

# A Guide For Lent



# Invitation to a Holy Lent

Lent is one of the oldest fasts in the Christian tradition.

Some scholars date its earliest form in the late second century.

In the western tradition, Lent is forty days long.

It begins on Ash Wednesday and concludes on Holy Saturday (the day before Easter) after sunset.

The forty-day season includes every day between Ash Wednesday and Easter except for Sundays, which the tradition has always regarded as Little Easters.

Lent is marked by dedication to prayer and deeper spiritual disciplines.

Christians often fast during this period of time or embrace other practices that help them spiritually prepare for Easter.

At First Free, we are offering a structure to our Lenten life that will focus on prayer, fasting, worship, and generosity.

This is a season of prayer for us.

Each of these activities invites us to move into a deeper communion with the Lord as we journey with Him to the cross and the resurrection.

On the pages that follow, you will find an invitation to prayer at 2:23 p.m. each day, a version of the Wesley Fast, and a daily devotion of prayers.

Our theme for this Lent is "Lost and Found."

Each week we will explore one of the parables of Jesus and how they invite us to find God in prayer.

May we all take this opportunity to draw near to Jesus during these forty days.

Grace for the Journey,  
Pastors Craig, Camille, & Stephanie

# Three Acts of Lent @ FFMC

## **ACT 1: 40 Days of Prayer & Journal**

In the pages that follow, you will find prayers for each of the 40 days of Lent. These prayers have been carefully curated for our congregation's use. We hope you will set aside time during each day to read these prayers, pray these prayers, and reflect on them. Consider using them during your morning or evening devotional time. Allow God to speak and move in these words each day. There is some space after each of the prayers for your own notes, reflections, and prayer.

## **ACT 2: Unifying Prayer @ 2:23 p.m.**

The Apostle Paul encourages us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:16-18). His exhortation to us is based on the life of Jesus, who often spent time alone with God in prayer. Many of Jesus's greatest miracles and other powerful deeds happened after these moments of prayer.

Our church is being challenged to set aside 2:23 p.m. as a moment of prayer. The time of day will remind us of the importance to be in prayer during the year 2023. 2:23 p.m. can be set as a reminder on your phone each day to pause for a time of prayer. You may only be able to pause for a short moment or join with others in prayer. What a powerful statement it will be for our whole church to pause at the same minute each day in prayer.

## **ACT 3: The Wesley Fast | Thursday Sunset to Friday, 3:00 p.m.**

Fasting has been used by Christians for centuries. Jesus told his disciples that they would one day fast after what would be his ascension (Matthew 9:15). Fasting is most often associated with abstinence from food. This does not need to be the case for us. We may choose to refrain from food, a certain kind of food, an activity, or something else we "give up." We may also consider "taking on" a new practice, act of service, or generous action during a fast.

Whether we give something up or take something on, the purpose of the fast is to jar the mind and heart. When remembering the fast, we must be pointed to why we are fasting. We are in prayer and devotion to the Lord. Each moment of remembering what we gave up or took on should remind us to pray and to recall our deep need for grace since we might fail in a fast. (As a matter of fact, success in a fast is not measured by one's ability to keep the fast!)

The founder of the Methodist movement, John Wesley, kept a fast each week. In his case, he fasted from food from Thursday at sunset until Friday at 3:00 p.m. (These reflect the hours Jesus ate the Passover meal, was betrayed, arrested, crucified, and eventually died at 3:00 p.m. on Good Friday.) During Lent of 2023, we are inviting our whole church to keep the hours of the Wesley Fast. You may choose to give up or take on during this period of time each week. Regardless of how you keep the fast, let us all be reminded to be in prayer for our church and the world each time we are reminded of our fast or even fail at keeping it. The most important purpose of any fast is to remind us of our deep need for God's grace.

# Ash Wednesday | February 22, 2023

Spirit of Jesus –  
Come with fire that refines,  
Water that refreshes,  
Wind that topples,  
Breath that fills.

Kindle a global revival of empathy, justice, and active peacemaking.  
Birth a witness of Love that is bigger and better than we inherited.  
Liberate us from privilege and oppression.  
Unshackle the gospel from nationalism, colonialism, white supremacy, and every other lens that shrouds the Good News.  
Give us an abundance of grace for others and ourselves.  
Grant us compassion for those who suffer.  
Free us from the influence of money, power, and acclaim.

Restore our reputation for caring for the poor, loving our neighbors, being ambassadors of peace and stewards of the earth.  
Unlock the immense resources hoarded in the Western Church and release them for your name's sake.  
Encourage us, so we do not grow cynical, isolated, and burnt-out.  
Fan our hopes, our joys, and our connections.  
Allow us rest when we need rest.  
Enable us to see you in each person we encounter.  
Show us mercy, in our humanity.

Let us love more fully than we thought possible.  
Let us not be quick on the draw, ready to retaliate, escalate, assassinate.  
Let our collective fervor for justice eclipse institutional concerns.  
Let us trust and follow the wisdom of those who have been marginalized.  
Let us persevere in creating safe places of worship to eat bread and drink wine together.

Let us stand for Love and with Love, following the way of your Son as best we're able.  
Let us not fear an experiential spirituality.  
Let us listen to the wondrous bodies you gave us.  
Let us hear you voice and tangibly feel you with us.  
Let us discern your guidance.  
Let us abide in and with you.

Show us what you're doing, so we can work together. Move where you will, when you will, in whatever way you will.  
Come, Holy Spirit, and restore your Church. *Amen*

"A Prayer for the Church" by Rev. Emily Swan

# NOTES

## Thursday | February 23, 2023

Oh, God beyond time, beyond the number line, the hourglass. Beyond moons that wax and wane and waves that push and pull along our fragile ground. Oh God beyond days and weeks and months, God uncontained by our twenty-four hours, free of our borders and yet still within them.

God who is here. God of the meetings, the emails, the PTA, the neck ache, the child crying over homework, the car leaking oil, the head lice, and the sheets to wash. Oh God of the groceries and the knife against the butcher block moving slow across the cucumber. God of the sun's path across a sky we cannot reach. God of midday, God of afternoons and the laughter of children, the clap of a ball on concrete. God of evening color and the muted spread of light in the clouds as the night leaks in. God in the hand I hold, God of the one I love.

God beyond time, we come to you pulled by the bullet points in our calendars, by the titles we keep beside our names, by the goals we've charted and the accomplishments we list to define our value. You see each image we upload to our pocket screens: altered, filtered, and pinned to virtual walls. You, God, touch our distortions and soothe the edges of our efficiency, and only you can make us real.

God beyond the boxes we build to contain our lives, the hours we track and tally. God outside of time, yet here: Come to us, relieve our ragged breaths, slow our steps, relax the red lines that spike in our brains. Tell what is true. Show us how time rolls like calm water, let us cup it quiet in our hands.

God, teach us to pause in this moment, to tuck ourselves into the curve of your slow arm, that we may know the miracle of now, the gift of this moment: you beside and beyond us, welcoming us outside of all we measure, and standing with us in it. May we see the goodness of our still hours and days, sunrises, sunsets, and the darkness where our rest is found.

Order us, that we may stand within time holding your hand. That we may know we are enough, not because of what we make of these hours, but because within these hours – with you – we are being made.

