Why does God shrink Israel’s army?
What implication for our life is there that Israel cannot save themselves?
In what ways do you think you can save yourself?
Wednesday

Isaiah 31

Where is Israel putting their trust?
Where should they be putting their trust?
What things are you tempted to put your trust in?
Is God content to play second fiddle to our distractions?

Thursday

James 4

What do you ask wrongly for?
What does James mean that friendship with the world is enmity with God?
To what does James closely link “drawing near to God”?
How should relying on God for protection affect human relationships?

Friday

Psalm 56

What is the first thing David asks for?
Does David complain against God?
Why, in the midst of his suffering, can David ask “What can flesh do to me?”
In verse 13, what previous grace does David point to when highlighting the character of God?

Saturday

Psalm 59

David, is obviously not sinless, but is all his suffering caused by his sin?
Is David pouting that he is being chased?
What is God compared to David’s enemies?
What trials tempt you to have a small view of God? Why?
Fourth Sunday in Lent

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

Provision

Human beings – unsurprisingly – have a short, 2-dimensional view of the world. Perhaps knowing, at least subconsciously, that we face death, we clamor for those things that stave off death. This may be food, clothing, drink, shelter, or sex. Our stomach growls to warn us that if we don’t eat, we’ll die. Our throats dry up and alert us to impending dehydration. The elements crash down on our heads and remind us that a warm hearth is better than hypothermia. The strong desire to procreate tells us that the survival of our species doesn’t hang with us alone, but a spouse and children. The right fulfillment to these desires are each and every one a gift from a God who provides for his children. While we often abuse these gifts through gluttony, drunkenness, classism, or sexual immorality, God intends them as shadows to greater spiritual realities.

When Israel was in the wilderness after their liberation from Egypt, they ran out of water and instead of humbling seeking the provision of God, they began to complain against him and Moses (Do you see a pattern here? If so, remember not to become self-righteous toward the Israelites; this is how you treat God more often than not). They again accused God of seeking their genocide in the wilderness (Ex 17:3). Moses then prayed to God, fearing the Israelites would stone him, and God commanded him to take his staff and strike a particular stone and water would come forth. Moses obeyed and God was faithful to provide the physical need that Israel had (vv. 4-7). Israel only thought 2-dimensionally about their need for water, but didn’t care anything for their relationship with God.

Contrast this story to the time Jesus met a Samaritan woman beside a well when he and his disciples traveled through the land. Being thirsty and tired, Jesus broke the traditional protocol prohibiting Jews from speaking with Samaritans and men from speaking with women by asking the woman to draw him some water. Visibly spooked by this cultural transgression, the woman incredulously asked Jesus how he could ask her such a thing (Jn 4:7-9). Jesus respond to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him and he would have given you living water” (v.10). “How,” wondered the woman, “can water be living and how can a man without a bucket draw any water from this well? (v. 11)” But Jesus wasn’t talking about physical water. Jesus was speaking about himself. Unlike physical water, which sustains for a few hours before it must be consumed again, the water Jesus provides sustain eternally (vv 13-14). Do you see what I mean by 2-dimensional thinking? The woman thought only about her physical need and Jesus one-upped her desire for water by providing her with spiritual nourishment.
But God thinks holistically. When he provides for his people, he may fill their bellies or slake their thirst. He may give a home or a family, but God primarily cares for the invisible spiritual needs of his children. When God commanded Moses to strike the rock, he was painting a picture of a spiritual provision. Jesus is the true and better rock, struck in the desert for the salvation of his people.\(^{12}\) When Jesus asks for water at the well, he is the well whose potency never ends. But we are too often distracted by our immediate wants to notice that God has provided salvation from our captivity. The Samaritan woman gives us an example of how we should react to Jesus. She was so overjoyed to meet the Messiah, the Savior that she worshiped as Jesus said she would, in spirit and in truth (Jn 4:24). Her worship led her then to evangelism as she told her whole town about this Man who told her sins (v. 39). Rather than worrying about our food or clothes or the carpet, rejoice! The kingdom has come (Mt 6:33).

