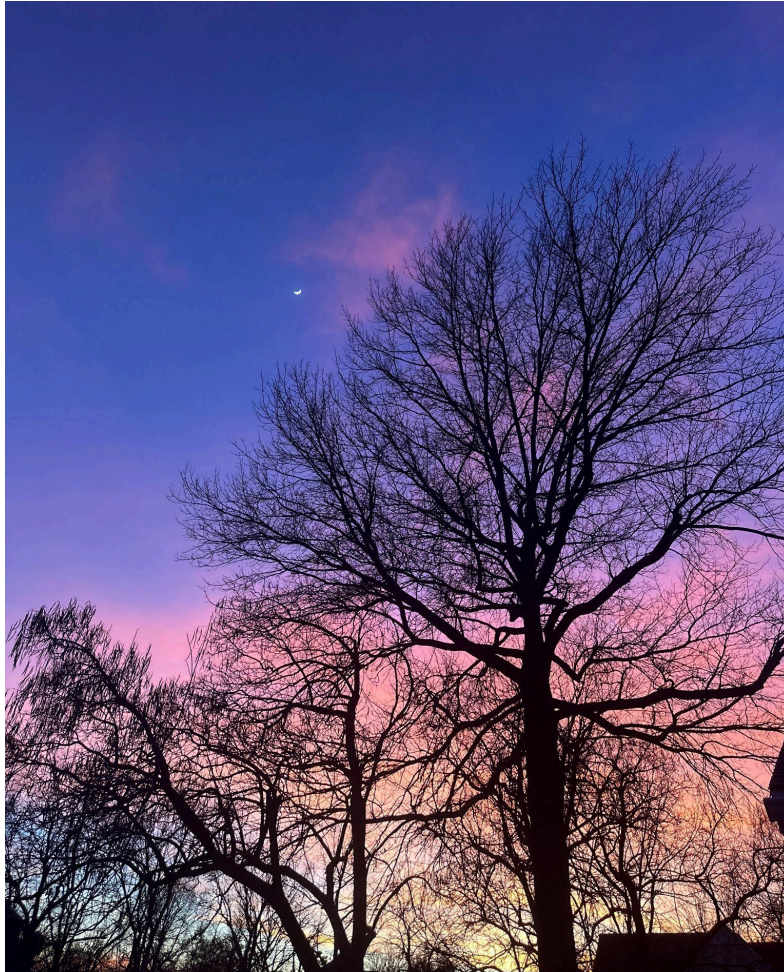


Simplicity in Silence

2025 Lenten Devotional Guide



An Introduction:

This 7 week devotional guide came from two places in my heart. One was the absolute need to sit in silent reflection these days. There is loud noise, piles of information, and a generally difficult world to face right now. During this time, sitting with ourselves is worthwhile. However, during such a time as this, we cannot simply think of our own personal salvation. We must look to the other children of God in this world and do something. So, this devotion focuses on how we can use our faith outwardly as well.

May God bring you silent reflection in the coming weeks.

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Week 1(Beginning March 5th)

Theme: Testing

Luke 4:1-13

Job 1:6-12

Luke 4:2 "There, for forty days, he would be put to the test by Accuser (Satan), the evil trickster snake. For forty days and nights Creator Sets Free (Jesus) ate nothing. His body became weak, and his hunger grew strong"

Jesus' wilderness story has always been the one that has been hardest for me to believe. As a young child, I can recall hearing about the fasting that Jesus does for 40 days and 40 nights and I can distinctly remember thinking, "That's just not possible, even for Jesus". My previous personal opinions aside, this text is assuredly one of Jesus' most wondrous miracles. Often we focus on the testing that happens after the starvation, but the starvation and loneliness that comes before is possibly even more profound.

The type of hunger that Jesus faced was two fold, not just hunger for food to keep his body going, but hunger for the Good News. Jesus' desire to bring about change rarely included concern for where his next meal would come from. It rarely considered what his friends might think of him when he said something out of the norm. How might we seek testing in our own lives? How might God give us hunger for His word?

Prayer: Holy One, We are people who hunger and thirst for more. Help us to hunger for the things YOU put before us, rather than worldly things. Amen.

