

**FEBRUARY DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET**

*2018*

# **From Ashes to Fire**

*A Lenten-to-Pentecost Devotional Collaboration between  
Ascension Lutheran Church, Grace Lutheran Church,  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church and Christ the King  
Lutheran Church and Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church  
ELCA*

## **ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH**

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*A Community of Grace, Called to Serve*

The following devotional is a collaborative effort among five

ELCA congregations in Co. Springs, including; Ascension Lutheran Church, Grace Lutheran Church, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Christ the King Lutheran Church and Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church. We are grateful to be brothers and sisters in Christ and able to connect in efforts such as this Lenten to Pentecost Devotional.

*Sincerely,*  
Deacon Mary Stoneback  
Ascension Lutheran Church

### **LENTEN MID-WEEK SCHEDULE**

#### **JOIN US @ ALC**

Feb. 14 Ash Wednesday Services – 12 pm, 7 pm  
Wednesdays, beginning Feb. 21 – March 21  
6PM – Soup Suppers, 7PM – Lenten Mid-Week Service

#### **JOIN US @ GRACE**

Feb. 14 Ash Wednesday Service - 12 pm, 7 pm  
Wednesdays, beginning Feb. 21 – March 21  
5:30PM – Soup Supper, 6:15PM – Holden Evening Prayer

#### **JOIN US @ CHRIST THE KING**

Feb. 14 Ash Wednesday Service – 6 pm  
Wednesday, beginning Feb. 21 – March 21  
6PM – Soup Supper and Joyous Light Evening Prayer

#### **JOIN US @ PRINCE OF PEACE**

Feb. 14 Ash Wednesday Service – 7 pm  
Wednesdays, beginning Feb. 21 – March 21  
Soup Suppers & Spiritual Disciplines

#### **JOIN US @ Mt. CALVARY**

Feb. 14 Ash Wednesday Service – 6PM  
Wednesdays, beginning Feb. 21 – March 21  
6PM – Soup Supper, 7PM – Lenten Worship Service

## **WEEK OF ASH WEDNESDAY**

## Isaiah 58:1-14

The Scripture Reading for February 14-17

*The Lord Does Not Desire Fasting, But Kindness and Justice*

<sup>1</sup>Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. <sup>2</sup>Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God.

<sup>3</sup>“Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?” Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. <sup>4</sup>Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. <sup>5</sup>Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? <sup>6</sup>Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? <sup>7</sup>Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

<sup>8</sup>Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. <sup>9</sup>Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,<sup>10</sup> if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. <sup>11</sup>The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters

never fail.<sup>12</sup>Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

<sup>13</sup>If you refrain from trampling the sabbath, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day; if you call the sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs; <sup>14</sup>then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

### **Wednesday February 14, 2018 – Ash Wednesday**

Isaiah 58:1-14

God has one of the greatest senses of humor- ever.

This year is a shining example. Not only is today, February 14<sup>th</sup> Ash Wednesday, but it is also Valentine's Day. Hmmm... Then, Easter Sunday falls on April 1<sup>st</sup>!!! No kidding! This is the first time this has happened since 1945 and it will happen again in 2029. Of course, there was 1956, which almost had the same occurrence, yet it was a leap year, so Ash Wednesday happened on Valentine's Day, yet Easter Sunday did not fall on April Fool's Day.

Why do I share this with you on Ash Wednesday?

Well, it's been said that laughter is the best medicine. Then, perhaps I need to attend more comedy shows and watch more comedy on television. Or, perhaps I need to attend to more of how God laughs when I get in the way of God's love for me and others.

The love of God is so much like a parent. When I think God is going to punish me, God gives me mercy and kindness. I think I'm doing the Lord's work and then, because of what God has done and is doing in Christ, I find I'm being led in a more wonderful, and faithful, adventure. Like a loving parent, watching

a child make already well-known mistakes, God is watching how we try to take control, thinking we are following God's leading, only to be surprised how God brings us back to where we need to be.

Isaiah says that those who live justly and who delight in God are like well-watered gardens, satisfied and strengthened by God in a parched land. The beginning of our 40-day Lenten journey can feel like entering a parched land. The words of Isaiah give us that gift of remembrance and refreshment.

Those who feed the hungry, help the oppressed toward freedom, and comfort the afflicted find themselves sustained by God. In a disconcerting way, Isaiah links doing justice with taking delight in the Sabbath and being fruitful with finding joy in God. As the ashes are placed on my head today, I especially need that reminder. Just like I'll need that reminder on April Fool's, err, Easter Sunday.

