



# WALKS IN THE WILDERNESS

2023 Lent Devotional Guide



# WELCOME

## 2023 Lent Devotional Guide

The Office of the Chaplain & Religious Life at SMU is excited to provide the 2023 Lent Devotional Guide to the SMU community. For Christians across the world, Lent is a season of reflection and confession that ends in the celebration of Easter. It provides an opportunity to pause, to lament, to pray, and to worship together in community. As we enter this sacred season of the year, we hope this guide will be a reflective tool for the SMU community.

Given the wide range of Christian traditions found at SMU, this guide is meant to be a collective expression of a shared faith. You will find daily devotionals written by students, staff, and faculty from across the university, representing a variety of Christian traditions. Allow their words to guide you in prayer and reflection over the next several weeks. Regardless of where you find yourself in this season, we hope you find words that both encourage and challenge you.

This guide is an ecumenical collaboration from across the university. No one viewpoint is meant to be representative of all Christians or traditions. Instead, we hope it is representative of the wide story that God is telling amongst our communities. If you have questions or want to get connected with a specific community on campus, please reach out to [chaplain@smu.edu](mailto:chaplain@smu.edu).

## Using the Guide

This guide contains daily devotionals around our theme for the year: Walks in the Wilderness. We will follow along the story of Jesus's temptations in the wilderness at the beginning of his ministry as it is told in Luke Chapter 4. The overall theme is a reflection of our personal journeys in the "wilderness" where we encounter trial, wonder, pain, joy, and, ultimately, God. We invite you to participate in your own walk in the wilderness this Lenten season as we explore what the wilderness is and what we might find there.

The guide is broken up into 7 weeks. At the beginning of each week, we introduce a scripture passage of the week along with a specific theme. Each devotional for a week will reflect on this theme. Each devotional will close with a prayer for the week. While the guide is broken down into specific days and themes, there is no prescribed way to use it. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in prayer and reflection this season of Lent, and allow this guide to be a simple tool along the way.

Grace and peace to all during Lent 2023. Journey along with us for a walk in the wilderness.

# WEEK ONE: THE INVITATION

Passage of the Week: Luke 3:1-6

(1) In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, (2) during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. (3) He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, (4) as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord;  
make His paths straight.

(5) Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth,  
(6) and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ ”

Every journey begins with an invitation. We invite you to journey with us into the wilderness to remember Christ's work on the cross, model Jesus's sacrifice, and reflect on our spiritual journeys. This week's devotionals will explore.

Prayer of the Week:

*Amidst uncertainties, I follow you. Amidst worry, I follow you. Amidst doubt I follow you.  
Lead me God, draw me close to you. Amen.*

## Wednesday, February 22nd

Welcome to Lent, friends. This season is one of journeying alongside Jesus, of preparing the way for our Lord. A word to the wise: this is not an easy path to travel. In the weeks ahead, as we read the scriptures and come together for worship and mark the time, we will confront a great deal of hardship.

If you know anything about the trajectory of this season, you will understand that this path we travel together only has one destination: death. Of course, we trust and anticipate the Easter story of resurrection, but before we can experience new life with Christ, we have to encounter the finality of death. And even before the cross and the grave, we will see the ugliness of humankind revealed in betrayal and suffering. This is no easy walk in the woods: this is a wilderness journey.

So how do we navigate such a treacherous path? Many of us had to discern that just a few weeks ago as snow and ice covered the streets and sidewalks of Dallas for four days. Stuck in dorm rooms and apartments, we had to trek across slippery paths to make it to the dining hall. For those able-bodied folks among us, this was nothing more than a small inconvenience; at most, we risked a bruised tailbone. But for those with disabilities, or those struggling with mental health concerns, these days of hazardous conditions and isolation posed a much larger challenge. How do we navigate a path like this one, and how do we journey together?

An acquaintance of mine owns and operates a farm up north, and in the winter, there are times when the landscape is downright dangerous to navigate. When coated in ice, the hillsides and familiar paths are especially precarious for both humans and animals to trod. But this farmer relies on some old wisdom to ensure safe passage. After the fire dies each night, she collects the ashes and scatters them along the pathways. Ashes provide traction on icy and snowy surfaces, traction that allows sheep, cows, donkeys, chickens, and humans to keep going, even over slippery terrain.

Ash Wednesday is a time for finding traction on the difficult path that lies ahead. As we receive the mark of ashes on our foreheads, we are reminded of our common destination on this journey: death. Collectively, we remember our mortality and are humbled and grounded in our humanity. On Ash Wednesday, we find ourselves at base camp, making preparations and summoning the will to do what comes next.

This is a journey we must make, lest we remain stuck in our old ways of death-denying and toxic positivity and disconnection from God's expansive and all-inclusive redemption. And we're also given a gift for the journey: ashes. God does not wish for us to slip, or fall, or slide around. God intends for us to find traction on the path, and for us to traverse together so that "all humanity will see God's salvation."

*Rev. Jessie Light-Wells  
Ukirk Campus Minister*

*Amidst uncertainties, I follow you. Amidst worry, I follow you. Amidst doubt I follow you. Lead me God, draw me close to you. Amen.*

## Thursday February 23rd

Do you remember the long, lonely days of 2020? In those early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were all stuck in our homes, filled with uncertainty and despair. There was a promise that things would not always be this way, but we didn't know when that would be or what it would look like. We had so many questions about the future and so little assurance of where we were headed.

The season of Lent is a season of preparation and anticipation. During this season, we are called to reflect on our lives in prayer, meditation on Scripture, and fasting. It is a fitting time to contemplate the work of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus's public ministry by announcing a new era in God's activity in the world. John's contemporaries were asking the same question we were asking in 2020: "When will things get better?" They were asking themselves, "When will God fulfill those promises of redemption from long ago?" John was called by God to announce the answer to these questions. He came to invite his community to participate with God in the renewal of all things through faith and repentance. God was going to fulfill the promise of deliverance and restoration, but in an unexpected way. God's reign would come through suffering and service, and it would be for all the peoples of the earth.

In Luke 3:1-6, we read that John's role was to prepare God's people for the return from exile through the promised Messiah. Much like the announcement of decreasing cases gives hope to the isolated masses during a pandemic, John's proclamation opened up a new world of possibilities for his neighbors. Jesus was coming to bring forgiveness and reconciliation. He had come to manifest the presence of God on earth and inaugurate an age of cosmic renewal. An age where the last will be first, the oppressed will be set free, and the lost will be found.

This text invites us to join God in the Spirit's ongoing work of restoration and renewal. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God accomplished a work of salvation that changes everything. The season of Lent is an invitation to open our lives to that transforming power of God and to participate in the journey of Jesus. As you take time in prayer and contemplation on Scripture this week, I invite you to consider the following questions: Where do I sense exile and alienation in my life, both from God and others? Where am I resistant to the possibility of God's activity in my life and in the world? Are there parts of my life that I don't want to examine? What would it look like to invite God into those parts of my life?

*Rev. Fee Kennedy  
RUF-I Campus Minister*

*Amidst uncertainties, I follow you. Amidst worry, I follow you. Amidst doubt I follow you. Lead me God, draw me close to you. Amen.*

## Friday, February 24th

The start of a journey is always an uncertain time. There is confusion and stress about what might lie ahead. But what if I told you that there is a way to have hope, even in the midst of that uncertainty. Would you believe me?

In Luke 3, John the Baptist is preparing the way for the coming Savior of the World, Jesus Christ. In this passage, John cries out that all will see the salvation of God. What does he mean by this? Well, a good place to start would be John 1, where we learn that Jesus Christ is the incarnation of the Word of God. This means that God, in His divine nature and eternal power, took on flesh and became a man in Jesus, so that He might bring the salvation that had been prophesied for thousands of years. Everything has pointed to this coming Messiah.

Now how does any of this apply to the start of a journey? Well, John the Baptist makes it pretty clear in John 3:30, when he proclaims "He must increase, but I must decrease". Everything ultimately points back to Jesus. It was through Jesus that the world was created, and now He has come to save. If we are to start a journey, we must humble ourselves before the everlasting, holy God. He must become our everything. Only through His lordship over our lives will we find abundant life in Him.

For many reading this, you know exactly what this means. You have tasted and seen the goodness of God as He has ruled over your life. However, I know that so many people haven't. If you haven't surrendered it all to Jesus - If He hasn't become your everything, then I want to speak directly to you:

There is a problem in this world, and it is us. God, the creator of the universe, made us to know Him and experience His goodness. Yet we turned from Him and chose a distortion of goodness, which is called sin. Because of our evil nature, we have cut our imperfect selves off from a perfect God. We cannot be reconciled to Him. However, as discussed above, God took on flesh and became a man in Christ Jesus. He lived a perfect, sinless life, resisting every temptation, and died the death that we deserved on the cross. Through this, He took on the punishment of the sins of all those who would ever turn to Him. He rose again 3 days later, demonstrating that He had conquered sin and death. God now offers us an opportunity to be reconciled to Him through the blood of Jesus Christ. We can accept this free gift from Him if we do two things. We must first turn from our sin and recognize our broken nature that will always fail. After that, we must turn to Jesus and trust Him with our lives. As John the Baptist said, Jesus must increase in your life, and you must give Him your everything.

Today is the day of salvation! Trust in the Lord, for He is good. He is mighty to save and He loves you more than you could ever know. In fact, He loves you so much that He conquered death for you. This journey might just be starting for you, but I promise that Jesus will walk alongside you for the rest of your days.

At the end of the day, the start of a journey will always be uncertain, but we can still find certainty in two things: Jesus' sufficient sacrifice and God's character. As long as we are being led by the creator of the universe, we can have certainty in His love for us. He will go before us. The Lord God is inviting you into a journey of redemption: are you in?

*Ben Murphy  
Class of 2023*

*Amidst uncertainties, I follow you. Amidst worry, I follow you. Amidst doubt I follow you. Lead me God, draw me close to you. Amen.*

## Saturday, February 25th

On Saturdays throughout Lent, you are invited to participate in a guided prayer practice. Find a quiet place to pause, be still, and read through this prayer. Repeat the prayer or any part of the prayer as many times as you'd like.

### *Opening Invocation*

Holy God, speak to me,  
That I might hear the good news,  
And trust my life into your hands and keeping.  
May I be present now, even as you are present to me.  
Eternal Friend, this is my prayer.

### *Psalm 23*

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
    he leads me beside still waters;  
    he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
    for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
    I fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
    your rod and your staff,  
    they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me  
    in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
    my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
    all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
    my whole life long.