*"A Prayer Against Efficiency" By Micha Boyette*

# NOTES

## Friday | February 24, 2023

Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this is possible without you.

When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with useless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author.

O Lord, thinking about you, being fascinated with theological ideas and discussions, being excited about histories of Christian spirituality and stimulated by thoughts and ideas about prayer and meditation, all of this can be as much an expression of greed as the unruly desire for food, possessions, or power.

Every day I see again that only you can teach me to pray, only you can set my heart at rest, only you can let me dwell in your presence. No book, no idea, no concept or theory will ever bring me close to you unless you yourself are the one who lets these instruments become the way to you.

But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will come and break through all the walls I have erected. Teach me, O Lord, to pray. Amen.

From *A Cry for Mercy* by Henri J. M. Nouwen



# NOTES

# Saturday | February 25, 2023

God of rest,  
Today I make the active choice  
To enter into your rest,  
And to join with you  
In delighting in this good world you have made,  
And dreaming of the perfect world you will remake.

I choose to tune out,  
Of demands and deadlines,  
Of performance pressures,  
Of flickering screens,  
Of that which robs my soul of joy,  
And the ways in which the world  
Seeks to define and shape my identity.

I choose to tune in,  
To your affirmation and love,  
To the celebration of freedom,  
To worship and your word,  
To the enjoyment of that which fills my soul with joy,  
And reminds me of my identity in Christ,  
As a deeply loved child of God.

Amen

“A Prayer for Sabbath” <https://christchurchlondon.org/>

# NOTES

# Monday | February 27, 2023

Dear God,

Thank you for leaving us with the Bible, which is “*God-breathed*” ([2 Timothy 3:16](#)) directly by you. Thank you that we have countless stories to read in the Bible of Jesus being brave. Thank you for sending your Son, who lead the way as our greatest example of what it means to advance the Kingdom even if we are hated for it.

We ask that you would give us courage to step out in faith in what you’ve called us to do. We ask that you would encourage us along this journey of being a chosen disciple for you. We ask that when those around us question us or discourage us, that you would give us confidence in you. Remind us that our strength comes from you, and your “*power is made perfect in our weakness, that when we are weak, we are made strong through you.*” ([2 Corinthians 12:9](#))

We need you and can’t do this without you. Thank you that we don’t have to be strong because that’s your job. Our job is to rely on your strength to get us from one task to the next. We ask for your guidance and direction and thank you for everlasting provision.

In Jesus’ Name, Amen

“A Prayer to Be Brave Like Jesus” [by Alisha Headley](#)

# NOTES

## Tuesday | February 28, 2023

O Lord, who else or what else can I desire but you? You are my Lord, Lord of my heart, mind, and soul. You know me through and through. In and through you everything that is finds its origin and goal. You embrace all that exists and care for it with divine love and compassion.

Why, then, do I keep expecting happiness and satisfaction outside of you? Why do I keep relating to you as one of my many relationships, instead of my only relationship, in which all other ones are grounded? Why do I keep looking for popularity, respect from others, success, acclaim, and sensual pleasures? Why, Lord, is it so hard for me to make you the only one?

Help me, O Lord, to let my old self die, to let die the thousand big and small ways in which I am still building up my false self and trying to cling to my false desires. Let me be reborn in you and see through you the world in the right way, so that all my actions, words, and thought can become a hymn of praise to you.

I need your loving grace to travel on this hard road that leads to the death of my old self and to a new life in and for you. I know and trust that this is the road to freedom.

Lord, dispel my mistrust and help me become a trusting friend.

Amen.

From *A Cry for Mercy* by Henri J. M. Nouwen

# NOTES

# Wednesday | March 1, 2023

“And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us. We will not fear, for God has willed his truth to triumph through us. The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him; his rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure; one little word shall fell him.” – Martin Luther

Our Father, we thank you for that one little word today: *Jesus*. We thank you that one little word will fell him – *Jesus*. We just want to keep speaking the name of Jesus.

Jesus, the name that charms our fears that bids our sorrows cease. ‘Tis music to the sinner’s ears, ‘tis life and health and peace. Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him. How I’ve proved him over and over. Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus, O for grace to trust him more.

Holy Spirit, lead us to the mountaintops and through the valleys, training us to become strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. We know this will mean letting go of the strength of our own making. Give us the grace to let it go before having it wrested from our hands.

...Prepare us even now for the wilderness season ahead with Jesus as we [observe] the days of Lent.

Praying in Jesus’s name, amen.

J.D. Walt



# NOTES

## Thursday | March 2, 2023

May the guiding hands of God be on my shoulders,  
May the presence of the Holy Spirit be on my head,  
May the sign of Christ be on my forehead,  
May the voice of the Holy Spirit be in my ears,  
May the smell of the Holy Spirit be in my nose,  
May the sight of the company of heaven be in my eyes,  
May the speech of the company of heaven be in my mouth,  
May the work of the church of God be in my hands,  
May the serving of God and my neighbor be in my feet,  
May God make my heart his home,  
And may I belong to God, my Father, completely.

Amen.

Source: Lorica of St. Fursa (Furse), 7<sup>th</sup> Century.  
*Prayers from the Ancient Celtic Church,*

# NOTES

# Friday, March 3, 2023

## Breath Prayer

- Slowing down – Begin by spending time quietly in God’s presence. Breathe gently, deeply, just enough to make a candle flicker. Breathe in, breathe out.
- Desiring – Imagine God calling you by name and asking, “What do you want?” Write your response: “God, what I most want from you right now is...”
- Connecting – What name or image of God most resonates right now? God, who do you most want to be for me right now?
- Praying – Combine your desire with the name or quality of God that you especially need in this season, such as mercy, love, belonging, or connection. Breath Prayer examples:
  - Jesus, have mercy on me.
  - I am beloved.
  - Abba, I belong to you.
  - “Be still and know that I am God.”
  -

Breathe in, breathe out, praying the phrase as you do. Try incorporating it into your day. Breathe it when you are waiting in line, when you are worried, when you are in the shower, when you need a sense of God’s presence.

From *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* by Ruth Haley Barton.

# NOTES

# Saturday | March 4, 2023

## Surrendering Burdens

*Read the beginning of Psalm 23 and imagine yourself there with Jesus.*

The Lord is my shepherd.

I lack nothing.

He lets me rest in grassy meadows;

He leads me to restful waters;

He keeps me alive.

He guides me in proper paths for the sake of his good name.