God's blessing on your journey from Ashes to Fire...

~ Pastor Dave Cruson  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

**Thursday, February 15, 2018**

Isaiah 58:1-14

“You talkin’ to me?” (This line is from the 1976 movie Taxi Driver)

How does God get my attention? Do I respond by asking God if He is talking to me? Isaiah's words in verse 1 tell Isaiah to “shout out—do not hold back.” How would we react if a person came into a worship service and told us what God has to say about our behavior? None of us like to be scolded. Would we resent the words that come from the Lord through Isaiah's mouth? “I'm really not so bad, God. Look at all I do. I fast, I sit in sackcloth and ashes. .” Am I self-righteous?

What is God's response? It is similar to Jesus' words in Luke 18:9-14 about the tax collector (also called the Publican) and the Pharisee. Essentially, Jesus and Isaiah said that we are to focus on why we do our observances and not just on the observance itself. Do our actions match our words? Do we oppress our workers and quarrel and fight after we piously fast? Do we outwardly observe but inwardly seek our own praise and self-righteousness and go our own ways?

Thanks be to God that Jesus is our Way and our Righteousness.

**Prayer:** *Gracious God, as we journey from the self-examination of Ash Wednesday to the triumphant victory of Easter, help us see that all righteousness is a free gift graciously given by you through the death and resurrection of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. In His name, Amen.*

~Donna Skovgaard,  
Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church

**Friday, February 16, 2018**

Isaiah 58:1-14

I was raised in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and I know that my conservative father believed God was present in each one of our days, to be thanked and praised. He firmly believed the Psalm 118:24: This is the day the Lord hath made.

My father revered Sundays and church holidays and we, his family, did very little work on them. The one additional day my father was adamant about keeping holy was Good Friday. We sat and read our bibles from noon to 3:00 pm each Good Friday. As a 6-year-old, three hours was an eternity. There were only four accounts of the crucifixion in the Gospels to read and re-read in those three hours.

As I have matured, I have come to realize what my father was modeling for his children. Good Friday was special, the day Christ died for our sins, the moment that Grace came into our lives. I raised my children not with three hours of quiet, but with the understanding that God is in each day, loving us abundantly and unconditionally. I thank God for my father's faith as it influences future generations to look for God in each day.

**Prayer:** *Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your gift of new days filled with your presence. We thank you for our earthly fathers as they model your love. We ask this in the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.*

~Jean Bruns  
Christ The King Lutheran Church

**Saturday, February 17, 2018**

Isaiah 58:1-14

In the chosen scripture for the start of this series, God's lesson addresses "the fast". It might be a surprise to some that this is not the "I'll give up chocolate for Lent" type of fast. Old Testament followers had serious duties around fasting, and they expected return on their actions: quid pro quo.

But God has a different expectation, as explained by Isaiah. How about giving and reaching out to those that need the most? When you really look at that type of giving, it may actually involve the decision to do without and pass that forward. Do we need that Starbuck's every morning [to use a modern reference], or can that money be used to feed a family or elder adult? Simplistic as that may be, it makes sense that God would be pleased with a selfless act, instead of a self-centered act. Unlike the secular "I'll give up [whatever] for Lent" that we share with our co-workers at the office, let's take a low profile and find an action that we share with God in our hearts. To steal another modern reference, take the

coming months to find that thing we can do without and pay it forward to fill a need.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, speak to me in this time of preparation to receive your priceless gift, to hear your children's needs and answer that request with a joyful heart, Amen.*

~Sara Petz

Ascension Lutheran Church

## FIRST WEEK OF LENT

**Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13**

The Scripture Reading for February 18-24

*The Flood*

<sup>1</sup>Then the LORD said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation. <sup>2</sup>Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and its mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and its mate; <sup>3</sup>and seven pairs of the birds of the air also, male and female, to keep their kind alive on the face of all the earth. <sup>4</sup>For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground.” <sup>5</sup>And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

<sup>11</sup>In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. <sup>12</sup>The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. <sup>13</sup>On the very same day Noah with his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons entered the ark, <sup>14</sup>they and every wild animal of every kind, and all domestic animals of every kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every bird of every kind—every bird,

every winged creature. <sup>15</sup>They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. <sup>16</sup>And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the LORD shut him in.