**Scripture Memory**

*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

*Matthew 6:33*

**Monday**

**John 4:1-45**

*The Samaritans are outsiders to the Jewish people, seen as ancient traitors. What does Jesus speaking to this woman say about him?*

*Does Jesus fill a physical need or ask for his to be filled?*

*Does Jesus acknowledge or ignore the Samaritan woman’s sin?*

*What spiritual need does Jesus fulfill.*

**Tuesday**

**Exodus 17:1-7**

*Was the physical need that the Israelites had a bad thing?*

*What spiritual need(s) did they miss out on?*

*What physical needs/wants cause you to struggle with God when he doesn’t “deliver”?*

*What do you miss out on?*

\(^{12}\) Dr. Edmund Clowney reiterated this point a great many times. His Westminster Theological Seminary class on Biblical Theology is available on iTunes U and teaches how to look for types of Christ in the Old Testament.
Wednesday

Matthew 6

How should God’s provision of our physical needs cause us to relate to others?
Why do you think Jesus takes the time to put a prayer in the middle of a discussion of provision and generosity?
Jesus promotes quiet generosity, quiet prayer, and quiet fasting. Why do you think this is?
Are you anxious about your physical needs/wants? What lie underscores this anxiety?

Thursday

Matthew 14:13-21, 15:31-16:12

According to 14:13 and 15:32, what motivates Jesus’ provision for these people?
Do you notice how the disciples forget Jesus’ earlier provision? Name a provision God has given you that you’ve forgotten.
What kind of people seek only God’s provision, but not God?
What is the leaven of the Pharisees?

Friday

Acts 3

The lame beggar asked for gold, which Peter didn’t have, but what did Peter do for the man?
What does God’s physical healing for this man cause him to do?
How does Peter use the opportunity?

Saturday

Philippians 4

Rather than anxiety, what does Paul say the Philippians should practice?
Do your needs drive you to prayer or to complaining?
How many churches does Paul say joined him in “giving and receiving”?
According to what would God care for the needs of the Philippians?
Fifth Sunday in Lent

O Almighty God, who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; Grant unto thy people that they may love the thing with thou command, and desire that which thou do promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Salvation

“What must I do to be saved?” Though variants of the question appear several times in the New Testament (Mk 10:17, Acts 2:37, 16:31) it’s not a common question anymore. Most people seem ignorant of the need for saving. Few know what they need saving from and fewer still can answer the question. The Lenten season forces us to face the need for saving, and consequently a Savior, by reminding us of our sin and mortality. But from what must we be saved and what must we do to be saved?

John tells the story of a teacher named Nicodemus once came to Jesus in the middle of the night. Nicodemus acknowledged that Jesus was somehow miraculous and somehow from God, but Jesus pressed him back. “Unless someone has been born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” In other words, unless some one has been granted new life, he does not understand who Jesus is, or what he is doing to advance God’s kingdom on earth because they do not understand him as king. Are you confused? Born again? Nicodemus was nonplussed. How can anyone be born again? That makes no sense. Jesus quoted Ezekiel to explain to Nicodemus that being born again means being made clean and given God’s Holy Spirit. In an act of cosmic heart surgery, God would remove the dead spirit in a person and replace it with a new spirit tuned to him (Ez 36:25-27). Nicodemus was still confused, so Jesus took him further back into Israel’s history.

Jesus reminded him that the children of Israel had become impatient with God and complained about him even after he had delivered them from slavery, given them clean water, given them providential food, and delivered them from their enemies (Nm 21:5). They incited the wrath of a holy God. Because we have all committed cosmic treason by not trusting, loving, or worshiping God, we are by nature and choice “children of wrath” (Eph 2:3). God sent vipers among his rebellious people to destroy them. The people acknowledged their sin and asked God’s servant, Moses, to pray that God would deliver them and God in his infinite mercy did decide to deliver his people, but instead of merely taking the vipers away, he told Moses to put a serpent on a pole and the victims who look at it would live (Nm 218-9). Jesus just told Nicodemus that he,
the Son of Man, is who the serpent in the wilderness has been pointing to this whole time. It is Jesus who will be lifted up on wooden pole, it is he who will die, it is he who, if the people look to him for salvation, will be able to save them from the wrath of God by taking the wrath of God upon himself.

If you are reading Lenten guide and still think somehow that your obedience, your righteousness, your general “good-personed-ness” will somehow save you, I beg you to give it up. You are dying and don’t even know it. Look to Jesus for your salvation. Look to the Son of Man lifted up on a cross, murdered, buried, and – better than the viper on the pole – resurrected to pay the penalty for our sin against a holy and righteous God.