*Notice where Jesus is and what he is doing and saying. Start asking him questions, such as the following ones:*

- Naming the burden – the stress, anxiety, things in our lives that weigh us down
  - Jesus, what burden do you want to lift right now?
  - What does the burden look like? If it was an object, what would it be?
- Identifying the cost and benefit –
  - Where do I carry this burden? What does it cost me?
  - Is there any reason I need to keep carrying it? Is there anything that prevents me from giving it to Jesus?
- Surrendering the burden
  - Jesus, what would you like to do with my burden?
  - Am I willing to give it to Jesus? If so, open your hands, picture the object or burden and then empty your hands, “seeing” what Jesus does.
- Receiving the gift
  - What gift, Jesus, do you want to give me in its place? Open your hands and “receive” whatever gift Jesus wants to give you.
  -

“Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Put on my yoke and learn from me. I’m gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves.” Matt 11:28-29

“Burden Bearing Prayer Exercise” developed by Lorie Martin & Eden Jersak

# NOTES

# Monday | March 6, 2023

Savior, I come  
Quiet my soul, remember  
Redemption's hill  
Where Your blood was spilled  
For my ransom  
Everything I once held dear  
I count it all as lost

Lead me to the cross  
Where Your love poured out  
Bring me to my knees  
Lord, I lay me down  
Rid me of myself  
I belong to You  
Oh, lead me, lead me to the cross

You were as I  
Tempted and trialed  
Human  
The word became flesh  
Bore my sin and death  
Now you're risen

Everything I once held dear  
I count it all as lost

To Your heart  
Lead me to Your heart

Lead me to the cross  
Where Your love poured out  
Bring me to my knees  
Lord, I lay me down  
Rid me of myself  
I belong to You  
Oh, lead me, lead me to the cross

Amen

"Lead me to the Cross" By Brooke Gabrielle Fraser



# NOTES

# Tuesday | March 7, 2023

Lord of the Fast,  
I come before you as a sinner  
But fully aware of your divine mercy.  
Still, I need this fast.  
For only in stepping away from the things of this world  
Am I able to fathom the immeasurable gift  
That is my redemption.  
Turn my nose from the scents around me  
That I may again know the sweet fragrance of Christ.  
Numb my tongue from all that allures it  
So that I may taste anew the bread of my salvation.  
Dull my touch to all sensations  
That I feel only the pulse of my heart  
longing to reconcile with my brother and my sister,  
and you, my maker.  
Stop my ears from all that lure them  
So that I may hear your song of mercy  
calling me back to the embrace of my father.  
Blind my eyes from all that distracts them  
So that I may gaze fully on the light of Christ.  
And once we have met  
There in wilderness  
Then return me to the world.  
Send me back among your people.  
That I may fill their senses with all I have  
found in you:  
All that is good  
All that is loving  
All that is merciful.

Amen

“Prayer of the Wilderness” – Catholic Relief Services

# NOTES

# Wednesday | March 8, 2023

God of majesty and glory,  
we are thirsty for your grace.  
You made a way for us in the wilderness,  
and still, in our foolishness, we go astray.  
We hide our eyes from your presence.  
We do not listen to your word.  
We are lifeless when we ought to dance  
and speechless when we ought to sing.  
Forgive us, O Lord.  
Speak peace to our fearful hearts,  
strengthen our weak hands,  
and make firm our feeble knees  
as we seek to follow in your holy way.

Amen.

Prayers of Confession on the Wilderness

Adapted from Isaiah 35:1–10

By [Kimberly Bracken Long](#)

# NOTES

# Thursday | March 9, 2023

God! My God! It's you—  
I search for you!  
My whole being<sup>[a]</sup> thirsts for you!

My body desires you  
in a dry and tired land,  
no water anywhere.

Yes, I've seen you in the sanctuary;  
I've seen your power and glory.

My lips praise you  
because your faithful love  
is better than life itself!

So I will bless you as long as I'm alive;  
I will lift up my hands in your name.

I'm fully satisfied—  
as with a rich dinner.

My mouth speaks praise with joy on my lips—

whenever I ponder you on my bed,  
whenever I meditate on you  
in the middle of the night—

because you've been a help to me  
and I shout for joy in the protection of your wings.

My whole being clings to you;  
your strong hand upholds me.

Psalm 63: 1-8

A psalm of David, when he was in the Judean desert.

# NOTES

# Friday | March 10, 2023

God of all history and eternity,  
you are eternal, unchangeable, infinite, and almighty.  
You are completely wise, just, and good—  
and the overflowing source of all goodness.  
We thank you for your covenant, which is never broken,  
and your love, which is never measurable.

Have mercy on us, O God,  
according to your steadfast love.  
According to your abundant mercy  
blot out our transgressions.  
Wash us thoroughly from our iniquities  
and cleanse us from our sin.

For we know our transgressions and our sins are ever before us.  
Against you, and you alone, have we sinned and done  
what is evil in your sight.  
Create in us a clean heart, O God. Put a new and right spirit within us.

Cast us not away from your presence,  
and do not take away your Holy Spirit,  
restore to us the joy of your salvation and sustain in us a willing spirit.

Amen.

(Adapted from Psalm 51)



# NOTES

## Saturday | March 11, 2023

You speak, Lord, but we are not always listening.  
Sometimes other voices are louder or more persuasive.  
You show us your way, lord, but we are not always looking.  
Sometimes other ways seduce us with their ease or power.  
You give us choices, now help us to learn your will.  
Lead us, Lord, to walk your way on any road we travel.

You call us to leave our old ways behind,  
but we like our comfortable lives.  
You call us to go where you will show us  
but we want the map and directions before we leave.  
You call us to be a blessing to all  
but often we want to keep the blessing for ourselves.  
Help us to hear your voice and to let go of what holds us back.  
Lead us, Lord, to walk your way on any road we travel.

God, sometimes you work too slowly for us.  
We want something we can see,  
something we can do now,  
something quick and easy.  
So we turn our eyes toward “the way it’s always been”  
and we try to re-create the days when everything was simple and good.  
But you call us to hear your promise of a future with hope,  
a promise we can’t understand, or see—  
a promise for which we must wait and look and work.  
Forgive us our impatience with mystery and promises,  
and turn our eyes toward your future.  
Lead us, Lord, to walk your way on any road we travel.

God, we confess that we like to think we know you,  
while what we really know is who we want you to be.  
We often think we have the answers, that we know best,  
even as you show us a still more excellent way.  
Open our eyes and our ears to know you as you are,  
and lead us, Lord, so we walk your way on any road we travel.

God, we confess that oftentimes our boxes are too small.  
We know what, and who, belongs where.  
But your circle is always growing,  
erasing our lines in the sand.  
Call out to us, O God.  
Widen our vision.  
Lead us, Lord, to walk your way on any road we travel.

# NOTES

## Monday | March 13, 2023

O God, early in the morning I cry to you.

Help me to pray and to concentrate my thoughts on you;

I cannot do this alone.

In me there is darkness, but with you there is light;

I am lonely, but you do not leave me; I am feeble in heart, but with you there is help;

I am restless, but with you there is peace. In me there is bitterness, but with you there is patience;

I do not understand your ways, but you know the way for me....

Restore me to liberty, and enable me to live now that I may answer before you and before men.

Lord whatever this day may bring, Your name be praised.

*Amen.*

*I Cannot Do This Alone by Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

# NOTES

## Tuesday | March 14, 2023

Lord, you set your face towards Jerusalem  
and walked alongside those who suffer.  
Be our vision that we too may walk the way of the cross  
and extend a hand to those we meet.

*Lord, give us the gladness of your help  
And support us with a willing spirit.*

Lord, you stopped to heal the sick, cure the lame  
and give sight to the blind.  
Be our vision that we too may give time to others  
and respond to their needs.

*Lord, give us the gladness of your help  
And support us with a willing spirit.*

Lord, you said, "The first shall be last and the last first."  
Be our vision that we too may work towards your kingdom  
when the exalted will be brought low and the lowly exalted.