<sup>17</sup>The flood continued forty days on the earth; and the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. <sup>18</sup>The waters swelled and increased greatly on the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters.

<sup>8:6</sup>At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made <sup>7</sup>and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. <sup>8</sup>Then he sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; <sup>9</sup>but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So, he put out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark with him. <sup>10</sup>He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; <sup>11</sup>and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so, Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. <sup>12</sup>Then he waited another seven days, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him anymore.

<sup>13</sup>In the six hundred first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and saw that the face of the ground was drying. <sup>14</sup>In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. <sup>15</sup>Then God said to Noah, <sup>16</sup>“Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. <sup>17</sup>Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.” <sup>18</sup>So Noah went out with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives.

<sup>9:8</sup>Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, <sup>9</sup>“As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, <sup>10</sup>and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. <sup>11</sup>I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” <sup>12</sup>God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: <sup>13</sup>I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

## **Sunday February 18, 2018 – First Week of Lent**

Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13

### **Lectio Divina Sunday**

Lectio Divina, or “Sacred Reading,” or “Divine Reading,” involves meditative listening to the reading, out loud and slowly, of a short passage or a few isolated verses of Scripture. It can be done on your own or with a group. As you read this week’s scripture, you are encouraged to set aside analysis, and what you “know” already about the passage, seeking instead to open yourself to God’s word. Listen with your heart and receive it expectantly and passively. Attend to (writing, drawing, etc.) what you receive from God through the Scripture passage. Consider the following points.

Guiding points:

- Take a few moments to pray about what you just read.
- Write down the very first thing that comes into your mind and/or heart.
- After that, read the passage again.
- Now that you’ve done those 3 things, write (or draw or...), the first few things that come to mind.

- Lastly, as you read the passage one more time, please write (or draw or...), about how this passage connects with you while on your Lenten journey.

## **Monday February 19, 2018 – First Week of Lent**

Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13

The story of the flood can be seen as a large scale “do-over”. The state of creation had degraded to the point that Noah alone “was found to be righteous before God.” The dysfunction of mankind was ended. Many of us have experienced our own personal flood. My “rains” started in earnest in 1990. I was starting a new business, raising two rambunctious boys, changing my diet, dealing with the challenges of being a military wife i.e. 10 moves in 10 years, long periods alone. My marriage was crumbling; more than unhappy and unfulfilling, it was becoming unsafe. My “flood” came when my marriage ended in April of 1991 with Roy’s suicide. I felt alone, crushed, overwhelmed and spent the majority of my time and energy in survival mode or going thru the motions. My “ark” was the prayers and support of my friends and family. My post-flood life has had, of course, many triumphs, joys, struggles and sadness as we all have.

I believe that God was with me and that God was with Noah. I also believe that God doesn’t abide with the faithful as a reward, but as a means to achieve His plan. He demands obedience but is also compassionate. He didn’t owe us any reassurance but nevertheless gave us a promise. A promise to never destroy the world with a flood again, and, because He knows how forgetful we can be, gave us a beautiful, colorful symbol of His steadfastness.

**Prayer:** *God our creator and redeemer, you sometimes use powerful, extreme means to show your will as well as gentle, subtle rainbows. No matter how I may see your actions in my life, remind me its not about me, but that your will be done, Amen.*

~Kathy Mannerberg

Ascension Lutheran Church

**Tuesday February 20, 2018 – First Week of Lent**

Genesis 9:8-13

The faithfulness of Almighty God is a thing that must be studied at length, and even then, will never be truly understood. As it has been said, “love that passes all understanding,” is a love that humankind is incapable of coming to terms with no matter how hard we try. When facing the evil in and of the world, a direct result of the unencumbered free will given by God, and humans’ reaction to that evil, not even understanding the true depth and breadth of it, we cannot comprehend God’s power of forgiveness.

A girl once asked me if I thought God would forgive her of her many sins. I responded: “Let me ask you a question. Do you believe that God created the universe and everything in it?”

“Yes.”

“Alright, then since you realize that the eternal power of Love that is GOD was sufficient to create the universe, ask yourself this question: Is my power to sin greater than God’s power to forgive if I ask Him for it, and BELIEVE on His promise to grant that forgiveness?”

If you doubt it, remember God’s word in Genesis 9:12-13 as you gaze upon His rainbow!