Scripture Memory

_Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead._

1 Peter 1:3

Monday

**John 3:1-21, Numbers 21:4-9**

_How, like Israel, do you fail to trust God for salvation?_
_In what way(s) is the salvation Jesus offers better than the viper?_
_According to John 3:17-19 are people good or evil by default?_

Tuesday

**John 8:1-11**

_We can usually identify with both the adulteress and the Pharisees at different points in our life. Who do you identify with most?_
_Who in the story has the right to cast a stone?_
_Why does he not?_
.Does Jesus’ saving the woman mean she has not committed a sin?

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* John 7:53-8:11 is not included in the earliest manuscripts, but is sound doctrinally. The occurrence may have happened during Jesus life and was added later, but it should not be used as the basis of a doctrine unsupported elsewhere in Scripture.
Wednesday

Acts 2

Who does Peter say killed Jesus? (v. 23)
Was God surprised by this?
Having been “cut to the heart” over their sin and Jesus’ response, the crowd asks Peter what they should do (v. 38). What is the answer?
For whom was the promise of the Holy Spirit?

Thursday

Acts 9-31

Is Saul a good guy?
Saul has helped kill Christians, including Stephen, but whom does Jesus say he is persecuting? (v. 5)
Do you recognize God as the most offended party when you sin or do you minimize your sin?
Did God save Saul to isolation or to community?

Friday

Philippians 2:1-18

Paul wants to encourage the believer to humility so what – or who – does he point to?
In what way(s) did Jesus humble himself?
When Paul encourages the Philippians to work out their salvation with “fear and trembling” who does he say is working in them?
How might the believer find this encouraging?

Saturday

1 Peter 1

Why does Peter say God caused Christians to be born again?
Since Jesus is holy, how should we live?
If we are born again, what is the germ or seed that conceived us?
Is the message of salvation one that wanes or falls off?
Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday

Almighty and everlasting God, who, of thy tender love towards mankind, has sent thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility; Mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of his patience, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Crucifixion and Resurrection

The time is come. Jesus has entered into Jerusalem for the last time. While the crowds cheer this teacher, this healer, this prophet on a donkey, his enemies are plotting his demise. This is Holy Week. The journey of Lent is almost at its end. This week, we will somberly and soberly read the Scriptures detail our Lord’s final march to the cross. As well, we will read in the Old Testament those places were God foreshadowed Jesus’ fate by painting in the pages of biblical history magnificent tapestries of blood and sacrifice that in the end are only shadows of the horror that awaits.

At the end of the dark tunnel that is Holy Week, after the murder of God by Mankind, hope will be found in the once and for all resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, the Son of Man, to defeat Satan, sin, and death, to liberate the captives, to pay the wages of our sin, and reconcile us to the God of the Universe.

Scripture Memory

But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
Isaiah 53:5


Monday in Holy Week

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Psalm 118, Luke 20
Tuesday in Holy Week

O God, who by the passion of thy blessed Son did make an instrument of shameful death to be unto us the means of life: Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ, that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever Amen.


Wednesday in Holy Week

O Lord God, whose blessed Son our Savior gave his back to the smiters and hid not his face from shame: Grant us grace to take joyfully the sufferings of the present time, in full assurance of the glory that shall be revealed; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever Amen.


Maunday Thursday

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, did institute the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may thankfully receive the same in remembrance of him who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of life eternal, the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who now lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit ever, one God world without end. Amen.


Good Friday

Almighty God, we beseech thee graciously to behold this thy family for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed, and given up in the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Ghost ever, one God, world without end. Amen.

Holy Saturday

_O God, Creator of heaven and earth: Grant that, as the crucified body of thy dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so we may await with him the coming of the third day, and rise with him to newness of life; who now lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen._


Easter Day

_O God, who for our redemption did give thine only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection has delivered us from the power of our enemy: Grant us to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection; through the same thy Son Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen._

Lent: A Walk in the Wilderness

Many Christians every year celebrate Lent as they prepare themselves spiritually for Easter. However, it is easy to allow Lent to become a “theologically sanctioned diet” or another rote tradition. Lent: A Walk in the Wilderness is designed to use Lent for it’s intended purpose; to remind Christians of the gospel and to proclaim to non-believers God’s redemptive purpose in sending Jesus to liberate the captives from sin and death.

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Redeemer Christian Church seeks to be a gospel-centered church. Redeemer was replanted in 2011 with a core group from West Amarillo Christian Church and believers from around Amarillo. Redeemer seeks to preach Christ in community to see the culture changed.

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