### *Prayer for Others*

Who is on your mind today? Lift them up to God.

### *The Lord's Prayer*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever.

### *Prayer of the Week*

Amidst uncertainties, I follow you. Amidst worry, I follow you. Amidst doubt I follow you. Lead me God, draw me close to you. Amen.

# WEEK TWO: WANDERING

Passage of the Week: Luke 4:1-2

(1) Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, (2) where for forty days He was tested by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over He was famished.

J.R.R. Tolkien's famous quote introduces us to our theme for week two: "Not all who wander are lost." Written as part of a song in his Lord of the Rings series, Tolkien's words suggest a different way of being in the world when you are not quite certain where you are or where you are going. If we take Tolkien seriously, a few questions come to mind: What does it mean to wander? Where might God be calling me to wander? What might we find when we allow ourselves to wander for a bit? As we enter this week, take a moment to find a few moments to wander for yourself. Enjoy a walk outside. Draw, paint, or build something new. Write out your thoughts in a journal. Whatever it might look like for you, wander.

Prayer of the Week:

*Merciful God, thank you for inviting us, your children, to the Jesus's journey into wilderness. Even when we are going through difficult and painful experiences in our lives, we know you are always with us. Let your bright eternal truth shine in upon our wandering, clear our eyes, and mercifully teach us your way. In Jesus Christ's name, Amen.*

## Monday, February 27th

The word “wilderness” is often used in Christian spaces to describe a time when your relationship with God is unsteady, when you feel spiritually dry and unable to connect with God. I recently had one of my own experiences in the wilderness. Nothing had particularly caused it. I just found myself unable to crack open my Bible, focus during prayer, or get anything meaningful out of a church service. I was embarrassed to confess this to a mentor of mine, but her response was one that surprised me. She said, “But think of all the life there is, even in the desert!” A recent trip to Big Bend State Park proved her words true. My tent was pitched within eyesight of the Rio Grande, which supported the needs of every creature. Even miles away, prickly pears, tarantulas, and wild hogs all thrived in the ecosystem they were designed for.

The passage says that Jesus went to the wilderness, not because He was distant from God, but because He was “full of the Holy Spirit.” It is the very Spirit of God that leads Him into the desert and sustains Him there. What kind of life do you think Jesus discovered while He was in the wilderness? Certainly, there were lots of living things to see wandering in the desert with Him. But what might He have uncovered spiritually? If you find yourself wandering in the wilderness, avoid the temptation to think you are a “bad” Christian. Instead consider how the Spirit might be leading you and ask God how you can learn from the experience.

*Bethany Warne  
Perkins Class of 2024*

*Merciful God, thank you for inviting us, Your children, to the Jesus's journey into wilderness. Even when we are going through difficult and painful experiences in our lives, we know you are always with us. Let your bright eternal truth shine in upon our wandering, clear our eyes, and mercifully teach us your way. In Jesus Christ's name, Amen.*

## Tuesday, February 28th

It's nearly light outside. I've run out of time again. I'm competing in an orienting course in Missouri. By using a pencil, protractor and compass, competitors challenge themselves to find as many points as possible before daybreak, while in the middle of a forest. Like a scavenger hunt, I'm lost. I had circled around the same area for nearly an hour, and my time was almost up. I'm horribly mad at myself. I had been practicing for months. I was hungry, pissed, and ready to go home... But I was in the middle of a national forest 700 miles away.

Hiking and wandering through the wilderness had always appealed to me. Wandering just sounded peaceful, like lollygagging, like you were taking your time. Yet, the times in my life where I've found myself wandering were the most distressing. I find that people do not wander because they know where they're going. Usually, it's to discover where they want to go. At least that's been the case for me.

When Jesus went to the wilderness, it was at the prompting of the Spirit. While in the wilderness, He was tempted by the devil, ate nothing, and left hungry. How comforting it is to know that the Messiah had his own wilderness periods. To know that the Spirit led even the Son of God to uncomfortable places. That even God left the wilderness hungry.

The Spirit knew what they were doing. Jesus left that wilderness victorious, because the Holy Spirit sustained Him. God might lead us to uncomfortable places, but we are not left there alone. The Spirit sustains and guides until it's time to leave.

When I was in that quite literal wilderness, lost and tired from having wandered around all night, I sat down, took off my pack and said one last prayer of desperation. When I looked up, I saw something strange. Twenty feet from me was a large buck staring at me and chewing. Unbothered by my presence, he slowly walked away revealing a signpost with big orange letters on it. My missing point. It felt strange to say a prayer and look up and discover that I was exactly where I needed to be. It was time to go home.

*Allison Goldsmith  
Perkins Class of 2024*

*Merciful God, thank you for inviting us, your children, to the Jesus's journey into wilderness. Even when we are going through difficult and painful experiences in our lives, we know you are always with us. Let your bright eternal truth shine in upon our wandering, clear our eyes, and mercifully teach us your way. In Jesus Christ's name, Amen.*

## Wednesday, March 1st

The Bible is full of wandering stories. Many major characters or stories in Scripture are about wandering physically or spiritually. Wandering is a common theme to cast a negative light on but to bring about positive change with spiritual growth. Sometimes Christians expect all is well to believe in Jesus or to attend Church, but Christians can experience wandering. God called Abraham but made him wander for years waiting for God's promises to come true. David became a king but spent years wandering. Even Jesus wandered in the desert for 40 days. God also calls us to the wilderness. It is not always a comfortable place or a stable moment, but there is God with us.

I came to Dallas from Korea about two years ago during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a big challenge for my life to move to a strange land by leaving my home. I came here trusting God led me to broaden my eyes for God's world, but it has been hard to stay here as a foreigner. From the matter of living and housing to getting certificates suitable for living here, I had to struggle almost every day to survive here. However, this life makes me rely more on God. It makes me realize that God is the only one I can seek in the middle of a desert where there is no hope. And I experience God who fills my life every day. What is more grateful is that this wilderness is not a place I go through alone. I am grateful that I can spend time getting to know God more deeply through the wilderness like many biblical characters and ancestors of our faith. Above all, the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, also went through a wilderness temptation is a great comfort to us, vulnerable humans who fall into temptation every day. It gives us the power to overcome the temptations, the important elements of our lives every day, in the wilderness with Jesus' name.

*Eunbyul "Stella" Cho  
Perkins Class of 2023*

*Merciful God, thank you for inviting us, your children, to the Jesus's journey into wilderness. Even when we are going through difficult and painful experiences in our lives, we know you are always with us. Let your bright eternal truth shine in upon our wandering, clear our eyes, and mercifully teach us your way. In Jesus Christ's name, Amen.*

## Thursday, March 2nd



*Now Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wild." - Luke 4.1 (The Message)*

Growing up, did you play in the woods – near your home or in some special place that you visited regularly? Today, go back to that place (in your mind or physically if you can)...spend some time wandering through the woods and listening...

The image here is from the banks of the beautiful Bouie River, just north of Hattiesburg, Mississippi. My mother grew up in this "wilderness." She met my father there. Four generations of my family have gathered here for the Fourth of July and Christmas – as well as funerals and birthdays. Each time I'm there, I spend some time wandering through the wilderness.

- Sometimes as I wander my mind is filled with memories of my childhood –
  - riding go-karts and jumping off rope swings into the River with my cousins.
- Many times, I take one of my nieces or nephews with me –
  - seeing the wilderness through their eyes.
- Most often, I am "led by the Spirit into the wild" -
  - I open my heart and mind to what God is inviting me to do and be now.

While I've often thought of Jesus' forty days in the wilderness as desolate and difficult, I wonder if the Spirit led Jesus into a familiar wilderness where He felt most rooted, connected, and held deeply in love. As we enter the Lenten journey, may we embrace this wilderness wandering – knowing we are deeply loved, surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses – and open ourselves to what God is inviting us to do and be.

*Lisa Garvin  
Chaplain and Minister  
to the University*

*Merciful God, thank you for inviting us, your children, to the Jesus's journey into wilderness. Even when we are going through difficult and painful experiences in our lives, we know you are always with us. Let your bright eternal truth shine in upon our wandering, clear our eyes, and mercifully teach us your way. In Jesus Christ's name, Amen.*

## Friday, March 3rd

In his preface to *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis famously argues, “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.” Where would you find yourself on that spectrum? Wherever you might fall, there is something unique for you to gain from this narrative of Jesus in the wilderness. We have all experienced times in our lives where we are inexplicably enticed by destructive desires. On the global scale, we have all witnessed evil and atrocities that extend beyond the actions of individuals and seem to be propelled by something outside of our grasp to understand. It is hard to admit, but if we are honest with ourselves, we are all vulnerable to deception. Life is often filled with chaos and confusion. The ministry of Jesus calls us to take these experiences seriously, while also holding them in the ultimate light of God’s victory over evil.

In this text, we see the reality of the devil on full display, but his appearance should produce confidence and wonder in the reader, rather than fear and skepticism. In His encounter with the devil, Jesus is embarking on a journey of suffering and service for the sake of the world. He was sent by the Spirit into the wilderness to face the devil for us. Jesus chose the path of wandering for us, so that we would not wander in darkness. He has gone before us as a wanderer, so that we would never wander alone.

In this passage, Jesus enters an inhospitable environment under immense strain. He has chosen to fast during His time of testing and temptation in the desert. He is physically exhausted, spiritually vulnerable, and emotionally desperate. Have you ever been there before? You are not alone. Jesus embarks on this wandering in the wilderness as the representative of God’s people. His forty days of testing and temptation draw an intentional parallel to the forty years of Israel’s wilderness wanderings. Where we have so often failed in the face of temptation and testing, Jesus succeeds. His time as a wanderer in the desert is no accident. He is facing temptation head-on so that we would have power and guidance during our wanderings in this life.

The good news of this narrative is that our trials and temptations can be redemptive experiences. As the Spirit guides us, we may face wanderings for our purification and growth. How might your current trials be an opportunity for growth in holiness? Where do you experience temptations to run from God? As you reflect on all these things, how can you contemplate the victory of Jesus on your behalf? Where do you sense the presence of God in the midst of your wanderings?

