

A SUFFERING SAVIOR

A DEVOTIONAL
FOR LENT 2020



CONTENTS:

Introduction	3
1st Week of Lent	4
2nd Week of Lent	5
3rd Week of Lent	6
4th Week of Lent	7
5th Week of Lent	8
Palm Sunday	9
Holy Thursday	10
Good Friday	11
Holy Saturday (Easter Vigil)	12
Resurrection Sunday	13
Appendix A	14

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Lent! Lent is a Christian season that invites the Church to focus on who God is and who we are in contrast. God is holy and we are sinners in need of salvation. Thankfully, Christ has reconciled us to God by His body and blood; He has paid the penalty of sin - death. Through our faith, we are sinners who have turned from sin (repented) and are living close to God.

At the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday, ashes are placed on foreheads acting as a visible reminder of the value of repentance that leads to life with God instead of the wrath of God. It connects back to the Old Testament's culture of ashes and sackcloth in times of mourning, especially for having sinned against God. While the Church focuses primarily on our new life in Christ, our spiritual life can be deepened as we remember our personal need for a Savior.

The Lenten season stretches over 46 days (the Sundays over the six weeks are excluded totaling the 40 days of Lent). If used wisely, Lent can be a reflective journey and an introspective look into our hearts and our absolute need for Christ as Savior and Lord.

Over the days ahead, may you rediscover Jesus as an all-sufficient Savior and the Victor over Satan and death. By His body and blood, we are saved!



1ST WEEK OF LENT

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.

(Mark 1:1 NIV)

ARE YOU READY? HERE WE GO!

From February 26 through March 1, read the Gospel of Mark 1-2.

As you read, you may notice that the Nativity story is absent. Mark's goal was to tell the story of a suffering Savior to Gentiles, so He jumped over Christ's birth that was less important to non-Jews. Instead, Mark launched the story at the revelation of Jesus as God's anointed Son who is the Christ (Messiah). From there, we immediately witness Jesus' authority to preach, heal, and teach.

“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

(Mark 1:15 NIV)

PRAYER - May Your Word be upon my mind, my lips, and my heart. Speak, Lord, your servant is listening. Amen.

2ND WEEK OF LENT

“The seed scattered on good soil are those who hear the word and embrace it. They bear fruit, in one case a yield of thirty to one, in another case sixty to one, and in another case one hundred to one.”

(Mark 4:20 NIV)

From March 2 through March 8, read Mark 3-4.

After you read this week’s passage, reflect. Is Christ calling you to follow Him in a specific way? Is He inviting you to receive Him? Is He challenging you to grow up in His Word and seek a deeper faith? Feel free to take time to sit in silence or take a walk as you ponder God’s message and seek His deep peace.

“Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace, be still!’ And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.”

(Mark 4:39 NKJV)

PRAYER - May Your Word be upon my mind, my lips, and my heart. May it grow up and bear fruit within me. Amen.

3RD WEEK OF LENT

“Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.”

(Mark 6:50 NKJV)

From March 9 through March 15, read Mark 5-6.

Jesus holds authority over sin and death. He has driven out demons and healed the sick, yet people continually reject Jesus as the Christ. As you read this week, reflect on who Jesus is to you. How far would you go to stay faithful to Christ amid opposition?

“Don’t be afraid; just believe.” (Mark 6:36b NIV)

PRAYER - May Your Word be upon my mind, my lips, and my heart. May my faith in your identity, words, and works be renewed within me. Amen.

4TH WEEK OF LENT

“But who do you say that I am?”

(Mark 8:29 NKJV)

From March 16 through March 22, read Mark 7-9.

In Mark 7-9, Jesus begins to point us to Calvary and the Good News that all who believe in Him as Savior are accepted by God. When He feeds the 4000, we are reminded that He is the Messianic Bread of Life. All who partake of Him (believe in Him) will never hunger for righteousness. Do you believe, and will you take up your cross and follow Christ in an age when it is not popular to stand up for the truth of Christ?

“The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” (Mark 9:31 NIV)

PRAYER - May Your Word be upon my mind, my lips, and my heart. Teach me afresh that we do not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Amen.