*Lord, give us the gladness of your help  
And support us with a willing spirit.*

Lord, you ate with tax collectors and sinners and heard their stories.  
Be our vision that we too may listen to the despised and rejected  
and value their lives.  
Lord, you took time to pray and time to be silent.  
Be our vision that through our prayers, fasting and almsgiving  
we too may draw closer to you and find your way.

*Lord, give us the gladness of your help  
And support us with a willing spirit.*

Lord, you entered Jerusalem with peace in your heart.  
Be our vision that we too may desire peace where others desire war,  
and may work for justice where injustice reigns.

*Lord, give us the gladness of your help  
And support us with a willing spirit  
For you are our hope and our salvation.*

*Amen.*

"A Prayer for Hope & Solidarity" by Annabel Shilson-Thomas

# NOTES

# Wednesday | March 15, 2023

The LORD upholds all those who fall  
and lifts up all who are bowed down. (Psalm 145:14)  
God of love, hear the cry of those who yearn for love;  
fractured families, broken homes, neglected, unwanted, alone –

God of love, *hear our prayer*

God of justice, hear the cry of those who yearn for justice;  
persecuted and oppressed, exploited, ill-treated, broken –

God of justice, *hear our prayer.*

God of peace, hear the cry of those who yearn for peace;  
in battle zones and broken states, frightened, fearful, anxious –

God of peace, *hear our prayer.*

God of healing, hear the cry of those who yearn for healing;  
physical and spiritual hurting, weakened, depressed –

God of healing, *hear our prayer.*

God of mercy, hear the cry of those who yearn for mercy;  
convicted, in need of your Grace, contrite, humble, bowed down –

God of mercy, *hear our prayer.*

I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.  
Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. (Psalm 116:1, 2)

May you know the peace of God, the love of God,  
The justice of God, the healing and mercy of God  
This day and all days

*Amen.*

A Prayer of Intercession from John Birch  
(Inspired by Psalm 145: 14)



# NOTES

## Thursday | March 16, 2023

Dear God,

In this season of Lent, we're reminded of our own difficulties and struggles. Sometimes the way has seemed too dark. Sometimes we feel like our lives have been marked by such grief and pain, we don't see how our circumstances can ever change. But in the midst of our weakness, we ask that you would be strong on our behalf.

Lord, rise up within us, let your Spirit shine out of every broken place we've walked through. Allow your power to be manifest through our own weakness, so that others will recognize it is You who is at work on our behalf.

We ask that you would trade the ashes of our lives for the beauty of your Presence. Trade our mourning and grief for the oil of joy and gladness from your Spirit. Trade our despair for hope and praise. We choose to give you thanks today and believe that this season of darkness will fade away.

Thank you that you are with us in whatever we face and that you are greater than this trial. We know and recognize that you are Sovereign, we thank you for the victory that is ours because of Christ Jesus, and we are confident that you have good in store for our future. We thank you that you are at work right now, trading our ashes for greater beauty. We praise you, for you make all things new.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

by Debbie McDaniel.

# NOTES

# Friday | March 17, 2023

I once heard of a monk who prayed while he washed dishes. I like that, so I pray to Jesus while making soup and call it my “reconciliation soup”.

**PREPARE CHICKEN:** Just like I take care to avoid the dangers of raw chicken, Jesus, help me handle reconciliation with care. It’s full of possibilities to hurt. Like the salmonella that coats this very chicken, scary, dangerous and off-putting. I want to avoid handling it, but I can’t. It’s as vital to this soup as racial justice is to your Kingdom. It’s essential to our formation into people who want to look like you...Help me know how to respond to the raw word of fear and pride with care. Then let me thoroughly wash every interaction in grace.

**DICE ONIONS:** Jesus, help me to embrace the tears. Tears are not my enemy – they are indications of prayers needing to be prayed, maybe even with childlike faith. Help me pray the deep prayers of unity as I dice and measure.

**SLICE CARROTS:** Some say eating carrots gives you good eyesight. If so, Jesus, I want to see people as Beloveds. White and Black. Police officers and politicians. Story breakers and stay-at-home moms. They are all valuable to you, so they will be valuable to me.

**CHOP CELERY:** I don’t understand celery, Lord. Its punchy, sharp, bitter, taste seems too much for this soup. Too bold. Overpowering. But simmered with the other ingredients, it helps create a healing broth. Lord, my anger feels like celery. I don’t understand it; it’s too much. I ask you to take it, turn it into something useful. Let it simmer mixed in with your love and it creates something life-giving. Every recipe for chicken noodle soup calls for celery, so I’ll use it. Every act of reconciliation calls for a safe space for sharp words and hard truths, so I’ll use them and trust they will transform relationships like the celery transforms the soup...

**ADD NOODLES:** Lord, let us remember that we are intertwined. Let us not shy away from bumping into each other in the broth of reconciliation. Let us wrap-around each other and soften our wills to yours.

**BRING TO BOIL:** Because the ingredients are only changed under pressure when the heat seems unbearable, and the broth permeates the noodles’ hardness. Jesus, refine us in your fire. Let us submit to the heat of your call to unity because it brings the warmth of wholeness, the warmth of the Kingdom of God here on earth as it is in heaven. Simmer until the aroma of peace fills your kitchen and serve.

By Osheta Moore

# NOTES

# Saturday | March 18, 2023

## BREATH PRAYER

*Breath prayer is an ancient form of prayer easily adaptable for anyone. Simply choose one or two lines to meditate, and inhale and then exhale through them. One common form of breath prayer is known as the Jesus Prayer:*

*(From Matthew 11:28-30)*

Inhale: Humble and gentle One,  
Exhale: You are rest for my soul.

*(From John 15)*

Inhale: True Vine and Gardner,  
Exhale: I abide in You.

*(From Romans 8:38-39)*

Inhale: Nothing can separate me,  
Exhale: from the love of God.

*(From Psalm 46:10)*

Inhale: Be still  
Exhale: and know You are God.

*(From Matthew 6:10)*

Inhale: On earth  
Exhale: as it is in heaven.

*(From 2Cor 12:9)*

Inhale: Your grace  
Exhale: is enough for me.

*(From 1John)*

Inhale: There is no fear  
Exhale: in your Love.

*(From Psalm 23)*

Inhale: I will not be afraid  
Exhale: for You are with me.

*(From Psalm 46:1)*

Inhale: You are our refuge  
Exhale: and our strength.

*(From Psalm 74:16)*

Inhale: Both day and night  
Exhale: belong to You.

*(From Psalm 91:1)*

Inhale: I find rest  
Exhale: in Your shelter.

*(From Psalm 103:4-5)*

Inhale: You surround me with love  
Exhale: and tender mercies.  
Inhale: You fill my life  
Exhale: with good things.

*(From Philippians 4:7)*

Inhale: Peace of Christ,  
Exhale: guard my heart and mind.