Rev. Fee Kennedy  
RUF-I Campus Minister

*Merciful God, thank you for inviting us, your children, to the Jesus’s journey into wilderness. Even when we are going through difficult and painful experiences in our lives, we know you are always with us. Let your bright eternal truth shine in upon our wandering, clear our eyes, and mercifully teach us your way. In Jesus Christ’s name, Amen.*

## Saturday, March 4th

On Saturdays throughout Lent, you are invited to participate in a guided prayer practice. Find a quiet place to pause, be still, and read through this prayer. Repeat the prayer or any part of the prayer as many times as you'd like.

### *Opening Invocation*

Holy God, speak to me,  
That I might hear the good news,  
And trust my life into your hands and keeping.  
May I be present now, even as you are present to me.  
Eternal Friend, this is my prayer.

### *Psalm 23*

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
    he leads me beside still waters;  
    he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
    for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
    I fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
    your rod and your staff,  
    they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me  
    in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
    my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
    all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
    my whole life long.

### *Prayer for Others*

Who is on your mind today? Lift them up to God.

### *The Lord's Prayer*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever.

### *Prayer of the Week*

Merciful God, thank you for inviting us, Your children, to the Jesus's journey into wilderness. Even when we are going through difficult and painful experiences in our lives, we know you are always with us. Let your bright eternal truth shine in upon our wandering, clear our eyes, and mercifully teach us your way. In Jesus Christ's name, Amen.

# WEEK THREE: SUSTENANCE FOR THE JOURNEY

Passage of the Week: Luke 4:3-4

**(3) The devil said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." (4) Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.' "**

This week, we join Jesus in His first temptation. After fasting for 40 days and nights, Jesus is hungry. Enter in the devil with a temptation to remedy the pain that comes with deep hunger that Jesus likely felt. Rather than take the bread to alleviate His suffering, Jesus's response asks us an important question this week: "what does it mean that we do not live by bread alone?"

Every journey needs sustenance. Whether it might be a good meal before a long hike or quality time with friends that fills your soul, we all need things that keep us going. They encourage us, sustain us, and propel us through the ups and downs of life. Where are you being sustained on your journey right now? What is the metaphorical "bread" in your life that we put in place of reliance on or trust in God? What does it mean to you to rely on God? Use this week to reflect on the sustenance in your life.

Prayer of the Week:

*God of creation, give me this day my daily bread. Allow the words of the hold hymn speak in my heart: 'As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you.' Teach me rely on you. Sustain me along life's tumultuous paths.*

## Monday, March 6th

“If you are the Son of God...” As Jesus is beginning his ministry, during a time of isolation in the wilderness, Jesus’ core identity is called into question. The devil questions Jesus’ identity as the Son the God, and challenges Jesus to prove himself by miraculously creating food for his hungry body.

In the summer of 2018, I too was in a time of new beginnings. Recently back in the States after two years living abroad, I was also newly married and transitioning into campus ministry for the first time. That summer I was also in season of relative isolation. My husband and I were staying in San Antonio (not our home city) while he completed an internship. He worked full-time at an office, while I attempted (mostly unsuccessfully) to work remotely from our apartment. During this season, I was cut off from my usual community and felt aimless in my work — in a wilderness of my own. And so, when I ran into another woman who was also a campus minister, I was delighted to make a new connection and a potential friend. She asked lots of questions about my work; we exchanged numbers and agreed to meet up again. I was so excited! As we talked more, though, it became apparent that she was “sussing” me out, trying to figure out if my doctrine of Jesus matched her own, and wanting to correct places where she felt I was misguided. For the first time, I realized what it must feel like for many people of other faiths to be made a project by their Christian friend; no relationship, just “fixing.” Deeply disappointed and even angry, I felt a strange need, a hunger, to prove myself. Questions and insecurities plagued me. ‘If you are really saved...’ ‘if you are really fit to lead...’ Despite my resentment, I wanted this woman’s approval.

“If you are the Son of God...”

In the midst of all this, God graciously put this passage before me. With a breath of fresh air, I realized that at no point in the wilderness, does Jesus deign to justify Himself. He replies merely “man does not live on bread alone”, which is a quote from Deuteronomy 8 that continues, “but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” God had already declared who Jesus was at his baptism—a few verses earlier in Luke 3:21-22 — saying “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” That was the sustenance that Jesus needed in this moment of temptation. Not bread to feed his physical hunger, not a miraculous act to increase his credibility, just the certainty that God called Him Son, and loved him. Gratefully, because of Jesus, I too can rest as God’s beloved daughter, with nothing to prove.

What are you trying to prove in this season, and to whom? How might God be inviting you to trust that He is enough?

Catherine Winniford  
Intervarsity Campus Minister

*God of creation, give me this day my daily bread. Allow the words of the old hymn speak in my heart: 'As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you.' Teach me rely on you. Sustain me along life's tumultuous paths.*

## Tuesday, March 7th

We all have things in our lives that seem to fill us up. For some of us it's playing a beloved sport. For others, it's a cup of tea and a good book on a rainy day. Maybe for you, it's as simple as completing all your laundry on a Saturday morning. Whatever it may be for you, the things that "fill us up" are those practices, people, and experiences that recharge us in the midst of hectic class schedules and the onslaught of responsibilities. They fill our soul so that we can propel us through everyday life.

For me in graduate school, long walks around campus with my dog, Albus, were the thing that always helped me reset after a particularly stressful day. We would spend an hour or two walking throughout campus listening to a podcast, trying to chase those pesky squirrels and breathing in the fresh air. Those walks with my dog allowed me space to think about my day. I processed a difficult conversation with my mom. I made mental notes of homework that I needed to complete. Often, I prayed and reflected on God.

During the course of one particularly busy semester, my walks with Albus became increasingly shorter as I raced from class to part-time jobs to hangouts with friends. Our daily hour walk turned into thirty minutes. Those eventually turned into a five-to-ten-minute frisbee session as I raced around campus to move on to the next thing on the agenda. After a few weeks of this wild pace, I found myself losing sleep, stressed, and feeling depleted. What I didn't realize at the time was that I had taken away the one part of the day where I was able to pause, breathe, and simply be. I wasn't able to fill myself up; meanwhile, I kept pouring more and more out to others. I thought I was saving time in order to prioritize other important things going on in my life. Instead, I was keeping myself away from what had become my opportunity to sit in the presence of God. In a sense, I was busy turning stones into bread.

Perhaps you have found yourself in similar situations. In the back and forth of numerous commitments and responsibilities, we forget to prioritize the things that fill us up. Sometimes we do so without even realizing it. In what areas of your life are you too busy turning stones into bread and forgetting to rest in the presence of God. What fills you up and how can you make it a priority during this season of Lent?

I wish I could tell you that I've never missed a long walk with Albus again, but the truth is I haven't. Instead, I strive for my best, and remind myself that I don't live by bread alone.

*Kaleb Loomis  
Assistant Chaplain*

*God of creation, give me this day my daily bread. Allow the words of the old hymn speak in my heart: 'As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you.' Teach me rely on you. Sustain me along life's tumultuous paths.*

## Wednesday, March 8th

Have you ever experienced intense hunger? When I was a college student, I went on a trip with some friends to stay with my friend's grandparents in Colorado. I was severely underprepared for the 15-hour drive and didn't bring any money or snacks for the trip. All I had was a large bag of leftover candy. As the hunger began to set in, I was desperate for any food I could find. In my state of desperation, I relied solely on that bag of candy for my day's sustenance. My stomach was revolting against my poor judgment for the rest of the trip.

When we experience intense hunger, we will look for satisfaction from foods that are detrimental to our health. We will even find foods appealing that have always repulsed us. In this narrative, Jesus has been fasting for forty days and, as you can imagine, He is desperate for sustenance. The devil steps in to offer Jesus a solution to His problem. He is challenging Jesus's unique status as the Son of God and offering Him a way out that is antithetical to His divine mission. As the Son of God, Jesus possessed the power to turn that stone into a loaf of bread, but using His power in this way would ultimately be a failure to trust in God. New Testament scholar Joel B. Green summarizes the tension well, "Will Jesus follow the leading of the Spirit and manifest unwavering trust in God to supply His needs; or will He relieve his hunger by exercising His power apart from God?"[1] The stakes could not be higher. The very promise of redemption is hanging in the balance.

In the power of the Spirit, Jesus refuses the devil's bidding and displays His trust in God by quoting Scripture. Jesus chooses to lay aside His power and walk the path of suffering service. Once again, He is succeeding where we so often fail. Where we are prone to use our power for selfish gain, Jesus uses His power in sacrificial love. Where we look to ourselves in prideful reliance, Jesus looks outside of Himself to the resources that only God can provide. He chooses the Bread of Life over the bread that leads to destruction.

In the Divine Comedy, there is a moment when Beatrice is describing Dante's wayward life on earth. She says that "he turned his footsteps toward an untrue path; he followed counterfeits of goodness, which will never pay in full what they have promised." [2] This is the great temptation that we all face, to follow counterfeits of goodness rather than embracing our true good in God. These counterfeits promise to sustain and fulfill us, but they will always fall short. During this week of Lent, ask yourself the following questions: Where do I run for refuge when I face trial and temptation? What are the things in life that I think will make me "enough"? Where do I put my hope for fulfillment and healing?

*Rev. Fee Kennedy  
RUF-I Campus Minister*

*God of creation, give me this day my daily bread. Allow the words of the old hymn speak in my heart: 'As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you.' Teach me rely on you. Sustain me along life's tumultuous paths.*

[1] Green, Joel B.. The Gospel of Luke, Eerdmans, 1997.

[2] Alighieri, Dante. Purgatorio, canto XXX, line 130.

## Thursday, March 9th

In Luke 4:4, Jesus resists Satan's urging that he use his divine power to satisfy his own material hunger, by turning a stone into bread. In doing so, he invokes Deuteronomy 8:3, which instructs us that "it is not by bread alone that people live, but by all that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord." This is a critical reminder that the essential sustenance for our Lenten journey, and indeed for our entire life's Christian walk, is not made by human hands. It is not ordinary, familiar, or mundane; often, it is not comfortable. Instead, what we are called to seek in our journey, and what sustains us as we grasp it imperfectly along the way, is authentic encounter with the living God: his Word, his Spirit, his transcendence.