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord my God, I humbly and lovingly pray for that level of understanding of your love and forgiveness that You are pleased to grant me. May that understanding bring me ever closer to You. Amen.*

~Don Kammer  
Christ the King Lutheran Church

## **Wednesday February 21, 2018 – First Week of Lent**

Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13

What would it be like to be trapped on a boat? This is a question that not many people ask themselves in their everyday lives. Here, let's talk more about being stuck on a boat that has seven pairs of every single animal, creepy crawling creatures, and birds on the planet. This is a little bit of a different situation. You also have to take into account that the animals and the humans all have waste. What would they do with all the waste? Would they throw it overboard?

There are so many questions that we have that will probably never be answered. Maybe God had solutions to all these problems, much like he has a solution to our problems in everyday life. God has the power to watch over us much like he watched over the people on the boat. It is amazing that we can have so much faith that we are able to trust God with our lives.

At the end, God makes a new deal with his creation: "I will never do that again" and the rainbow is a sign of that deal.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, sometimes you ask us to do scary things, but we have trust in you that you will take care of us, Amen.*

~Sandra Hagen, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

~Kendall Stroup, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

~Joel Thompson, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

Ascension Lutheran Church Confirmands

## **Thursday February 22, 2018 – First Week of Lent**

Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13

God guides Noah to bring every living thing on the ark so that they may populate the earth again after the devastating flood thereby preserving His creatures from total destruction. Pope Francis has

written “St. Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home [the earth] is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us”. Pope Francis’ views on the environment, climate change, pollution and recycling are near and dear to my heart.

My parents instilled this respect of the earth when I was growing up. We were taught to be frugal. We didn’t waste food, water or clothing. We reused. We recycled. I saw the need to continue this. And although there is still some eye rolling from some members of my family, I have impressed upon them the importance of the idea that we’re all in this together – and not just for us now, but for the future of our earth. Returning to Noah, it is clear life is a gift from God, a treasure to be cherished and honored.

~Kathleen Fulton  
Christ the King Lutheran Church

### **Friday February 23, 2018 – First Week of Lent**

Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13

*Seven pairs, seven days, forty days and forty nights. The six hundredth year, in the second month, on the seventeenth day.*

In reading the Genesis account of the flood, I was drawn to the usage of numbers. The numbers of pairs, days, nights and the passage of time. The more I read the passage aloud, a rhythm unfolded. The reading had an almost lyrical feel. Why was I so curious about the numbers and mention of time? I remembered a class about grief and a discussion of the Paschal Mystery, the journey from Christ’s passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension and the usage of time. Forty days in Lent, Jesus rose three days after his death, etc. Yet, the Paschal Mystery in more general terms is the process of dying and rising, death and new life. Time is therefore not prescriptive, rather a metaphor. We need time to mourn, grow and heal and it takes the time it takes to do so.

The usage of numbers in the Genesis account of the flood, therefore highlights the process which Noah's family lived out from the time the flood waters started, to God's promise to never flood the land again. Did it really take forty days and forty nights? Knowing this is not as important as knowing time was needed for it to be completed.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, as we traverse this season of Lent, we are all each in different seasons of our lives. There is mourning, joy, loss and life. Help us to abide with you as you abide with us through everything, no matter how long or short it takes. Amen.*

~Deacon Mary Stoneback  
Ascension Lutheran Church

### **Saturday February 24, 2018 – First Week of Lent**

Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13

The rain fell on the earth for forty days and forty nights. When I read these words, I hear them as "God's tears" fell on the earth. I can only imagine the extreme pain, sadness, hurt, and despair God must have felt when deciding to destroy what he created. I picture God having hit bottom with the actions and behaviors of his beloved creation. And when he did, he cried.

Isn't that what we do when we hit bottom? We release our feelings of sadness, frustration, anger, and you-name-it in the form of tears. "Tears are healing," my mom told me years ago. And she was right! Tears are a physical release of all that pent-up stuff, allowing you to accept, move on, heal, and grow. I believe that God shed tears of anguish so that his world could heal. Although he promised to never again flood the earth, is he crying again?

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, thank you for this earth. We are sorry for the hurtful ways we treat others and how we neglect and harm your*

*creation. We know our negative actions hurt your heart. Help us care for your earth, your creatures, and your children, so the only tears are tears of joy! In your name we pray, Amen.*

~Tammi Clawson  
Grace Lutheran Church

## SECOND WEEK OF LENT

**Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21**

The Scripture Reading for February 25 – March 3  
*Deliverance at the Red Sea*

<sup>10</sup>As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the LORD. <sup>11</sup>They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? <sup>12</sup>Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, ‘Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” <sup>13</sup>But Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the LORD will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. <sup>14</sup>The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.”