*Start with ten good breaths in and out, with the words that are most meaningful or steadying to your soul.*

*By Sarah Bessey*

# NOTES

# Monday | March 20, 2023

God of Compassion,

Luke 7:11-15

As you did in Nain, enter *our* city gates. Enter into the somber roads down which our hearses drive and the glad streets down which our children run. Enter the parks where the junkies shoot up and the yuppies listen to jazz. Walk uninvited into starter mansions and cheap motel rooms that charge by the hour. Stroll into the cool-air freezer section where the pregnant women escape the heat, and the bus stop benches where the weary wait. Enter every law office and adult bookstore. Step into the spaces we say we feel your awesomeness *and* the places where we clam your forsakenness. Enter our city gates, God of Compassion, as you did the city of Nain. And bless.

Bless the things we mistakenly think were already dead. Bless that which we have already begun to carry out of town to bury. Bless our rocky marriages and our college-age kids who smoke too much pot. Bless the person at work whom we love to hate. Bless the chronically sick. Bless the one who has no one. Bless what we call insignificant and which you call magnificent. Bless it all and love what only you can love: the ugly, abandoned, and unsanitary in the wash of humanity upon which you have nothing but a gleaming compassion –when we have none.

God of Compassion who saw the widow of Nain, we thank you for seeing us. For seeing our loneliness and our bravery. For seeing the times we can't say what we need to. For seeing the ones who have never felt like they are enough, but whom you know already are and always have been. For seeing the moments when we are more than we thought we could be. For seeing what no one else can or will. Thank you for seeing as beautiful what we call ugly. In your compassion, teach us to see each other.

Reach out and raise us, God of Compassion. Touch us as you did the wood on which the widow's son lay and speak those same words to us: *Young man, arise. Little girl, get up.* To we who think we are not worthy to be loved and medicate ourselves with food and booze and shopping, say "rise up." To we who have been hurt by those who say they follow you, say "rise up." To the ones who care for the least of these and who feel too burnt-out to keep going, say "rise up." To we who are holding on to resentments like a security blanket, say "rise up." To those who hide their failings behind their good works, say "rise up." To the unloved child who has no idea that one day they will change the world, say "rise up."

And when again, God of Compassion, you have raised the dead – when again you have made whole that which is broken, when again you have reached into the graves we dig ourselves and loved us back to life – don't stop there. Like the young man of Nain, help us to sit up and speak. Give us words that are not empty affirmation, but give us strong words, as real as the very soil from which you raised us.

Give us the words, Lord, but also give us the pause before the words. Please.

And then, as you did the son to his mother, give us one to another. Make us one in this fractured world. And help us to know that when we do not have enough compassion for the road ahead, that you do, and that is enough.

Amen.

"God of Compassion" by Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber



# NOTES

## Tuesday | March 21, 2023

Jesus! Jesus, how did you do it? How did you manage with war, rumors with wars, sickness, and pain all about you, with oppression, rejection by family, friends, and foes alike? How did you manage with the knowledge you would suffer in such an excruciating way?

Me? I cannot save the world. I can barely get myself together. My sins are many. I have little power, little sway. Little money. What can be done? What can any of us really do?

In all this, you bid me come, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28-29).

Jesus, I come to you.

Could your yoke, or teaching, have something to do with me offering my five loaves and two fish, like the little boy? Offering the little I have and in some way being part of the answers to many prayers? Is it in trusting you, Triune God, to multiply my offering and the offerings of others wherever they find themselves?

Oh, I see.

You *do* see.

You don't expect me to save the world. I literally cannot. But you do expect me to do and love to the best of my ability in my given moment, right? To cry for them like you did Lazarus. And maybe if I do that, see them and do my part with what I have, it'll be enough. It is all you ask: no more, no less. And all that I can do. I can relax knowing you and others pick up where I leave off.

... I know I can trust you. You are good... With all my heart I believe this.

Amen.

"Finding Rest" By Marlena Graves

# NOTES

# Wednesday | March 22, 2023

God

Creator, Hoverer

You speak and we form.

You breathe life and we awake.

You said, "it is good" and we believe.

God

The Red Sea before us, shouting impossibility.

They say we can't, we shouldn't, and we wouldn't.

Words seeded from our youth, the limits, and the lies

There must be truer truths in us to confound, resist, defy.

Created from nothing, said something, made everything.

This God

The Lord will fight for us, so we need only to be still.

Still our soul, stand out loud, trusting that God is

El Roi, God who sees, bears witness to a name.

At her sound, \_\_\_\_\_ leaps, demands possibility.

Immanuel, God with us, for us, within us.

God

You said, "it is good" and we believe.

You breathe life and we awake.

You speak and we form.

Creator, Hoverer

God

By Rev. Gail Song Bantum

# NOTES

# Thursday | March 23, 2023

'There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.' (John 1:6-9)

In the lonely places  
The wilderness  
Where we stand forlorn  
Windswept and alone  
Your voice calls out  
**Prepare a way for the Lord**

In the dark places  
The shadows  
Where we hide our fears  
Embrace our tears  
Your voice calls out  
**Prepare a way for the Lord**

For the desert places in which we walk  
The streets we roam  
The paths we cross  
Guide our feet  
Take us to places  
Where you would go  
Give us words that you would use  
That in this season  
Of promise and preparation  
We might point the way with John the Baptist  
To the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

O come, Thou Day-spring, from on high,  
And cheer us by thy drawing nigh;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

Lord, thou hast given us thy Word for a light to shine upon our path;  
grant us so to meditate on that Word, and to follow its teaching,  
that we may find in it the light that shines more and more until the perfect day; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

"A Celtic Celebration" (Jerome, c 342 - 420)

# NOTES

# Friday | March 24, 2023

If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins,

**O Lord, who could stand?**

But with you there is forgiveness;

**Therefore you are feared.**

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,

**And in his word I put my hope.**

There is a transformation that takes place  
within the warmth of your embrace

That certain knowledge that you are  
refuge, shelter, fortress and stronghold  
against which no army can succeed

That you are Brother, Sister, Mother, Father  
the love that knows no bounds

That you are God

And I am lost outside of your arms

Create in me a pure heart, O God

And renew a faithful spirit within me

Restore to me the joy of your salvation

And a willing spirit to sustain me

O Lord, open our lips

**And our mouths will forever declare your praise**

O come, O come, Emmanuel,

And ransom captive Israel,

That mourns in lonely exile here

Until the Son of God appear.

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel**

**Shall come again and with us ever dwell**

...I arise today

Through the strength of heaven;

Light of the sun,

Splendor of fire,

Swiftmess of wind,

Depth of sea,

Stability of earth,

Firmness of rock

I arise today

Through God's strength to pilot me;

God's might to uphold me,

God's wisdom to guide me,

God's hand to guard me.

Afar or anear,

Alone or in a multitude.

Christ, shield me today

Against wounding;

Christ with me,

Christ before me,

Christ behind me,

Christ on my right,

Christ on my left,

Christ beneath me,

Christ above me,

Christ in me.

I arise today

Through the mighty strength

Of the Lord of Creation

(attr. St. Patrick) "A Celtic Celebration"



# NOTES

# Saturday | March 25, 2023

God,

When I read your word, sometimes you give me challenging pictures of yourself.