Our culture presses us relentlessly toward secularized ways of thinking and speaking—even about things that are fundamentally religious. Thus, for example, Christmas is described as being about "friends, family, and generosity," while Eastertide is a "time of rebirths and renewals," or other such soft, generalized formulations. And, to be sure, these human goods are to be celebrated and cultivated, just as bread is a good to be received appreciatively. While they are necessary, though, they are not sufficient for our true flourishing. They can, when made our chief focus, obscure the miraculous, awe-inspiring, world-changing gifts that we truly celebrate in these holidays: the Incarnation and Resurrection of God-made-man in the person of Jesus Christ. In Lent, the focus of our journey must be the simultaneously glorious and terrible self-gift of Christ on the cross, and our own sinfulness that necessitates this atonement. These are not terms in which we are encouraged to think or speak in our everyday lives—they are not the mundane "bread" to which we are accustomed. But these reflections are the indispensable sustenance for a true Lenten journey.

So what, then, is this food for the journey that "comes forth from the mouth of the Lord?" First, and most obvious, is his Word. Daily scripture reading, even if only a few verses, is vital provision for a Lenten journey. All Christians, regardless of their specific biblical theology, regard the scriptures as inspired by God. "Inspired" means literally "breathed or blown into"; what could more clearly be said to come "from the mouth of the Lord?" Secondly, we should ask God in prayer to send the Holy Spirit to support our Lenten journey of faith. The Holy Spirit is often conceptualized as the *pneuma* or breath of God, and can thus truly be said to "come forth from the mouth of the Lord." Grounded in the Word, inspired by the Spirit, and resolutely focused on the cross, we will be provisioned for a true Lenten journey. These are gifts far greater than bread.

*Dr. Matthew Wilson  
Professor of Political Science  
Director of the Center for  
Faith & Learning*

*God of creation, give me this day my daily bread. Allow the words of the old hymn speak in my heart: 'As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you.' Teach me rely on you. Sustain me along life's tumultuous paths.*

## Friday, March 10th

We have spent the week asking what it means to rely on God. As I think about question, a fear that we might fall into an easy trap, one fails to acknowledge and recognize the true hurt, pain, and suffering that shows up in our lives. When difficulty comes into the lives of our friends, it is easy to tell others, "don't worry, trust in God." Yet relying on God is not always an easy task. When your world has been turned upside down, when it feels like God has abandoned you, relying on God sometimes seems easier said than done amidst confusion, uncertainty, and pain.

Of course, Jesus's life reflects a model of reliance of God, but not one that dismisses the reality of our hurt and pain. While Lent is the season leading up to the cross, I'm reminded of the words that Jesus proclaims on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" If you were not aware, Jesus is quoting the first line of Psalm 22. In this Psalm, the author cries out because of the absence of God. Despite this, the psalmist continuously points back to the faithfulness of God. The Psalmist feels forsaken by God but still places trust in God. When Jesus invokes this line, it is not merely a cry out of abandonment; it carries with it an acknowledgement of hope. Though Jesus feels God forsaken, Jesus trusts in the faithfulness of God.

Relying on God does not mean making light of pain, suffering, and hurt. Instead, we might follow along the words of Psalm 22 and of Jesus. Reliance on God is not a platitude to make ourselves or others feel better; instead, it is a call to remember God's faithfulness in the midst of pain, suffering, and hurt.

*Kaleb Loomis  
Assistant Chaplain*

*God of creation, give me this day my daily bread. Allow the words of the old hymn speak in my heart: 'As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you.' Teach me rely on you. Sustain me along life's tumultuous paths.*

## Saturday, March 11th

On Saturdays throughout Lent, you are invited to participate in a guided prayer practice. Find a quiet place to pause, be still, and read through this prayer. Repeat the prayer or any part of the prayer as many times as you'd like.

### *Opening Invocation*

Holy God, speak to me,  
That I might hear the good news,  
And trust my life into your hands and keeping.  
May I be present now, even as you are present to me.  
Eternal Friend, this is my prayer.

### *Psalms 23*

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
    he leads me beside still waters;  
    he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
    for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
    I fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
    your rod and your staff,  
    they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me  
    in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
    my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
    all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
    my whole life long.

### *Prayer for Others*

Who is on your mind today? Lift them up to God.

### *The Lord's Prayer*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever.

### *Prayer of the Week*

God of creation, give me this day my daily bread. Allow the words of the old hymn speak in my heart: 'As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you.' Teach me rely on you. Sustain me along life's tumultuous paths. Amen.

# WEEK FOUR: WAYFINDING

Passage of the Week: Luke 4:5-8

(5) Then the devil led Him up and showed Him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. (6) And the devil said to Him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. (7) If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” (8) Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him.’”

Wayfinding is a term often used in exploration or traveling. In plainest terms, it encompasses all the ways in which people and animals orient themselves in physical space and navigate from place to place. The second temptation that Jesus asks us to consider what orients our lives. In short, what do we worship? Despite promises of power, glory, and splendor at the cost of worshipping the devil. Jesus's response is a call to worship and serve God alone. What are the priorities in your life? What are you oriented towards? Amidst promises of power, glory, and splendor found in contemporary life, what is our wayfinder to help us navigate it all?

Prayer of the Week:

*God be in my head, and in my understanding. God be in my eyes, and in my looking. God be in my mouth, and in my speaking. God be in heart, and in my thinking. God be at my end, and in my departing. (Adapted from a Celtic Benediction)*

## Monday, March 13th

During this time of wayfinding in my personal life, I am filled with numerous moments of doubt and temptation. And yet it is in those moments that I find true growth from my choices and experiences if I allow myself to lean into what life throws my way. As a first-year student at SMU, the twists and turns are everywhere, and I could easily sway at any given moment. But when I consider my priorities, I can find strength and courage to push forward and stay focused. My aspirations as a college student and my personal goals can feel shaky and insecure at times as there are lots of distractions constantly being presented. And this feeling of disorientation is shared among so many of my friends and peers.

When I look at Luke 4:5-8, not only can I put myself in that moment with Jesus, I can wholeheartedly relate. There is power, greed, and glory surrounding me in this world of privilege I find myself living in, and I am sure many others can relate to this feeling. And as I climb the “mountain” of my own life, power and greed stand in the way of the overall journey to success. Life isn’t a sprint; it is a marathon. What I have learned is that there will be ups and downs throughout the process and experiences that shape who we will become. But it is especially important to enjoy the moments along the way which makes the outcome even more satisfying.

My wayfinding is not only charted by my own personal choices but those of God’s plan for me. Trusting the process and leaning into the lessons being learned along the way only makes us smarter and stronger individuals. It is great that through our experiences as college students we have the ability to make mistakes and learn from the moments of our right and wrong decisions made. This process can only help us realize the ultimate power and glory is delivered directly from God and not from the temptation of distractions. And in our moments of wayfinding can we truly remember to put the devil behind us and “worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.”

*Connor Silva  
Class of 2026*

*God be in my head, and in my understanding. God be in my eyes, and in my looking. God be in my mouth, and in my speaking. God be in heart, and in my thinking. God be at my end, and in my departing.*  
*(Adapted from a Celtic Benediction)*

## Tuesday, March 14th

My prayer companion for this Lenten season is Guinean cardinal Robert Sarah's *The Power of Silence: Against the Dictatorship of Noise* (Ignatius Press, 2017). I will copy below my favorite "Silence is..." statements, lightly edited, from Cardinal Sarah's book, in case others would like inspiration and encouragement to give up noise for Lent as a way of reorienting ourselves towards God.

Silence is not an absence.

Silence is attained in silence and grows in silence.

Silence of the heart is the silence of the passions.

In the silence of the heart, God speaks.

Silence is a divine liberation that unifies us and puts us at the center of ourselves, in the depth of God's mysteries.

True welcome is silent.

Silence is difficult, but it enables us to be led by God.

Silence is more important than any other human work.

God's silence is a consuming fire for those who approach Him.

The silence of eternity is the union of the soul with God.

The Holy Spirit is the first condition for silence.

Silence is a sweet, violent seizure by God.

The silence of love is love in silence.

Silence is a dam that restores a kind of dignity to humanity.

Contemplative silence is a silence of adoration and listening by a person who stands in the presence of God.

Silence is a quest and a form of charity, in which God's eyes become our eyes and God's heart is grafted onto our heart.

Silence is a paradise, but we do not see this right away.

Silence is not the exile of speech. It is the love of the one Word.

In his final moments, nocturnal silence is Christ's companion.

The rejection of silence is a rejection of the love and life that come to us from Jesus.

Silence is the only thing that reveals the depths of life.

Sacred silence is the only truly human and Christian reaction to God when He breaks into our lives.

Silence is the prerequisite for being open to the great answers that will be given to us after death.

Silence is a ladder that is set up on earth and whose top reaches heaven.

*Dr. Denise DuPont  
Professor of Spanish*

*God be in my head, and in my understanding. God be in my eyes, and in my looking. God be in my mouth, and in my speaking. God be in heart, and in my thinking. God be at my end, and in my departing.  
(Adapted from a Celtic Benediction)*

## Wednesday, March 15th

I find it difficult to not worry about money, status, success, and what other people think about me. These are the things I was brought up to worry about. They're valid concerns. When I go to the grocery store and see that eggs are \$5 a carton, I worry about my financial security and not being able to have all of the nice things I'd like out of life. I panic and sign up for an unsustainable amount of overtime.

When I get a grade that was not as high as I anticipated, I worry about my academic success, then spend every waking moment studying, reading and writing, until my apartment is in a state of severe neglect.

When it's Valentine's Day and my family grills me about not having a partner, I let their fears get the better of me and download dating apps, just to spend hours trying to create a perfect profile and swiping through matches, because the truth is I didn't really want to be on them in the first place.

As I go through life, I realize that the things I put my faith and trust in will never sustain me the way I hope. It's not that it's wrong to worry about finances in a recession, or about grades, or about finding connection. It's that I put all of my chips into those baskets and pursue them in a rash, unhealthy way and don't realize it until I've made myself sick from overworking, disoriented in a messy home, or lonely from searching. I find that when I react this way to life's stressors, or temptations, it's because I was treating them as idols. I was giving my time, energy and health to God's that promised security and happiness but could not provide either.

When Jesus was tempted with all of the splendor and glory of the world he stated, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only'" (Luke 4:8, NIV). If Jesus had not been filled with the Holy Spirit and oriented towards the Divine, He might not have found His way out of the wilderness.

I can't help but think that I would react to the temptations and stressors of modern life better if in those hard moments where I'm tempted to panic, if I oriented myself to Christ instead. Maybe during those moments of worry I wouldn't panic as much. Maybe even experience peace.