Week 2 (Beginning March 12th)

Theme: Rejection

Luke 4:14-24

Psalm 73

Luke 4:17: "The headman handed him the scroll with the words from the prophet Creator Will Help Us (Isaiah). He opened the scroll and began to read."

That moment before everything changes. That is the moment I want to focus on here. This moment has been captured in this verse. Jesus is caught in between the moment of rejection and the moment of before. There are many times in which we are Schroedinger's experiment. We are caught in the between, of the knowing and not knowing. God doesn't leave us to face this alone.

Jesus is going to be rejected, likely knows he will be rejected, but continues on with his message. It speaks to Jesus' deep understanding of his call in this world and points us to following a similar call in our own lives. As Psalm 73 speaks to this moment of rejection. It can look, from the outside, as if God is allowing the wicked to prosper. Psalm 73 rejects that and speaks to our need to stay strong in the face of the wicked "getting away with misdeeds". God always knows.

As we consider the cultural climate that we face now, how might we live more bravely as Christians? What are ways that we can show that we don't fear rejection from the world? What are ways we can show other Christians that we won't reject them?

Prayer: God of the broken hearted, To be alive is to know both joy and grief in the world. Jesus saw that as well. Help us to center ourselves between joy and grief. Mold us to new ways of being your children. Amen.

Week 3 (Beginning March 19th)

Theme: Cutting

Luke 13:1-9

1 Corinthians 4:18-21

1 Corinthians 4:20-21: "For Creator's good road does not depend on talk alone but also on power. Which is better? Should I come to you with a big stick, or with love and a gentle spirit?"

Luke 13:8-9: "But the garden keeper answered the man, 'Give me another season. I will dig around the tree and fertilize it. If it has no fruit after that, then cut it down.'"

Just chop it down! That's what I exclaimed one day during the summer of our first year in our home. My husband did better than that, he burned it to the root. We had an odd bush in front of our bedroom window that I wanted gone, so he took care of it. The next year, it came back, but to everyone's surprise, it was a hydrangea bush. It was absolutely beautiful.

We like to think that our words are pruning the bad branches off each other, but more often our words are just cutting each other down to the root. Which do we come with in our day to day lives? A big stick or a gentle spirit? One need only look at the headlines on any given day in the grocery store line to see how often our words are cutting each other down, leaving only a stump in it's wake. Not all of us can luck into burning a bush to the ground and making something beautiful appear the next year.

Prayer: Great Creator, You have come to us in a burning bush, in a baby in a manger, a human man willing to die for love. Open our eyes to how our words impact those around us. Let us be a gentle spirit and not a big stick. Amen.

Week 4(Beginning March 26th)

Theme: Saving

Luke 8:22-25

2 Corinthians 4: 7-10

Luke 8:25: “ He turned to his followers and said to them, “Where is your faith?” Amazed and afraid, they shook their heads and whispered to each other, “Who is this man? Even the wind and the waves listen to him!”

2 Corinthians 4:7: “Our bodies are like old clay pots that have been filled with the sacred gift of his light. This shows that the great power we have does not come from us but from our Creator.”

I grew up around trees on my grandparents farm where I spent long summer days and short snowy cold days. Their shade kept me cool on hot summer days and their bare figures made me smile on long winter days. If you've ever experienced a winter's cold unforgiving wind, frozen ground, and unpredictable weather, then you know what it is to have faith. We have a phrase in Missouri, "If you don't like the weather, just wait five minutes." While meant tongue in cheek, it really speaks to the faith Missourians have that nothing lasts forever.

We as humans will not last forever, at least in these clay pots we call bodies. We stand a lot in our life like the trees in the winter. Cold, often bare, strong, sturdy, and waiting for something to bring new life to us. Trees have the patience of an entire season and their reward is a lush spring blooming. How might our faith in God hold us through our season of waiting? How might we lean on others when we face these seasons in our own life?

Prayer: God of birds of the air and the trees of the ground, We want to be like trees and have our strong roots to tide us over until winter. Help us to dig deep through our warmth and sunshine filled moments so that when winter hits, we are ready to withstand the cold. Amen.

Week 5 (Beginning April 2nd)

Theme: Serving

Luke 13:10-15

Romans 13:8-10

Romans 13:10 "Love does no harm to another, so loving others fulfills the purpose of the law."