The Mighty One, God, the Lord,  
speaks and summons the earth  
from the rising of the sun to where it sets. (*Psalm 50:1*)

The voice of the Lord twists the oaks  
and strips the forests bare.  
And in his temple all cry, "Glory!" (*Psalm 29:9*)

The Lord reigns, he is robed in majesty;  
the Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength. (*Psalm 93:1*)

These pictures the Psalmist paints of you as King of Kings are powerful but feel distant and unapproachable to me. How do I share my thoughts with the One who shakes the earth with His voice and strips the forests bare? As I struggle with these words and pictures, I come before you. Oh God, give me a kingly picture of yourself that I can grasp. Then you open my eyes to Psalm 113, which starts with your splendor and ends with a picture of tenderness.

Who could possibly compare to the Lord our God?

God rules from on high;

<sup>6</sup> he has to come down to even see heaven and earth!

<sup>7</sup> God lifts up the poor from the dirt  
and raises up the needy from the garbage pile

<sup>8</sup> to seat them with leaders—  
with the leaders of his own people!

<sup>9</sup> God nests the once barren woman at home—  
now a joyful mother with children!

THIS is the King I can cry out to and be heard! Not only do you hold heaven and earth, but you SEE the outcasts and COME for the purpose of lifting-up those who need you most. You give them a place of prominence. Oh, God, you answer my prayers by revealing more of yourself to me. I imagine sitting at your beautiful feet with your robe curled around me, and your hand resting on my head. There I tell my King about the needs of the battered women and children at the Penny's Place safehouse and the struggles of the foster youth who are searching for places to belong. I bring before You the growing number of homeless tents I see, and those that have lost so much during this prolonged time of isolation. I lay the many things that break my heart there at your feet and feel comforted by your power and presence. You are not far off, but God with us - the One who raises up. You are my majestic King, and I praise You for the assurance You bring when I fix my eyes on You.

Rev. Camille Pook

# NOTES

# Monday | March 27, 2023

Praying the Lord's Prayer by John Wesley

*"Our Father"* – Who art good and gracious to all, our Creator, our preserver; the Father of our Lord and of us in Him, Your children by adoption and grace. Not *my* Father only, but the Father of the universe, of angels and human beings.

*"Who art in heaven"* – Filling heaven and earth and beholding all things in heaven and earth; knowing every creature and all their works, and every possible event from everlasting to everlasting...

*"Hallowed be thy name"* – ...May you be duly honored, loved, feared, by all in heaven and in earth, by all angels and all men!

*"Thy kingdom come"* – ...May all people receive You, O Christ, for their King and truly believe in Your name. May they be filled with righteousness, peace, joy, holiness, and happiness till they are removed into Your kingdom of glory to reign with You forever.

*"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"* – May all inhabitants of the earth do Your will as willingly as the holy angels!...O Spirit of grace, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make them perfect in every good work to do Your will, and work in them all that is well pleasing in Your sight!

*"Give us"* – O Father (for we claim nothing of right; only of Your free mercy) *"today"* (for we take no thought for tomorrow) *"our daily bread"* – all things needful for our souls and bodies, not only the meat that perishes, but the sacramental bread, and Your grace, the food which endures to everlasting life.

*"And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors"* – Give us, O Lord, redemption in your blood, the forgiveness of sins. As You enable us freely and fully to forgive us all our trespasses.

*"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"* – Whenever we are tempted, O Lord who helps our infirmities, do not allow us to be overcome or suffer loss by it, but make a way for us to escape so that we may be more than conquerors, through Your love, over all sin and the consequences of it.

*"For Thine is the kingdom"* – The sovereign right of all things that are or ever were created.

*"The power"* – The executive power, whereby You govern all things in Your everlasting kingdom.

*"And the glory"* – The praise due from every creature for Your power, all Your wondrous works, and the mightiness of Your kingdom, which endures through all ages, even *"forever. Amen"*

# NOTES

# Tuesday | March 28, 2023

Lord I come, I confess  
Bowing here, I find my rest  
Without You, I fall apart  
You're the one that guides my heart

Lord, I need You, oh, I need You  
Every hour, I need You  
My one defense, my righteousness  
Oh God, how I need You

Where sin runs deep, Your grace is more  
Where grace is found is where You are  
And where You are, Lord, I am free  
Holiness is Christ in me

Lord, I need You, oh, I need You  
Every hour, I need You  
My one defense, my righteousness  
Oh God, how I need You

So teach my song to rise to You  
When temptation comes my way  
And when I cannot stand, I'll fall on You  
Jesus, You're my hope and stay

Lord, I need You, oh, I need You  
Every hour, I need You

My one defense, my righteousness  
Oh God, how I need You

You're my one defense, my righteousness  
Oh God, how I need You

My one defense, my righteousness  
Oh God, how I need You

“Lord, I Need You” by Matt Maher

# NOTES

# Wednesday | March 29, 2023

God,

We're so tired.

We want to do justice, but the work feels endless, and the results look so small in our exhausted hands.

We want to love mercy, but our enemies are relentless and it feels like foolishness to prioritize gentleness in this unbelievably cruel world.

We want to walk humbly, but self-promotion is seductive, and we are afraid that if we don't look after ourselves, no one else will.

We want to be kind, but our anger feels insatiable.

Jesus, in this never-ending wilderness, come to us and grant us grace.

Grant us the courage to keep showing up to impossible battles, trusting that it is our commitment to faithfulness, and not our obsession with results, that will bring in your shalom.

Grant us the vulnerability to risk loving our difficult and complicated neighbor, rejecting the lie that some people are made more in the image of God than others.

Grant us the humility of a decentered but Beloved self.

As we continue to take the single step that is in front of us, Jesus, keep us from becoming what we are called to transform. Protect us from using the empire's violence in our words, in our theology, in our activism, and in our politics – for your kingdom of peace.

Keep our anger from becoming meanness.

Keep our sorrow from collapsing into self-pity.

Keep our hearts soft enough to keep breaking.

Keep our outrage turned towards justice, not cruelty.

Remind us that all of this, every bit of it, is for love.

Keep us fiercely kind.

Amen.

“A Prayer for the Tired, Angry Ones” by Laura Jean Truman



# NOTES

# Thursday | March 30, 2023

Show us your glory.

Lord, you've heard these words offered countless times, in songs of worship or the pleadings of prayer.

Show us your face, Lord. We want to see you. We want to witness your glory on display.

And yet we come with hearts of repentance, as we acknowledge the ways we have too often denied your glory displayed before us in disabled bodies. Together we confess our sin. We lament the sin of ableism.

Jesus, you who have victoriously conquered death, remind us of the wounds you still bear in your resurrection. Teach us like you did Thomas, saying, "Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Put your hand into my side. No more disbelief. Believe!" (John 20:27)

We worship you, our wounded king...

Thank you for the beauty of your diverse creation. We see your image more clearly displayed through our differences. Convict us, Lord, of the ways we have harmed those who are disabled with our belief, whether spoken or unspoken, that they may be experiencing punishment for sin. Teach us like you did your disciples, saying, "Neither they nor their parents have sinned. This happened so that God's mighty works might be displayed in them." (John 9:3)...