5TH WEEK OF LENT

Jesus said, “Go, your faith has healed you.” At once he was able to see, and he began to follow Jesus on the way.

(Mark 10:52 CEB)

From March 23 through March 29, read Mark 10.

While heading towards Jerusalem, Jesus teaches His kingdom’s culture that is blessed through a life of faith - commitment, trust, benevolence, simplicity, surrender, humility, and servanthood. While in Jerusalem, Jesus will emphatically live out these qualities culminating in His crucifixion and Resurrection. Mark places these teachings amid one of Jesus’ Messianic prophecies foretelling His death and resurrection (10:32-34) that makes the kingdom life possible in us.

Finally, we see that faith in Christ brings sight to the blind. This is an important contrast preceding Mark 11 (Jesus’ triumphant entry on Palm Sunday) where Jerusalem will blindly overlook the truth of Christ’s Kingdom message and Messianic identity.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45 NIV)

PRAYER - May Your Word be upon my mind, my lips, and my heart. Deepen my understanding of You and Your kingdom. May my life exemplify the culture of Your kingdom. Amen.

PALM SUNDAY

“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”

(Mark 11:9b NIV) (Ref. Psalm 118:26)

From March 30 through April 8, read Mark 11-13.

In Mark 11, Jesus enters Jerusalem to the cheers of the masses who are looking for political salvation. They are blind to Christ's identity and purpose in Jerusalem - spiritual salvation. They are not bearing the fruit of faith. This point is re-emphasized as Jesus curses the fig tree for not producing fruit and when He sternly teaches the Pharisees and Sadducees. We are also reminded that the Return of Christ is preordained by God and will be favorable for those who have received spiritual salvation through believing in Christ.

“Haven't you read this passage of Scripture:

‘The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes?’”

(Mark 12:10-11 NIV)

PRAYER - May Your Word be upon my mind, my lips, and my heart. Help me know You better through Your Words in Holy Scripture. Breathe fresh wind upon my faith. Amen.

HOLY THURSDAY

*“Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?
‘I am,’ said Jesus.”*

(Mark 14:12 NIV)

Today, April 9, is Holy Thursday. [Read Mark 14.](#)

As Jesus celebrates the Passover with His disciples on the day before His crucifixion, He identifies Himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. However, Mark contrasts this Good News against the continued disbelief amongst those Jesus had come to save.

Mark 14 is an invitation for us to see our own weaknesses and brokenness in the story’s characters. At the same time, we are reminded that Christ’s body and blood make us whole (i.e. salvation). He heals our brokenness and mercifully invites us to live in God’s Kingdom with Him.

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them. (Mark 14:22-25 NIV)

PRAYER - May Your Word be upon my mind, my lips, and my heart. Thank you for being the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Have mercy on me. Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY

They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him.

(Mark 15:17 NIV)

Today, April 10, is Good Friday. Read Mark 15.

On this dark day, the KING dies. He is mocked, flogged, rejected, and crucified, but He does not let that stop Him from fulfilling His purpose. Since before the foundation of the world, He has had an appointed time to die for the world He loves - a world broken and separated from God in their sin. As you read this darkest moment in the Story, notice the love that is also being pictured through the cross, the veil in the temple, and Jesus' caregivers. Even in the darkest hour, God's love is at work for His glory.

And they crucified him. (Mark 15:24a NIV)

PRAYER - May Your Word be upon my mind, my lips, and my heart. Thank you for giving Your life so that I may live. Continue to give me forgiveness and freedom through Your sacrifice. Amen.

As part of tomorrow's worship, you will be invited to fast breakfast and lunch. If you are unfamiliar with fasting, please read *Appendix A* for guidance.

HOLY SATURDAY

EASTER VIGIL

He was pierced because of our rebellions and crushed because of our crimes. He bore the punishment that made us whole; by his wounds we are healed. Like sheep we had all wandered away, each going its own way, but the Lord let fall on him all our crimes. He was oppressed and tormented, but didn't open his mouth. Like a lamb being brought to slaughter, like a ewe silent before her shearers, he didn't open his mouth. (Isaiah 53:5-7 CEB)

Today, April 11, is Holy Saturday. We will step out of Mark and go read Isaiah 53.