*Allison Goldsmith  
Perkins Class of 2024*

*God be in my head, and in my understanding. God be in my eyes, and in my  
looking. God be in my mouth, and in my speaking. God be in heart, and in my  
thinking. God be at my end, and in my departing.  
(Adapted from a Celtic Benediction)*

## Thursday, March 16th

The novelist Walker Percy is well-known for his depiction of the human condition as a pilgrimage. Percy contends that we are all wayfarers on a journey and we fall into despair when we lose our pursuit of truth. We all need trustworthy coordinates to guide us in a life toward the good, the true, and the beautiful. The main characters in Percy's novels tend to be disoriented young men looking for purpose, meaning, and identity. The problem is that the modern world is filled with distracting forces that fight for our attention and allegiance, leading to confusion, destruction, and malaise. Percy's novels are filled with amusing and thought-provoking tales of wayfarers on a journey navigating the obstacles of modern life, leading us to ask the question: "How do we find our way?"

In Luke 4:5-8, the devil presents Jesus a certain set of coordinates for navigating life. He is tantalizing Jesus with an offer of power and glory in exchange for His allegiance. He is offering Jesus an alternative kingdom that is a counterfeit of the true kingdom of God. By accepting this offer, Jesus would be abandoning His trust in God and forfeiting his true identity as the Son of God. Once again, the hope of humanity hangs in the balance. Will the savior of the world remain true to his mission or will He give this world over to the destructive forces of evil?

There is something uniquely compelling in the promise of power and glory. We all want to be known and adored. We are all drawn to grasp more power whenever it is offered to us. Power in itself is not inherently bad, but all too often our use of power descends into manipulation and coercion. Where have you been given power in your life? In what ways are you tempted to use your power for your own gain rather than in service of your neighbor?

The good news of this passage is that Jesus chose to lay aside the vain glory of this world and embraced the true glory that comes from God alone. His refusal to accept the offer of the devil is proof that His identity was securely rooted in the love of God. Jesus appeals to the Scriptures to find His coordinates in life. He is finding His way in the midst of the devil's deception by clinging to the true north of God's promises. Because of Jesus's victory, we can be confident as we navigate this world. He has been faithful on our behalf and provides us a perfect example to follow in our wayfinding. In this Lenten season, take time to reflect upon the places you are tempted to forfeit your status as a child of God through faith. Where do you look for your identity outside of the loving embrace of God? Meditate upon God's promises for you and the reliable guide you have in Jesus the Victor.

*Rev. Fee Kennedy  
RUF-I Campus Minister*

*God be in my head, and in my understanding. God be in my eyes, and in my looking. God be in my mouth, and in my speaking. God be in heart, and in my thinking. God be at my end, and in my departing.  
(Adapted from a Celtic Benediction)*

## Friday, March 17th

To begin today, grab a pen and paper (or an electronic means of note taking) and take a few minutes to write out all two lists. On the first list, include three to five things that are most important to your life. These should be the things that you value most. On the second list, write out what you did yesterday. You can be as specific or as general as you want when outlining your schedule, but account for how many hours you spent doing each task. Feel free to round up or down!

In a provocative line his book, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, James K.A. Smith writes that we are what we love, but we may not love what we think. Smith argues that the priorities of our lives show up in the ways that we spend our time and in the things that we do. If you say you value holistic wellness, but never spend time exercising, eating healthy, or attending to your mental health, is holistic wellness actually important to you? Or rather if you say serving your community is important to you, but you rarely volunteer, then maybe community service isn't that big of a priority. While everyone's circumstances are different and things are not always as black and white as the examples given, Smith's proposition challenges us to consider how we spend our time and how that time reflects what's most important to us.

Take a look back at your two lists. Does how you spend your time align with what you say you value the most? If not, perhaps you may consider either reimagining what you consider most important to you or reorienting how you spend your time. To be clear, the ways that we spend our time does not always mean something positive or negative; instead, it reflects what are the priorities in this season of life. Some priorities will change throughout life but take this week to consider whether or not your faith is a current priority in your life based on your time. If not, how might you change your schedule or your daily rhythm to better reflect this priority? How will you need to continue to update both your values and the way you spend time in the future from season to season?

Take a final moment to recite our weekly prayer below. Reflect on these words and what they might mean for you in this season of life.

*Kaleb Loomis*  
*Assistant Chaplain*

*God be in my head, and in my understanding. God be in my eyes, and in my looking. God be in my mouth, and in my speaking. God be in heart, and in my thinking. God be at my end, and in my departing.*  
*(Adapted from a Celtic Benediction)*

## Saturday, March 18th

On Saturdays throughout Lent, you are invited to participate in a guided prayer practice. Find a quiet place to pause, be still, and read through this prayer. Repeat the prayer or any part of the prayer as many times as you'd like.

### *Opening Invocation*

Holy God, speak to me,  
That I might hear the good news,  
And trust my life into your hands and keeping.  
May I be present now, even as you are present to me.  
Eternal Friend, this is my prayer.

### *Psalm 23*

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
    he leads me beside still waters;  
    he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
    for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
    I fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
    your rod and your staff,  
    they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me  
    in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
    my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
    all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
    my whole life long.

### *Prayer for Others*

Who is on your mind today? Lift them up to God.

### *The Lord's Prayer*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever.

### *Prayer of the Week*

God be in my head, and in my understanding. God be in my eyes, and in my looking. God be in my mouth, and in my speaking. God be in heart, and in my thinking. God be at my end, and in my departing. Amen.

(Adapted from a Celtic Benediction)

# WEEK FIVE: EXPECTATIONS

## Passage of the Week: Luke 4:9-12

(9) Then the devil led Him to Jerusalem and placed Him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, (10) for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' (11) and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.' " (12) Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' "

Of all the temptations that Jesus faces, the final one found in this week's passage might be the most difficult to reflect on in our own lives. What does it mean to "put God to the test?" Jesus is tempted to prove His divine Sonship by putting himself in danger knowing that He will be protected. One way we might look at this part of the passage is to ask ourselves, "What do we expect from God?" As we enter the last half of Lent consider the following: What are the expectations that we place on life? How about expectations on a "Christian Life?" What happens when we face unmet expectations? What does "putting God to the test" look like in modern life?

## Prayer of the Week:

*As I wait upon the manifestation of your blessing, keep me patient.  
As I continue to walk your path, keep me hopeful.  
As I remember your exceeding love, keep me joyful.*

## Monday, March 20th

When I was in college, I carried on a regular conversation with one of my classmates about the existence of God. My friend — who had once believed in God but had abandoned his faith years ago — had a strong grasp on the philosophical arguments against God's existence based on the reality of suffering. After nearly two years of discussion, he revealed that his experience of intense suffering as a child was the beginning of the disintegration of his faith in God. His philosophy of God and suffering was inextricably tied to his experience of suffering. His story shows how suffering shapes us and our view of the world in profound ways.

What is your agenda in life? What do you hope to achieve? Whatever it may be, I am quite confident that suffering is probably not on the list— and for good reason! We all face suffering and seek to avoid it at all costs. We have aspirations and expectations for our future and suffering is either a temporary nuisance or an absurd tragedy along the way.

In this passage, the devil is offering Jesus a way out of suffering by proposing a path of divine Sonship that would circumvent the cross. Does Jesus really need to go through with his mission of giving His life as a ransom for many? He is the Son of God after all, surely God would never let Him suffer in this way. Jesus refuses the devil's proposition to put God to the test in this manner. Why? Because it is precisely by choosing the path of suffering that Jesus will bring redemption to the world and manifest His status as the Son of God. As we read in 1 Peter 2:23-24: "When [Jesus] was abused, He did not return abuse; when He suffered, He did not threaten; but He entrusted Himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed."

Suffering is never on our agenda, but suffering can have redemptive power in our lives. We should never excuse injustice or gloss over real pain, but in this fallen world, God works through our suffering to shape us. Just as metal is refined in fire, and plants must undergo painful pruning for their flourishing, we too are conformed to the image of Jesus through trials. How do you view the suffering in your life? In what ways are you experiencing frustration and disappointment on account of your sufferings? How does the example of Jesus inform the way we think about suffering? During this week of Lent, reflect on the suffering of Jesus. Remember that you are not alone in your suffering, Jesus has been there too. He willingly suffered on our behalf to bring a redemption that can never be shaken, no matter what we face.

*Rev. Fee Kennedy*  
*RUF-I Campus Minister*

*As I wait upon the manifestation of your blessing, keep me patient.*  
*As I continue to walk your path, keep me hopeful.*  
*As I remember your exceeding love, keep me joyful.*

## Tuesday, March 21st

Do not put the Lord your God to the test, eh? I hate to say it, but the reason I felt called to write on this topic is because I can't remember a day in my life when I haven't put God to the test. Especially when it comes to expectations, or should I say, premeditated resentments. Walking the Christian path carries some tone of getting something out of it, eternal life perhaps? We give of ourselves and expect something in return. I try to be indirect with it when it comes to my relationship with God because I try to hide my self-centeredness. Yet every time God sees me for who I am, a sinner who is going to sin again.

A couple years back I planned a solo nine-day, three-thousand-mile road trip. During this trip, I met with a friend who had moved out West, and to be honest, I had a crush on them. After visiting for a couple of days, I discovered that my love was unrequited, and it crushed me. The next day on the road, I really let God know that my expectations had not been met. It was there on a picnic bench at a Utah rest stop I heard God's voice say, "give and expect nothing in return". It's taken me a couple years of reflection to make a little sense of that encounter. Today I think God's message was that I wasn't ready for that relationship because I had no handle on how to give without expectations. I'm still learning. I hope my story gives you something to reflect on this week.

*Hunter Barnett  
Perkins Class of 2023*

*As I wait upon the manifestation of your blessing, keep me patient.  
As I continue to walk your path, keep me hopeful.  
As I remember your exceeding love, keep me joyful.*

## Wednesday, March 22nd

### A Prayer as Lent Drags On

We've wandered this Lenten wilderness for five long weeks, O God.

Our intentions were good way back on Ash Wednesday,  
But this fast has gone on too long now.  
When can we have my chocolate/fast food/social media back?

On Ash Wednesday, we expected this fast to draw us closer to You,  
To remind of us of our utter dependence on You,  
To create space – mentally and physically – for time with You,  
And five weeks in, we confess that we question whether this is what You  
expected of us.  
What difference does this fast make when we count down the days  
until it ends?  
So we can return to our gluttonous and frivolous habits.

We desire to know You more fully,  
And to serve You more faithfully  
In this Lenten season, and in every day ahead.