Search our hearts and expose our pride. Dismantle our idols of self-reliance and the illusion of meritocracy. Show us the ways we ignore our privilege and claim credit for your heavenly mercies as personal accomplishment. Give us the wisdom of Solomon, saying, "The fastest runner doesn't always win the race, and the strongest warrior doesn't always win the battle. The wise sometimes go hungry, and the skillful are not necessarily wealthy. And those who are educated don't always lead successful lives. But time and chance happens to them all." (Ecc 9:11)

We confess the sin of our pride and renounce the lie of meritocracy. Teach us to follow the example of Paul, by refusing to boast of anything except our own weakness, in which your power is all the more fully displayed. (2Cor 11:30, 12:9)

God of love, show us the ways we have excluded disabled bodies from our tables, from our pews, and from our pulpits. Reveal the ways we have belittled or discounted the giftings of disabled people. Teach us how to make a place where they are not only welcome to receive, but where they are empowered to serve, teach, and lead us as well. Remind us of the blueprint scripture offers for a thriving and unified body of believers, saying, "The parts of the body that people think are the weakest are the most necessary, which is why God designed the body to give greater honor to those parts, so that there won't be division in the body." (1Cor 12:22, 24-25)

Show us how to wholly welcome disabled bodies in our churches, homes, and communities. Teach us to better honor them for their vital role in your Kingdom...

Let the change begin with us. Rid us of the sin of ableism, and lead us in the way of your justice – on earth as it is in heaven.

Amen.

"A Liturgy for Disability" by Stephanie Tait

# NOTES

# Friday | March 31, 2023

God of herons and heartbreak,  
Teach us to love the world again.  
Teach us to love extravagantly  
Knowing it may  
(it will) break our hearts  
And teach us that it is worth it.

God of pandemics and suffering ones,  
Teach us to love the world again.

God of loneliness and longing,  
Of bushfires and wilderness,  
Of soup kitchens and border towns,  
Of snowfall and children,  
Teach us to love the world again.

Amen.

“A Prayer to Learn to Love the World Again” by Sarah Bessey

# NOTES

# Saturday | April 1, 2023

Merciful Lord,

Sometimes it seems like we can't help but lose our way again and again.

Our hearts long to follow you but you know the way of the human heart.

You know how in our misguided longings we veer off our journeying to you and begin to chart our own ways by false stars and distorted visions.

Forgive us.

Forgive us for all the times we are tempted by the hints of light instead of remaining steered by the assurance of Light.

Forgive us when we forget that we are already claimed by you,  
Loved by you and purposed by you.

Forgive us when we allow ourselves to shape and be shaped by values and words that do not bring life, create life, nurture life, sustain life, or resurrect life.

Merciful God,

Help us find our way again.

Turn us back towards the road spotted with your other pilgrims, wayfarers, and repentant servants.  
Remind us that your Way is the way of returning.

Guide us by your Spirit and by your Light.

Make us remember the Power of the Spirit within us.

Make us remember the gifts of our minds, our hearts and our bodies that you have bestowed on us, that we would use them to honor the directives and the invitations you lay upon us.

We know that our ways are not your ways, and we thank you for this.

Help us trust your ways over our ways.

Remind us of your faithfulness as you forgive us our short memory.

In your immeasurable love, grace, mercy, and wisdom, do not abandon us regardless of how often we lose our way.  
Place your wounded hands upon our broken hearts and turn us towards you.

Lord of Light, Lord of the Life, Lord of Resurrection.

Amen.

# NOTES

# Monday | April 3, 2023

God Almighty,  
God the Three in One.  
Loving God,

Great Creator.

Dear God, I don't know how to begin my prayers anymore.

It's not that I want to go back to the way it was, when I imagined you with your chin on your hand, inclining your ear to me like a patient confessor – or like a slightly more available father, who might be persuaded to give me what I wanted in exchange for good behavior.

The longer I have known you, the more I have lost sight of you, which is not as bad as it sounds. We are so close now that I can't imagine you with giant ears, white eyebrows over golden eyes, massive hands that give or take by your inscrutable will. There would have to be more distance between us for that.

We are so close now that you come to me as breath, pulse, wind, sap, the steady humming current that weds all living things.

Imagine a mountain, I say to those who want to go there, one so familiar you can see it with your eyes closed. Green in summer, bare in winter, iridescent at sunset, it's always where it's supposed to be, right there on the horizon. You have loved it from afar.

Now imagine deciding to climb that mountain, not once but over and over again – first by the marked path, then by the deer trails, then by making your own way up. One day you pray in the dry streambed. One day you pray under the stone outcrop. One day you pray face down in the sweet birch leaves.

My point is, the better you know the mountain – the more intimate you become – the harder it is to see it whole, as something separated from yourself. You're not looking at the mountain anymore. You're not even on the mountain. You're in the mountain's life, as its life pours into you. This makes words hard to come by.

Oh, Thou Who Art.  
Thank you for green.  
Wake me up to blue.  
Receive the fine ash of my sadness.  
Blow a seed my way.

...These days I say so much less.

...Thank God, dear God, you don't seem to mind. We both like the words, because they mean I'm paying attention, though we both know the prayer is in the silence after. Ragged breath becoming steady, then still, until I am all ears for you, here in the mountain of your presence where I can't see you anymore.

Oh, Thou Who Art.  
Breathe on me...



# NOTES

## Tuesday | April 4, 2023

God of prayers for parking spots and prisons,  
Of hospitals and holidays,  
Of anger and angels,  
Of traveling mercies and tired ones,  
Of decolonization and deconstruction,  
Of wilderness and wander,  
Of feasts and ferocity,  
Of goodness and grief,  
We come to you today  
With our whole selves.

God of our honest prayers and  
More honest silences,  
Open our eyes to see and  
Our ears to hear and  
Our hearts to understand  
How you are already here with us.

Mother God, gather us as  
A hen gathers her chicks  
And let us catch our breath for  
One hot second and remember  
How you hold the whole world  
In your kind, capable, wise hands,  
Including us.

Spirit, when we cannot part the weeds  
Of our own traditions and old languages,  
When the old pathways of prayer feel choked  
With briars and thorns,  
Would you make a path in the wilderness  
For us to find you in new ways, new words,  
New practices, new permissions?  
Would you meet us in the wilderness and  
Set out a feast?  
We are hungry and thirsty.

We are grateful for (mostly) every moment  
That brought us here to you.  
Help us to sink down into your Love  
To push our roots down into that marvelous Love.  
And be planted within your power and grace  
As we practice loving this world as you have  
Loved this world.

May we laugh harder  
Because we have learned  
To let ourselves weep with you.

May we see and know and name Beauty  
Because we have learned  
To bring the ugliness to you.

Surprise us and startle us.  
We're open to all the weird ways you want to  
Speak – in us and to us and through us.

May we be Peacemakers,  
Joy-bringers, Truth-tellers, Status-Quo-Disrupters,  
Wanderers, Wonderers, and Misfits to our Time  
(because of Resolute contentment),  
Who never settle for the sit-down-and-shut-up life  
But rise up in your  
She [He]-who-the-Son-sets-free-is-free-indeed  
Birthright of freedom.

May we be the ones who come close to you  
Because of our vulnerability and not  
Because of our false certainties;  
Teach us to lay down our masks and pretenses.  
You tore down the veil between us and the Holy of  
Holies,  
Keep our hands from rehangng that curtain...

May we learn to sit with you,  
In silence,  
And know it is enough to know you  
And be known by you  
And know ourselves.