<sup>15</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, “Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward. <sup>16</sup>But you lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground. <sup>17</sup>Then I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and so, I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army, his chariots, and his chariot drivers. <sup>18</sup>And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gained glory for myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his chariot drivers.” <sup>19</sup>The angel of God who was

going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. <sup>20</sup>It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so, the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

<sup>21</sup>Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. <sup>22</sup>The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. <sup>23</sup>The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. <sup>24</sup>At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. <sup>25</sup>He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."<sup>26</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers."<sup>27</sup>So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea. <sup>28</sup>The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. <sup>29</sup>But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. <sup>30</sup>Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. <sup>31</sup>Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So, the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

<sup>15:20</sup>Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. <sup>21</sup>And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."

## **Sunday February 25, 2018 – Second Week of Lent**

Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21

Lectio Divina, or “Sacred Reading,” or “Divine Reading,” involves meditative listening to the reading, out loud and slowly, of a short passage or a few isolated verses of Scripture. It can be done on your own or with a group. As you read this week’s scripture, you are encouraged to set aside analysis, and what you “know” already about the passage, seeking instead to open yourself to God’s word. Listen with your heart and receive it expectantly and passively. Attend to (writing, drawing, etc.) what you receive from God through the Scripture passage. Consider the following points.

Guiding points:

- Take a few moments to pray about what you just read.
- Write down the very first thing that comes into your mind and/or heart.
- After that, read the passage again.
- Now that you’ve done those 3 things, write (or draw or...), the first few things that come to mind.
- Lastly, as you read the passage one more time, please write (or draw or...), about how this passage connects with you while on your Lenten journey.

## **Monday February 26, 2018 – Second Week of Lent**

Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21

I am a science geek. I love to try and figure out how and why things happen in the natural world. So, when I read the story of God delivering the Israelites across the Red Sea, my analytical brain goes into overdrive. “What weather conditions could have produced such a strong wind?” and so on. But, in my scientific zeal, I tend to miss the real point of this passage - God saved these people, His people, in the midst of their doubts and fears. There is definitely a time and place in this world for seeking to understand

how and why, because God gave us an intellect to wrestle with those questions, too. But sometimes it is enough to just know that God did it, and he can do it again. That is a precious gift! As Miriam did, we should rejoice in this knowledge, and praise God for this gift!

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord God, thank you for the gift of saving us, again and again, even if we don't understand how it works. Please continue to do so - always! Amen*

~Ingrid Daniel  
Ascension Lutheran Church

**Tuesday February 27, 2018 – Second Week of Lent**  
Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21

In the 80s and 90s, AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) was considered a death sentence. Millions of people died before antiretroviral therapy (ART) became more widely available in 2004. I was privileged to lead a project in 10 countries that saved the lives of three-quarters of a million-people living with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. We saw people dying of AIDS, being carried to hospitals—too weak to walk—and saw them walking (dancing!) home several weeks later in what became known as the “Lazarus effect.”

Bridget—a school teacher in Zambia—lost her husband to a “illness of long duration” (local euphemism for AIDS). Soon after, she was wasting away, much like her husband. Her Lazarus experience changed her whole outlook on life! She became a fulltime “treatment buddy,” helping others to start and stay on life-saving ART.

Like the Israelites in our scripture reading, Bridget despaired that death—like the Egyptians—would overtake her. Upon her return to health, Bridget told people around her “Do not be afraid, stand

firm (“AIDS will not overtake you”), and see the deliverance of the Lord!”

**Prayer:** *Lord, let us rejoice with Bridget and millions of others who put their trust in you and follow their antiretroviral therapy, daily, “for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and rider (AIDS) he has thrown into the sea!” Amen.*

~Carl Stecker

Christ the King Lutheran Church

### **Wednesday February 28, 2018 – Second Week of Lent**

Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21

There are times in life where you might think that things are looking up, that you are in the clear, that the trial has passed. Occasionally, it is right at that moment that the table turns again, and you find yourself thrown right back into the midst of a trial. This must have been the feeling that the Israelites had as they looked back toward Egypt and saw Pharaoh’s entire army coming at them in hot pursuit! Moses was probably at his wits end as the people challenged his leadership and yet again doubted God’s ability to bring them through their circumstances.