Today, Faithful God, when we are tempted to give up the fast  
Because we know your Love for us does not rest on whatever we've "given  
up" this year  
Remind us of Jesus' strength and clarity in the wilderness.  
Focused on Your Holy Word,  
Confident in Your faithful presence,  
And Committed to disciplined obedience  
That we, too, drawing close to You  
may resist the temptations confronting us,  
remain disciplined in our obedience,  
and be transformed into Your likeness.

We offer this prayer in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who remains with you  
and the Holy Spirit now and forever more. Amen.

*Lisa Garvin  
Chaplain and Minister  
to the University*

*As I wait upon the manifestation of your blessing, keep me patient.  
As I continue to walk your path, keep me hopeful.  
As I remember your exceeding love, keep me joyful.*

## Thursday, March 23rd

I grew up in a deep Christian background knowing that God would always bless me and my life as God's promise in the Bible. There were some tough times to live following Jesus Christ, but I believe that my future life will be better than now. Just as we live in hope of eternal life after death not being satisfied with life in this world, we often expect that God will give us a better future even if we are not satisfied with our life currently. We all have problems in our lives, even if they are all different. We expect God to solve our problems by continuing to pray, serve, and devote our lives. We expect God to work in the way we want God to do as soon as possible. Many Christians leave the church, blaming that they prayed hard to God, but God did not work when they needed. It seems like that we are putting God to the test to show His might "on time." We cannot know the plan and timing of God, and it makes us frustrate to wait for God's working in our matters. God said He would give Abraham a child, but God did not say when or how He would give it.

God sometimes does not tell us when our wilderness will end. The reason why the wilderness of waiting is more difficult and painful is that we have to live in a wait that seems to have no end. We expect Almighty God like a hero to solve problems in the right time. We may think we have waited long enough. It could have been, but we may have to wait a little longer. This is the wilderness waiting. Modern people are even more unfamiliar with waiting. If we have a question, we google quickly. If we want to watch something, we do short and summarized videos. People say to stop being unbearable right now and find a better life. However, this wait is to recognize the sovereignty of God in our life. It is to live trusting God is the only one who knows the time and achieves it. We can desire to finish our wandering, but we cannot test God to work for us right now.

*Eunbyul "Stella" Cho  
Perkins Class of 2023*

*As I wait upon the manifestation of your blessing, keep me patient.  
As I continue to walk your path, keep me hopeful.  
As I remember your exceeding love, keep me joyful.*

## Friday, March 24th

Growing up and in college, I fell in love with the story of Harry Potter like many of my peers. Flying on broomsticks and performing magic in a far-off land was a perfect way for my imagination to help me escape stress in everyday life. Sometimes I wish life were as simple as casting a spell to make whatever I wanted appear. If I'm honest, I wish that's how prayer worked. I wish I could ask God for what I wanted, and it would magically appear. I also happen to be a huge fan of Survivor — yes, the reality TV show from 2000 is still alive and well. With dreams of one day getting to play the game of Survivor, I must admit that asking God for the chance to be on the show has slipped into my prayers at least a time or two. Like a magical incantation, I want to wake up the next day with my bags packed and on a flight to a remote tropical island.

While perhaps a silly example, the passage this week makes me reflect on the other ways I treat prayer like a spell from Harry Potter. If I say the right words in the correct way with a contrite heart, then boom, my prayers will magically appear. While I know this is not how prayer works, I think I sometimes expect it to in the back of my mind — at least I hope it will work out that way. Inevitably, I place expectations on God and get saddened or frustrated when they aren't met. Yet, prayer is not a magic lamp that grants wishes.

To be clear, it is valid and good to ask for things in your life; we see examples of this throughout Scripture and Christian history. Our temptation to pray and expect though is in part — I believe — why we have the Lord's Prayer included in our sacred text. Jesus provides an example for how and what to prayer so that we might be reminded that prayer is not simply petition for the things we want or a magic spell to activate God; it is communication in and with God. It orients us back towards God and who God calls us to be.

The next time you take to prayer, I invite you to consider whether or not you are bringing expectations, or simply are you putting God to the test? If so, sit, be still, and listen in prayer. Come with no expectations. Be still and know that God is.

*Kaleb Loomis*  
*Assistant Chaplain*

*As I wait upon the manifestation of your blessing, keep me patient.*  
*As I continue to walk your path, keep me hopeful.*  
*As I remember your exceeding love, keep me joyful.*

## Saturday, March 25th

On Saturdays throughout Lent, you are invited to participate in a guided prayer practice. Find a quiet place to pause, be still, and read through this prayer. Repeat the prayer or any part of the prayer as many times as you'd like.

### *Opening Invocation*

Holy God, speak to me,  
That I might hear the good news,  
And trust my life into your hands and keeping.  
May I be present now, even as you are present to me.  
Eternal Friend, this is my prayer.

### *Psalm 23*

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
    he leads me beside still waters;  
    he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
    for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
    I fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
    your rod and your staff,  
    they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me  
    in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
    my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
    all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
    my whole life long.

### *Prayer for Others*

Who is on your mind today? Lift them up to God.

### *The Lord's Prayer*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever.

### *Prayer of the Week*

As I wait upon the manifestation of your blessing, keep me patient.  
As I continue to walk your path, keep me hopeful.  
As I remember your exceeding love, keep me joyful. Amen.

# WEEK SIX: MEETING GOD IN THE WILDERNESS

Passage of the Week: Exodus 3:1-6

(1) Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness and came to Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. (2) There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. (3) Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight and see why the bush is not burned up." (4) When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." (5) Then He said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." (6) He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

We have reflected on Jesus's journey in the wilderness throughout Lent, and now, we take some time to explore another story of a man who found himself in a different journey in the wilderness: Moses and the Burning Bush. The story of the burning bush is one of God's faithfulness to the chosen people of Israel and how God works through unlikely people and situations. In short, this week is about reflection on meeting God in places that we might not expect. Where is God showing up in your life this week?

Prayer of the Week:

*God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I confess that too often I fail to see you at work in the world. I fail to stop, pause, and turn aside to the burning bushes you've set before me. Help me to see the holy places where you show up when I least expect it.*

## Monday, March 27th

You wipe the sweat from your brow as the sun beats down upon you. You are hundreds of miles from... I mean, can you even call it home? Many years ago, your life took an unexpected turn. You grew up in luxury, but now, at the crack of dawn each morning, you rouse yourself to tend to an unruly, stubborn, disobedient flock of sheep until nightfall. You struggle to make ends meet. Every single day, the same thing. Over, and over, and over again.

Until today. You are leading your flock by Mount Horeb on the west side of the desolate wilderness when you see something that staggers your imagination. You blink twice. There is a bush ablaze before your eyes. The flames flicker aggressively like serpent tongues, lapping and biting at the dry brambles. Yet, the bush is not consumed! What a miracle! You approach the bush curiously, but suddenly, out of the roaring flames, a Voice thunders. Your name. It rings in your ears. The Voice says, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." As you dumbly slide your sandals off, the Voice roars: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." You turn away, afraid to face Jehovah God.

Think about this story. How often have you found yourself at a place in life that was unexpected? Where things had not gone as planned? Where you thought that everything was ruined? My friend, to experience this is to be human. Surely Moses is experiencing the same thing. Yet, what happens? God meets him where he is.

We encounter God every single day. God speaks through the general revelation of Creation, through the conviction of the conscience, and through the specific revelation in His Scriptures. We cannot encounter this God and remain unchanged; truly, all things are open and laid bare in His sight. Read Hebrews 4:12-13 and meditate upon the unparalleled, intimate knowledge of God. You, dear reader, are never out of God's sight, nor are you escaping His observation. What a comfort in times of worry, anxiety, pain, and suffering!

This comfort is derived from the character of God. He is faithful, immutable, holy, just, sovereign, patient, merciful, gracious, and love. More than that, He IS. God identifies Himself to Moses by saying, "I AM WHO I AM" (Ex. 3:14). God will never cease to be God, and He will never cease chasing after His people, appearing to them in creation, in their conscience, and in His Word (even in the most unexpected times). Let this glorious truth minister to your soul, dear Christian.

To close, read Psalm 23. Pray through each verse and pay special attention to God's unwavering presence in every circumstance and the active role He plays in the passage. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

*Matt Daniel  
Class of 2023*

*God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I confess that too often I fail to see you at work in the world. I fail to stop, pause, and turn aside to the burning bushes you've set before me. Help me to see the holy places where you show up when I least expect it.*

## Tuesday, March 28th

In the mysterious encounter between Moses, the burning bush, and God, God identifies Himself to Moses as “the God of your fathers...the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:6).

In so doing, God teaches Moses (and all of us) that He has a history — He has acted before — we might even say that He has a “reputation.” He reminds Moses that, in the past, He called and guided his ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This reminder is supposed to help Moses see that God is ever-faithful and compassionate and almighty: God remembers the fathers, He remembers His promises to them, and now He comes to their descendants to free them from their slavery to Pharaoh. Even His revealed name—“I Am Who I Am”—confirms His almighty fidelity to His people: past, present, and future. (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 205-207).

God’s almighty fidelity to Moses’ fathers tells Moses that God will accomplish His saving plan in his own life, no matter the circumstances. Moses’ encounters with God’s power against the limited power of Pharaoh, against the afflictions that come with 40 years of wandering in the desert, against the wavering hearts of the Israelites, and against the enemies of the people of Israel, God indeed demonstrates to Moses’ generation His almighty fidelity.

We see the fullest expression of God’s almighty fidelity in Jesus Christ. Jesus’ 40-day desert journey and the temptations that accompany it (mirroring Israel’s 40 years of desert wandering), His suffering and death on the Cross, and His resurrection from the dead prove the everlasting fidelity of God even unto death. God is faithful, God is almighty, God will accomplish His saving plan, no matter the circumstances.

In light of this almighty fidelity, some early Christian writers saw the burning bush as an image of the Church animated by the fire of the Holy Spirit. From age to age, despite persecutions and trials and the follies and sins of some of her members, the Church mysteriously endures and is not consumed. Through the Church, the fidelity of God is made visible until Jesus comes again.

God’s faithful love—from Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob, through Moses, through the death and resurrection of His Son, up through the age of the Church—prompts us not to despair of His providential plan even as we inevitably experience the trials of life in the wilderness of this fallen world. God is almighty, God is faithful, and He rightly demands our trust and obedience. Through His history with our ancestors, He has more than proven His almighty fidelity.