On this solemn day, we turn our ears to the prophet Isaiah and hear God's plan to deliver His people from exile through a suffering servant of the people. Though Isaiah was writing about someone who would deliver Israel from exile in Babylon, God also intended these words to point towards Jesus, the Suffering Savior. His work through the cross would bring deliverance. Through Christ's death, we are no longer exiled from God in sin. We are brought home into a relationship with God where He dwells within us.

As we read today and await Christ's resurrection, do so with a prayerful and empathetic spirit. Give thanks to God for His saving love. He has given us peace and hope we could never experience on our own. **FASTING** - Consider fasting breakfast and lunch today as an act of spiritual worship.

PRAYER - May Your Word be upon my mind, my lips, and my heart. Deepen my thankfulness for Your sacrifice and the work that You have done and continue to do in my life. Amen.

RESURRECTION SUNDAY

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here.”
(Mark 16:6a NIV)

Today, April 12, is Resurrection Sunday and we will conclude Mark’s Gospel by reading Mark 16.

Mark’s resurrection story is succinct and focuses on the contrast between belief and unbelief. The goal of his Gospel story is beautifully revealed in this final chapter’s cliffhanger. Will his audience believe and accept the Good News of eternal salvation through the resurrected Christ, or will they reject God’s Son and be condemned to eternity without God? Will they accept Christ’s commission to go preach this Good News to the world? This cliffhanger prompts us to consider our response as we finish reading Mark’s Gospel on this Easter Sunday.

What is your answer?

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” (Mark 16:5 NIV)

PRAYER - May Your Word be upon my mind, my lips, and my heart. Fill my heart with an abundant joy today as I celebrate the resurrection of our Savior, Your Son, Jesus Christ. Praise God from whom all blessings flow! Amen.

Appendix A

A Primer on Fasting

Fasting is Not:

Fasting is not a way to earn God's favor or guarantee Him into answering prayer. Fasting is not a spiritual way of losing weight or a means to display our self-righteousness or play the part of the martyr. (2 Samuel 12:16-20; Isaiah 58:3-7; Matthew 6:16; Luke 18:9-14)

Fasting is:

Fasting is a voluntary act of personal worship. It can be practiced by worshippers who mourn and need to repent from wrongdoing. It may also be done as a prayerful means of pleading for grace-filled strength and perseverance to remain faithful to God's will. (Ref. 1 Samuel 7:6; Nehemiah 1:4; Esther 4:16; Acts 13:2-3). In the Old Testament, fasting literally meant 'to cover the mouth'. In the New Testament, fasting had its roots in abstinence from food and/or drink. It was an act of humbling one's soul, deepening their intimacy with God. It occurred through self-denial and reaffirms the need to lay down our life and its desires so that we may receive God's abundance through grace. (Matthew 4:4)

Fasting is a time-bound season to offer God "the time and attentiveness we might otherwise be giving to eating, shopping, or watching television" (Calhoun, 2015, p. 246). We sacrifice our creaturely comforts and lay down those desires as an expression of our faith believing God to be the ultimate supplier of our needs. "During Lent, fasting reminds the church of how Jesus gave up everything—even his life—for us" (p. 246) so that we could find life in Him. We "set aside a little comfort so we can listen and attend to the voice and nourishment of God alone. For God can give us grace and comfort and nurture we cannot get on our own" (p. 247).

Practicing Fasting:

- Ask God what would be appropriate for you to fast from during the period of the fast (e.g. food, liquid, social media, television, etc.).
- If food, fast in an appropriate manner given your current health condition. Respect your health needs and stay hydrated. Drink the appropriate amount of water.
- If liquid, do not exceed fasting beyond three days.
- Check your motive for fasting. Are they pure?
- When hunger pains or the longing for what you're fasting from sets in, turn your emptiness to the nourishment that comes from God. Take that time to prayerfully focus on your reason for fasting.
- Talk to God. Share your thoughts and feelings with Him. Consider telling Jesus what it means for you to share in His sufferings and what His self-denial means to you. What might God be wanting you to learn about Him during this fast? Maintain a posture of listening to God.
- Praise God. (Psalm 103:1-5)

References

Calhoun, A. A., (2015). *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*. (Revised and Expanded). IVP Books: Downers Grove, IL