Life has the tendency to bring the unexpected our way. Many times, those unexpected occurrences lead to unpleasant circumstances. The doctor informs you of bad news from the latest test results. You find out the company is downsizing. Your child’s school shares some bad news. A relative calls and what they have to say sends you into a tailspin. Life’s great challenges have a way of bringing us to crisis in our faith as well. The Israelites’ initial reaction was to doubt the promise of God. In light of their reaction, I love Moses’ response: “The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.” Regardless of where you are in life right now, or where you find yourself in the future, don’t forget that God is on your side.

Finally, when God delivers the Israelites yet again, we see the people finally put their trust in God and in Moses as their leader. Though we cannot always know the cause or reason for a trial, God can use that circumstance to deepen your trust in Him. When that next crisis of faith comes along, or if you are in one today, choose to run toward God, not away from Him. God never wastes suffering or trials. God knew that Israel would need a deepened faith in Him to face what was coming their way in the future. God can use what you are going through today to strengthen you for future circumstances.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, give us the faith to trust you in the midst of our fear, insecurities, and anxieties. Remind us that you are our God and that you will fight with and for us. Show us our purpose and guide us in your will. In His Precious Name we pray. Amen.*

~Rev. Kevin Cho  
Mount Calvary Lutheran Church

**Thursday March 1, 2018 – Second Week of Lent**  
Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21

Remember that famous movie scene? Moses stretched out his arm, the Red Sea parted, and the Israelites were saved. But wait. If the story illustrated God's power, why was Moses asked to lift his staff over the waters? Surely God could have done this miracle without him.

Yes, he could. But God often chooses to work through people. Remember that kind nurse when you were in the hospital? How about your special friend who showed up in an emergency? Maybe the stranger who pushed your car out of the snow wasn't a stranger at all. Perhaps all three were God in disguise.

Teresa of Avila wrote these words centuries ago:

“Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassionately on this world,  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world.”

Does God want to work through you? Absolutely. You don’t need to be Moses—just be yourself. Listen for God’s guiding voice, then take that first step. What is he calling you to do today?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus - I want to be your hands and feet in the world, but I don't know how. Please take my hand and gently guide me. Together we will be a blessing to all. Amen.*

~Lisa Wulf  
Ascension Lutheran Church

### **Friday March 2, 2018 – Second Week of Lent**

Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21

Even though the story of the Red Sea is widely known, I had never read the story directly from the Bible. After finally reading it, there were a few specific verses that really stood out to me. Exodus 14:13-14 says, “Do not be afraid, stand firm and see the deliverance that the LORD will accomplish for you today. The LORD will fight for you and you have only to keep still.”

As I grow older, I realize how easy it is to get swept away by life. School, homework, test scores, and even things like watching the news can make you feel carried away, helpless, and powerless. More often than not, stress takes over my life. To hear that God is fighting for me, to hear that someone is always by my side is comforting; He delivers me from the current that sweeps me away and all I have to do is stand firm in Him. He doesn’t care about my test scores or GPA; He will fight for me always.

How do I begin to describe the feeling of total acceptance?  
Miriam, in Exodus 15:21 says, “Sing to the LORD, for he has

triumphed gloriously.” Today, I am grateful to have a God who fights for me and the opportunity to sing His triumphs.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, thank you for always fighting for me. I will try to stand firm in you, to thank you for your triumphs. Amen.*

~Millie Bramschreiber, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Ascension Lutheran Church

### **Saturday March 3, 2018 – Second Week of Lent**

Exodus 14:10-31

Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid, stand firm and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.”

The Israelites have seen miracle after miracle, and how much evidence that God is for them. However, as soon as they see the Pharaohs’s chariots, they immediately assume the worst—that Pharaoh’s army will kill them and leave them to die in this God-forsaken wilderness.

Many years ago, when I was diagnosed with cancer, I was very frightened. Even though I prayed for a successful surgery, I was so scared. On the day of surgery, God placed me in the care of a wonderful Christian nurse. She assured me that God was with me, to trust him and not be afraid. Her words calmed me. I felt God’s presence and was no longer afraid.

**Prayer:** *Good and gracious God, forgive us when we forget how much you love us. Help us remember that you are always on our side and will never leave us. We ask this in your holy name, Amen.*

~Ruth Osbourn  
Grace Lutheran Church



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