Luke 13: 12-13 "When Creator Sets Free (Jesus) saw her, he told her to come to him and said, 'Honored woman, you are set free from your weakness.' He put his hands on her, and right away she stood up straight and gave thanks to the Great Spirit."

While never a waitress, I did work for a few years in foodservice. In small town Missouri, I dreaded Sunday nights working at Dairy Queen. It was always busy and loud as the church folks come in from an evening service together. We never knew which kind of crowd we would get on any given Sunday. Usually, it was the kind of Christians we all love to meet, the kind ones who have endless amounts of patience, who share their sweet demeanor with everyone. Occasionally, however, would be a crowd of people who vaguely resemble Christians. They were rude, short with us when we messed up an order, and threatened us when food was taking too long. Jesus meets both those kinds of Christians every single day.

We have been told many times that people will know we are Christians by our love. Sometimes our love is hidden behind our grinding teeth as we "love" folks that we serve, while (not so secretly) despising them. As Christians, our command is to love our neighbor as ourselves. Our neighbor is everyone we encounter. Love does not harm, as Paul says, and love looks like healing a woman on the Sabbath even though it was "against the rules". How might we as Christian subvert "the rules" and show our love to all those we meet? How might we be set free from our weaknesses that keep us from showing that kind of true love?

Prayer: Loving God, When we resemble You in the world, we feel like we are floating on air, yet we continue to fall back into old patterns. Change our hearts, O God, open us up into being Christians full of love and compassion. Amen.

Week 6 (Beginning April 9th)

Theme: Entrance

Luke 19:28-40

1 Corinthians 11: 1-2: "Walk this road of life following in my footsteps, as I also walk this road following in the footsteps of the Chosen One. I have great respect for you. You have never forgotten to hold on to the things I have taught you. You have followed the traditions that I entrusted to you in the same manner that I have them to you."

Luke 19:40 "I will tell you this," he said to them. "If they were silenced, the very stones and rocks we are walking on would lift their voices and cry out!"

Have you ever seen someone speak truth to power? If not, have you ever encountered a truth so big that it could not be denied? This moment in Jesus' ministry demonstrates exactly that. Jesus knew that his ministry of love, compassion, and hope had culminated in this moment of grand entrance into Jerusalem. That entrance was so profound, so necessary that Jesus states that even if you silenced his disciples, the truth would ring out from the stones.

How often in our own lives are we ignoring the truths that blare at us from all sides? We have reached the beginning of Holy Week this week and Jesus has plans that no one else (at the time) knows about. When his disciples become confused during this moment of entrance into Jerusalem, Jesus tells them to just follow him.

Prayer: Holy One, We shout Hosanna as you enter while also hoping you don't notice all the sins we have committed against you and our neighbors. Help us to share your message of true power to those in power so they might change their ways and come back to your teachings. Amen.

Week 7 (Holy Week, including Easter)

Theme: Risen

Luke 24:1-12

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

1 Corinthians 15:14 "If the Chosen One has not risen, then the story we tell means nothing, and your faith is a dried-up spring."

Luke 24:10b-11 "These women told the message bearers and the others what they saw with their own eyes. But the men did not believe the women, thinking it was only empty talk."

To hear a lot of Christians tell it, we are Easter people. We believe in something that we have not seen with our own eyes. We are the women of this story, with the Good News, being perceived as only empty talk. Paul talks in his own letter about the emptiness of the story without Christ's resurrection. A story that many folks view as a parlor trick or something to keep the disciples going with their movement. People can view this moment as something that could be taken or left for the grander story.

Truly being an Easter person means to live out the life Christ has called us to daily. If one does not believe in the risen Christ, the story means little or ends up feeling like empty talk. How are we as a community telling this story to those we meet? Are we highlighting Jesus' ultimate defense against the empire (that even death couldn't stop his message) or as a parlor trick for his followers? How might we resist the urge to think others are speaking empty talk? As this lenten season has ended and now Eastertide is upon us, how might we reach out to each other?

Prayer: Resurrected Christ, You urge us into relationship with one another. Your death and resurrection brought people together in both mourning and elation. Help us to see how in our journey of faith and our path in seeking justice and deeply entwined in both. Amen.