*Fr. Wade Bass  
Chaplain & Director  
Catholic Campus Ministry at SMU*

*God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I confess that too often I fail to see you at work in the world. I fail to stop, pause, and turn aside to the burning bushes you've set before me. Help me to see the holy places where you show up when I least expect it.*

## Wednesday, March 29th

Moses, the son-in-law of a priest, encounters something strange at the mountain of God. You would think he would be a little less surprised. He's the son-in-law of a priest after all, and he had just led a flock of sheep through the wilderness to the mountain of God! I don't believe the mountain got its name for being a plain and mundane mountain. Nevertheless, Moses has a humbling encounter with God as He appears in the burning bush, a bush burning in such a way that brings no harm to the bush.

It's a productive exercise when you're reading the Scriptures to view these characters and their lives as if they are living within you. Are we like Moses when we go to church? Tending to our business as usual not expecting anything really transformative or strange to happen when we walk into the doors of the church, the house of our Lord. I can speak from experience when I say that fifty out of fifty-two Sundays a year, I don't anticipate a transformative encounter at church. Yet I am always surprised and humbled at those two Sundays a year when my soul is opened up to seeing the strange and unconditional love of God. A love that burns without harming what it inhabits. Even better, the loving fire of God brings growth. Like Moses I have to be reminded that the church is holy ground. I have to set aside whatever it is that keeps me between my soul and my God, even if it's my sandals.

*Hunter Barnett  
Perkins Class of 2023*

*God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I confess that too often I fail to see you at work in the world. I fail to stop, pause, and turn aside to the burning bushes you've set before me. Help me to see the holy places where you show up when I least expect it.*

## Thursday, March 30th

When I made the difficult decision at Baylor to forego my dream of being a Southern Baptist preacher in the 1980s, I followed God's call to be a Christian light within collegiate debate. To do that, I needed to be trained in argumentation and debate, and I accepted a graduate assistant position at the University of Kansas to complete a doctorate in communication studies so that I might become a director of debate. From 1990-1994, I struggled to discipline my mind to a wide array of topics such as the Frankfurt school, postmodernism, critical theory, human sexuality, and so many intellectual challenges. Candidly, at times I felt isolated and separated from God. I even felt hostility and judgment about my Christian beliefs within a rather secular academic paradigm.

One of the many ironies of that experience that inspired me was the university logo of the University of Kansas. Created at its founding in 1866, the seal recognizes Moses kneeling at the burning bush. The University of Kansas today acknowledges that the burning bush represents the knowledge of God, and the kneeling Moses is emblematic of our humble relationship to the pursuit of that knowledge. Rhetorical considerations like this one, alongside emerging friendships my wife and I found in Bible studies at Lawrence, Kansas, led me to have renewed hope in God's purpose for my life in a difficult interval of doctoral graduate study.

Moses' encounter with God in the desert as recorded in Exodus 3 is a longstanding reminder that God is with us even in difficult times. God seeks relationship and our enlightenment in moments that may be fresh with recent despair. Out of this experience, God shaped the experiences of the people of Israel leaving the captivity of Egypt. Our minds should be similarly receptive in this season of Lent when our recent history may suggest to us that hope is lost and that God is not before us. This image of Moses helped inspire me to persevere and seek God's truth in the midst of turbulent challenges of my mind in graduate school at the University of Kansas.

*Dr. Ben Voth  
Professor of Rhetoric  
Director of Debate & Speech*

*God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I confess that too often I fail to see you at work in the world. I fail to stop, pause, and turn aside to the burning bushes you've set before me. Help me to see the holy places where you show up when I least expect it.*

## Friday, March 31st

Moses failed. After he killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew, Moses fled to Midian to escape Pharaoh's death penalty. He lost everything he had as an Egyptian prince. While he was staying in the wilderness and keeping the flock of his father-in-law, his heart was broken, and his hope was crushed. He was like a bush in the wilderness which was a low, humble, and fruitless plant. No one paid attention to a bush because it had no flower, fruit, or shade. Whenever Moses looked at a bush, it might have reminded Moses of his situation in the dark place.

However, Moses encountered God at the hopeless and broken place when God showed up to him in a flame of fire out of a bush. Moses thought that he would go over and look at the bush because it was not consumed by the fire. Rather, the bush shone with the fire. When Moses drew near to it, God stopped him and declared the place where Moses was standing holy ground. It was the moment when Moses was transformed from a shepherd of the flock to a shepherd of God's people, the hopeless ground becoming the holy ground. God came to Moses, a mere nobody, and used him to save the Israelites.

The Gospel of John says "Jesus, the true light, was coming into the world and enlightens everyone" (John 1:9). When people believed that holiness is confined to the temple, and hope for salvation is limited to the religious insiders, Jesus, the true light, appeared around the table with prostitutes and in the streets with tax collectors. He made them shine and transformed their broken, hopeless places into holy ground. And those who were given hope and love by Jesus became His followers who deliver the good news to those who have yet to hear and experience it.

When I was nine years old, I was bullied by my classmates for not using swear words. They used foul language to act like "adults" and told me that I should use those words if I wanted to hang out with them. Once I refused, my classmates forced other peers not to talk to me and they even started to hit me. My peace was stolen, and my joy was destroyed. However, my family and I began to spend more time praying together and talking to each other as well as trying to overcome my hardship. In the meantime, God started to use me in ways I could never have imagined. I paid careful attention to those who were also bullied and encouraged them not to lose courage by praying together. When my brokenness was connected with others' brokenness, our hopeless, broken places became our holy ground.

During Lent, I hope all of us experience Jesus, the true light, lighting up our dark places. God will transform our hopeless ground into the holy ground. When we connect our brokenness with others' brokenness, the Holy Spirit will restore our hope, joy, and love.

Daniel Cho  
Perkins Class of 2023

*God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I confess that too often I fail to see you at work in the world. I fail to stop, pause, and turn aside to the burning bushes you've set before me. Help me to see the holy places where you show up when I least expect it.*

## Saturday, April 1st

On Saturdays throughout Lent, you are invited to participate in a guided prayer practice. Find a quiet place to pause, be still, and read through this prayer. Repeat the prayer or any part of the prayer as many times as you'd like.

### *Opening Invocation*

Holy God, speak to me,  
That I might hear the good news,  
And trust my life into your hands and keeping.  
May I be present now, even as you are present to me.  
Eternal Friend, this is my prayer.

### *Psalms 23*

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
    he leads me beside still waters;  
    he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
    for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
    I fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
    your rod and your staff,  
    they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me  
    in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
    my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
    all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
    my whole life long.

### *Prayer for Others*

Who is on your mind today? Lift them up to God.

### *The Lord's Prayer*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever.

### *Prayer of the Week*

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I confess that too often I fail to see you at work in the world. I fail to stop, pause, and turn aside to the burning bushes you've set before me. Help me to see the holy places where you show up when I least expect it. Amen.

# WEEK SEVEN: LOST & FOUND

Passage of the Week: Luke 15:11-24

(11) Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. (12) The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the wealth that will belong to me.’ So he divided his assets between them. (13) A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant region, and there he squandered his wealth in dissolute living. (14) When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that region, and he began to be in need. (15) So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that region, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. (16) He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything. (17) But when he came to his senses he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! (18) I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; (19) I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.” ’ (20) So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. (21) Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ (22) But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. (23) And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate, (24) for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.”

The season of Lent is spent in repentance and remembrance leading up to Holy Week and ultimately Easter morning. As we begin this week, the scripture passage asks us to reflect on God's response to our sin and shortcomings, a response that culminates in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Parable of the Lost Son reminds us of God's unconditional love even when we have lost our way. We have spent this season walking in the wilderness; now we must ask, what does it mean to be lost and found?

Prayer of the Week:

*When I am lost in the wilderness, you find me.*

*When I fail to care for others, you forgive me.*

*When I forget that I am your beloved child, you remind me.*

*Find me. Forgive me. Remind me. Lord God. Amen.*

## Monday, April 3rd

The Parable of the Prodigal Son told in Luke's Gospel is actually the third in a series of stories about lost items. Jesus tells the Parables of the Lost Sheep, Coin, and Prodigal Son in response to criticism from religious leaders, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2b). Simply put, Jesus has the audacity to entertain those who were not "worthy," those who were "impure," those who were on the outskirts of "good society." Yet, Jesus's response to these snide comments includes three stories about God's response to the "lost." This love looks like leaving 99 sheep behind to find one lost one. This love looks like overturning the entire house to find one lost coin. And this love looks like a joyous feast when the son who left home seemingly without care for his family finds his way back. This love searches for the lost and rejoices upon their return.

Through these stories, Jesus reiterates that the Kingdom of God is where the lost are found. Regardless of their life's journey, anyone has the opportunity to return home. While it may be suggested that these three stories help emphasize and reiterate Jesus's response to the religious leaders, I wonder if all three's inclusion might also have a different audience in mind. Perhaps, you and I need all three stories because we are the ones that need to hear the message. We are lost sheep, coin, and son. Too easily, we forget that we are the beloved children of God. We feel we are too broken, too worthless, and too mistake-prone to be such. We need each story to be reminded that God's love welcomes us back home regardless of where our journey has taken us before now.

I imagine that Jesus's message was hard for these religious leaders to hear, but is it a message that you can hear for yourself? Today, I invite you to re-read the entirety of Luke Chapter 15 with a new lens. Rather than Jesus responding to the religious leaders, read Jesus's words as a response to you. As we celebrate Holy Week, remember that Jesus's march towards the cross is from the same love that welcomes you back, even when you feel lost. Remember that you are a beloved child of God.

*Kaleb Loomis*  
*Assistant Chaplain*

*When I am lost in the wilderness, you find me.*  
*When I fail to care for others, you forgive me.*  
*When I forget that I am your beloved child, you remind me.*  
*Find me. Forgive me. Remind me. Lord God. Amen.*

## Tuesday, April 4th

It's never too late to come home.

In my work as a hospital chaplain, I often find myself saying this. And yet so many people need to hear it.

Throughout our lives, many things can fracture our relationship to our Creator. Sometimes life events tragically unfold. Sometimes a conscious choice to separate ourselves is made. We can become distant, but we're not always aware of this distance. It can take years to realize how far away we are and what we are missing. The distance between us and God can feel like chasm has opened, splitting our lives in two. How are we supposed to repair a relationship that truly is that damaged?

I love the Parable of the Prodigal Son because it shows us how. In the parable, the father is "filled with compassion" and celebrates his son's return. The son approaches with regret and humility, but his father welcomes him with open arms.