Teach us to pray, God, as you have always  
Welcomed us to pray:  
Fully human, fully yours, fully held,  
And fully loved.

We will tell you the truth of our lives  
And of this world.  
And we will listen to the truth you speak back to us  
The truth of our belovedness,  
Of your justice,  
Of your faithfulness,  
Of love.  
And say  
Let it be so,  
Let it be in me.  
Amen.

"A Benediction" by Sarah Bessey

# NOTES

# Wednesday | April 5, 2023

How long, Lord?

How long must we cry out?

How long must the vulnerable sit silent as bombs, guns, cages, natural disasters threaten lives?

How long must we hear the agonizing silence of so many in the church?

How long, Lord?

Are you listening? Yes? You do! You do? You do see us! You do hear us!

We believe you are at work bringing peace. True peace – flourishing, wholeness, and well-being. We hear your words of truth and know in our minds that you are:

Lord, the God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome.

You show no partiality.

You defend the cause of the fatherless, motherless, and the widow.

You love the stranger.

We believe and we feel overwhelmed – sometimes

It is hard to believe that you actually care about the injustice and suffering. When we don't see your work. When we sense the apathy from the church. When we feel small and forget that we were designed to be different and make things different.

When we feel overwhelmed by darkness in the world – the violence, injustice, poverty, oppression, abuse.

Give us hope not to be overcome. Give us eyes to see your goodness for our world.

Give us the strength to hold the pain of injustice in our world and faith that it will end.

Give us courage to be honest with ourselves about why and how we are doing justice.

We believe. So. Empower us to disrupt our broken thinking by learning *truth* from diverse leaders. Enable us to discover the *beauty* of justice and inspire action in others. Embolden us to display your *goodness* in the world...

Sisters [and Brothers], let us act in creativity to rebuild a just world.

Where those fleeing danger can find rest.

Where children are not discarded because they do not look like us.

Where mothers are not standing over the graves of their sons and daughters.

Where violence does not define us and death does not have the last word.

Jesus, we repent and return to you. As you call us in Amos 4-5. We hear your call:

Return to me.

Return to me and seek me.

Return to me, seek me, and do justice.

Jesus, we repent, confession –

Our complicity in evil systems

Our apathy towards pain

Our pure enjoyment of things that satisfy us

Our inability to forgive just as Christ has forgiven us.

Thank you for being born as a refugee into a tiny ethnic minority, oppressed and persecuted to death by the empire, and yet never fighting back in the form of empire but embodying self-sacrificing resistance.

Jesus, You came to proclaim good news to the poor by proclaiming freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind. You came not only proclaiming freedom but freeing the oppressed. We know that we can be agents of

justice but only you can liberate. We pray, we engage, we do our work but only you bring salvation, You bring healing, you bring liberation. Only your power can stand against the darkness.

Call us, Repairer of Broken Walls and Restorer of Streets with Dwellings. Help us to live justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with you, God. Empower us to let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, love mercy and to walk humbly with God.

--Micah 6:8

“A Liturgy of Longing”

by Rev. Sandra Maria Van Opstal

## NOTES

# Thursday | April 6, 2023

*[Breathe in]* The holy is here,  
*[Breathe out.]* present with me.

Spirit of Jesus –  
Come with fire that refines,  
Water that refreshes,  
Wind that topples,  
Breath that fills.

Kindle a global revival of empathy, justice, and active peacemaking.  
Birth a witness of Love that is bigger and better than we inherited.  
Liberate us from privilege and oppression.  
Unshackle the gospel from nationalism, colonialism, white supremacy, and every other lens that shrouds the Good News.  
Give us an abundance of grace for others and ourselves.  
Grant us compassion for those who suffer. Free us from the influence of money power, and acclaim.

Restore our reputation for caring for the poor, loving our neighbors, being ambassadors of peace, and stewards of the earth.  
Unlock the immense resources hoarded in the Western Church and release them for your name's sake. Encourage us, so we do not grow cynical, isolated, and burnt-out.  
Fan our hopes, our joys, and our connections.  
Allow us rest when we need rest.  
Enable us to see you in each person we encounter.  
Show us mercy, in our humanity.

Let us love more fully than we thought possible.  
Let us not be quick on the draw, ready to retaliate, escalate, assassinate.  
Let our collective fervor for justice eclipse institutional concerns.  
Let us trust and follow the wisdom of those who have been marginalized.  
Let us persevere in creating safe places of worship to eat bread and drink wine together.

Let us stand for Love and with Love, following the way of your Son as best we're able.  
Let us know fear an experiential spirituality.  
Let us listen to the wondrous bodies you gave us.  
Let us hear your voice and voice and tangibly feel you with us.  
Let us discern your guidance.  
Let us abide in and with you.

Show us what you're doing, so we can work together.  
Move where you will, when you will, in whatever way you will.  
Come, Holy Spirit, and restore your Church. Amen.

# NOTES

## Friday | April 7, 2023

O Love Divine, what hast thou done!  
Th'incarnate God hath died for me!  
The Father's coeternal Son  
The Son of God for me hath died:  
My Lord, my Love is crucified:

Is crucified for me and you,  
To bring us rebels near to God;  
Believe, believe the record true,  
Pardon for all flows from his side:  
My Lord, my Love, is crucified.

Behold him, all ye that pass by,  
The bleeding Prince of life and peace!  
Come, sinners, see your Savior die,  
And say, was ever grief like his?  
Come, feel with me his blood applied:  
My Lord, my Love, is crucified. Amen.

"O Love Divine, What Hast Thou Done" By Charles Wesley



# NOTES

## Saturday | April 8, 2023

Blessed are you, O Lord our God King of the universe. You are the Author of Love and Life. You have given us the opportunity to work this past week – the privilege of serving You and Your Kingdom in visible and invisible ways. For the work of our hands and heart, we thank You.

We thank you for the things we did out of duty and the things we did out of delight – for projects, demands, chores, sore muscles and acts of kindness – for all that was planned and unplanned. Lord, receive it as our gift to You. For all that was left undone because of distraction or laziness, forgive us, Lord Jesus.

For all that was left undone because we obeyed the Spirit's leading, we recognize Your handiwork and give You thanks.

Now, the Sabbath lies before us and we are ready to cross the threshold. (some light a candle)  
Lord, Jesus, You are the Light of the world.  
You created and crafted this day of Sabbath Rest.

You bless it.  
You crown it with glory.  
You call it holy.

Through it, You call us out of darkness into Your love and light.  
It is to be a day of refreshment and celebration.  
You alone release us from bondage of duty and demand.

Enter our homes and hearths today.  
Almighty God, grant us and all our loved ones true rest on this Sabbath Day.  
May Your Presence drive out from among us anger and fear, worry and regret.  
Send your blessing upon us, that we may be people of the Word.

Heavenly Father,  
We rejoice in the beauty of Your world,  
The power of Your Word,  
The presence of Your Holy Spirit...

It is from You we receive every good and perfect gift.

Open our eyes to see.  
Giver of Life and Love,  
Grant us Your peace this day and always, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

“A Sabbath Prayer” [www.RunHardRestWell.com](http://www.RunHardRestWell.com)

# NOTES



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