One of my favorite details from this passage is in Luke 15:14, and it's one that is commonly overlooked. There is a famine in the country where the Son relocated. It's not the son's fault that he "began to be in need." In fact, the son "hires himself out" and does what he can to support himself. It's not enough. None of this is the son's fault. The son is literally doing what he can to stay alive before he hits rock bottom.

Like the father in the parable, God is always reaching for us. We need only turn towards our Infinite Parent once again and accept the love that is freely given.

Those who are separated from God, by life events or even conscious choice, should not be blamed. We choose to worship a loving and forgiving God who is always ready to celebrate us when we decide to start the journey back home. It's never too late.

*Sara Cowley  
Perkins Class of 2024*

*When I am lost in the wilderness, you find me.  
When I fail to care for others, you forgive me.  
When I forget that I am your beloved child, you remind me.  
Find me. Forgive me. Remind me. Lord God. Amen.*

## Wednesday, April 5th

In his defense, he only wanted to get us home faster. But, as it turns out, sugar cane can be as tricky to navigate as corn.

We were coming home from a “missionary get-together”— a meeting of religious workers gathered for a week of community and fellowship. This was the highlight of our year as we saw old friends, made new ones, and explored new parts of the island we hadn’t yet seen. This year, we had met in a town at the utmost tip of Luzon. It had been everything we had anticipated, and we were sad to say our goodbyes, knowing we wouldn’t see our friends for another year.

But, leave we did. We tossed our bags into the bed of our blue Isuzu pick-up and started the long drive home. And, somewhere in between hugs, handshakes, “goodbyes,” and “drive safes!”, a fateful piece of information was relayed to my father— if he cut through a particular sugar cane field, he could shave an hour off the drive home.

And, with that, our fate was sealed.

No parent could resist the temptation to reduce the closing drive of a family trip by 20%, especially not when that journey was undertaken in sweltering tropical heat in a car with no air-conditioner. He would have been a fool not to use this information, right?

But the intel was bad, or at least unactionable. And the consequences were dire.

When the time came to take the turn off the highway, we did it. We entered the sugarcane field. Over the objections of my mom, in spite of the realization that the cane was about to be harvested (and, thus, quite tall), in full knowledge that our map didn’t include a way through the field.

And we got lost.

I won’t bore you with the details. Needless to say, it included a lot of louder-than-normal conversations between my parents, fussy children, sun headaches, interminable hunger, sweat-drenched clothing, and lots of U-turns. It also included a 4-hour drive home after we got back to the highway.

In the moment, being lost was far from enjoyable. It tested the resolve and goodwill of every person sweating in the truck. And yet, in spite of it all, it has become one of our fondest family stories to tell. It was a moment of bonding, an afternoon of character building, and has provided us with years of entertainment.

On our spiritual journey, it is easy to become overwhelmed when we are lost. To believe that the moment will never end. That it is, in fact, no moment at all, but our state of being. It can feel impossible to keep perspective. To believe that there is no way out. That “lost” is all there is.

But we are reminded by the story of the Lost Son that this too shall pass.

That Love and Beauty go before us, walk with us, and eagerly await us on the other side of “lost.”

*Jon Carman*  
*Religious Life Coordinator*

*When I am lost in the wilderness, you find me.*  
*When I fail to care for others, you forgive me.*  
*When I forget that I am your beloved child, you remind me.*  
*Find me. Forgive me. Remind me. Lord God. Amen.*

## Thursday, April 6th

My church in Mississippi did a Drive Through Holy Week Re-enactment – kind of like a Live Nativity at Christmas, but this was scenes from the last week of Jesus’ life. It was a pretty major production, and I was in charge. Different Sunday School classes participated by reenacting different moments in the last week of Jesus’ life.

On Good Friday, faithful church members gathered at the church in the late afternoon to prepare these outdoor scenes and offer to neighbors who would drive through our parking lot an experience of Christ’s Passion. The focal point, of course, was the crucifixion on the front lawn. Everyone who drove by on the way home saw one of our youth with his arms open wide on the cross, two soldiers standing guard and two young women, grieving at the foot of the cross. Those who chose to turn into the parking lot would see the Palm Sunday scene – young families, waving their palm branches, shouting “Hosanna,” as Jesus walked through with a live donkey named Jack.

The next scene was tucked away, almost out of sight, with two disciples sleeping on a large rock and Jesus a few feet away praying that this cup would be taken from him. As you continued on the teenagers, who led a Maundy Thursday service the previous night, were sitting at a long table eating grapes and pita bread, recalling Jesus’ Last Supper with his disciples. Beyond that was the trial before Pontius Pilate, with a crowd yelling, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”.

Just before making the turn out of the parking lot toward the cross, the older adult class depicted the Road to Calvary in still life – holding papier-mâché stones as Jesus carried the cross on his shoulder. Finally, neighbors turned left out of the parking lot and toward their homes to see Jesus hanging on the cross. It was dusk on Good Friday, and we traveled home to wait...

I think of that Drive Through Holy Week Re-enactment each year. It was a lot of work, and quite honestly I thought it was a little “over the top.” But it forever shaped my understanding of humanity and God’s unconditional love for us. One year, as I was doing the final set-up and people were taking their places in each scene, our first guest arrived. All the participants in the scenes are dressed in Biblical times attire, but I was in cutoff shorts and a t-shirt. When the first car turned in, as the sun was beginning to set, I hid in the grass somewhere between the Garden of Gethsemane and Trial before Pontius Pilate. Lying there, it was mostly quiet, but I could faintly hear the “Hosannas” of the families in the Palm Sunday scene, and I could hear the shouts of “Crucify him!” at the Trial scene. And I realized... in one week the crowds went from celebration to condemnation. Yet, Jesus remained steadfast in his love for the world... even to death on a cross.

*Lisa Garvin  
Chaplain and Minister  
to the University*

*When I am lost in the wilderness, you find me.  
When I fail to care for others, you forgive me.  
When I forget that I am your beloved child, you remind me.  
Find me. Forgive me. Remind me. Lord God. Amen.*

## Good Friday, April 7th

While studying abroad in London during college, I made a trip out to the English countryside, to Braintree, England. Braintree happened to be town where the first Loomis immigrant to the English American colonies grew up. Joseph Loomis set off for a foreign land in the early 1600s, and now I had returned in 2013 to learn more about where my family had come from. I chose to take one of our few free days to go and see if I could find remnants of my family history, hoping to have a transcendental journey along the way to share with my dad. I planned to visit the town library, tour the historical center, and, if I was lucky, find a graveyard with a Loomis headstone. There was one problem though, and I only realized it after my 2-hour train trip to Braintree. I forgot it was New Year's Day... and most places were closed.

Frustrated and defeated, I walked around town hoping to make the most out of this trip, lamenting that I hadn't chosen to spend the day with friends back in London. While I got to see the church that Joseph Loomis was baptized in and locate some historical landmarks, my goal of finding a mystical connection to the past was slipping through my fingers. On top of all this, I did not have cell service and thus no map to navigate around town. So, I started walking hoping to find something, upset at myself, and honestly upset at God. Recently, my life had hit a couple of unexpected bumps in the road and several unmet expectations. This trip was another event in a series of disappointments. Lost both physically and spiritually, I wanted God to show up and save me.

As it happens, I stumbled across a graveyard during one of my most intense mental rants at myself and God. Here was my magic moment that would make this whole trip worth it. Yet after an hour of searching and even a glance at records dating back to the 1700s, I had no luck in finding my transcendental connection, just another disappointment. I stumbled back towards the train station, lost my way, and missed my train. I was lost and God was nowhere to be heard or seen.

I wonder if this was how the disciples felt on the day we call "Good" Friday. Their teacher, their promised Messiah, was suffering on a cross. Did they feel lost too? Were they waiting for a miracle at the final moment that would turn their fortunes around? Were they waiting for God to show up and save them too? While their miracle would arrive in three days, the story of Good Friday asks us to sit in a state of being lost. Jesus is dead. Hope seems to be gone. We are lost without Christ. There is no Easter Sunday without Good Friday.

Thankfully, I eventually made it back to London safe and sound later that night. Now it's a great story of the time I almost got lost in the English countryside. Ten years later, I don't look back on that trip with the sadness or frustration. I see the shared community of disciples, telling me, "we've been there too." I'm reminded that even when I feel lost, I'm not alone. I just need to wait a few more days. Until then, I sit with good company.

*Kaleb Loomis  
Assistant Chaplain*

*When I am lost in the wilderness, you find me.  
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When I forget that I am your beloved child, you remind me.  
Find me. Forgive me. Remind me. Lord God. Amen.*

## Saturday, April 8th

On Saturdays throughout Lent, you are invited to participate in a guided prayer practice. Find a quiet place to pause, be still, and read through this prayer. Repeat the prayer or any part of the prayer as many times as you'd like.

### *Opening Invocation*

Holy God, speak to me,  
That I might hear the good news,  
And trust my life into your hands and keeping.  
May I be present now, even as you are present to me.  
Eternal Friend, this is my prayer.

### *Psalm 23*

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
    he leads me beside still waters;  
    he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
    for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
    I fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
    your rod and your staff,  
    they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me  
    in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
    my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
    all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
    my whole life long.

### *Prayer for Others*

Who is on your mind today? Lift them up to God.

### *The Lord's Prayer*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever.

### *Prayer of the Week*

When I am lost in the wilderness, you find me.  
When I fail to care for others, you forgive me.  
When I forget that I am your beloved child, you remind me.  
Find me. Forgive me. Remind me. Lord God. Amen.

# HAPPY EASTER!

## **He has Risen!**

Thank you for journeying along with us throughout this Lenten season. We hope it has been one of rest and reflection. Lent ends with Easter Sunday, and the story of Easter is the story of God's redemptive work in a broken, imperfect world. We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God incarnated, whose life and death demonstrated God's unconditional love to humanity. In Christ's resurrection, we learn that life is more powerful than death, that hope springs forth like the new dawn even after the darkest of nights.

We invite you to continue to use this guide in future. Whether we are in the season of Lent or not, we will find ourselves out in the wilderness wandering, encountering God, and sometimes, getting lost. Grace and Peace to you this Easter. We all can shout out, "He is risen. He is risen, indeed!"

## **Thank You**

This guide could not have been completed without the hard work of all who contributed to it. We are grateful for those who wrote a devotional and those who helped in crafting and reviewing this guide. We look forward to the ways in the future that the Christian community at SMU will offer shared expressions of our collective faith.

