

MARCH DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET

2018

# From Ashes to Fire

*A Lenten-to-Pentecost Devotional Collaboration between  
Ascension, Grace, Prince of Peace, Christ the King 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**

**\*Refer to February's booklet for continued Lenten Soup Suppers & Mid-Week Service times**

#### **HOLY WEEK**

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

March 29 - Maundy Thursday Services, 7 pm  
March 30 - Good Friday Services, 12 pm & 7 pm  
March 31 - Easter Vigil, 6 pm (Led by HS youth)  
April 1 - Easter Sunrise, 6 am, Easter Services, 8 am & 10:30 am  
\*Youth Pancake Breakfast/fundraiser served 7-8 am & 9-10:15 am

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

March 29 - Maundy Thursday Services, noon & 7 pm  
March 30 - Good Friday Services, noon & 7 pm  
March 31 - Easter Vigil, 7 pm  
April 1 - Easter Services, 8 am & 11 am  
Easter Breakfast served 9-11 am

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

March 29- Maundy Thursday Holy Communion, 6:30pm  
March 30 – Breaking Bread with Jesus, Family Activity Day, 9 – 11:30 am  
March 30 – Good Friday Service, 6:30 pm  
April 1 – Easter Worship, 8 am & 10:30 am.  
\*Easter brunch will be served between services and Easter Egg Hunt

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

March 29 - Maundy Thursday, 7 pm (with Holy Communion)

March 30 - Good Friday Service, 7 pm (no Communion)

April 1 - Easter Sunday Service, 9:30 am

## **JOIN US @ MT. CALVARY**

March 30 - Good Friday Service, 7 pm

April 1 - Easter Service, 9 am

# **THIRD WEEK OF LENT**

**March 4 – 10**

## **Ezekiel 37:1-14**

*Valley of the Dry Bones*

<sup>1</sup>The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. <sup>3</sup>He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” <sup>4</sup>Then he said to me, “Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. <sup>5</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup>I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.” <sup>7</sup>So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. <sup>8</sup>I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” <sup>10</sup>I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. <sup>11</sup>Then he said to me, “Mortal, these

bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’<sup>12</sup> Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel.<sup>13</sup> And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people.<sup>14</sup> I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act,” says the LORD.

**Sunday March 4, 2018**

Ezekiel 37:1-14

### **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 March 5, 2018**

Ezekiel 37:1-14

When I see the homeless on the street I wonder if they are full of despair and pain. I wonder if they think of The Valley of Dry Bones? Maybe they had a lot of regrets of what could have been better. They do not give up but try to make it day-by-day hoping things will get better. I wonder how helpful the few dollars I give are to them. Does it give them any hope at all?

I start each day off with listening to Bible in One Day App. I need this inspiration to make it through the day. In this practice, I feel the hand of the Lord upon me and the Lord touches my dry sack Bones. My bones are dry when I wake up in the morning and my mind says get up and my body says, “wait 10 more minutes”. I believe if one is really spiritual hungry, with prayer God can bring anything back to life.

God delights to do these impossible things. It’s not like some things are more impossible than others to God, as he is not like us. He is able to do all things, even change the hearts that have been in the grave for a long time. As long as God is involved, and he is in the picture, the work of recreating life takes place.

**Question:** Are the Dry Bones really dead?

~Eugene Newbold  
Ascension Lutheran Church

## **Tuesday March 6**

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Do you ever wonder at the seemingly insignificant things you learned in school that you remember years later? In my freshman biology class, we were taught that life is cyclical. I can still see the diagram in our texts--animals eat plants; their droppings and refuse feed the soil which then can grow fresh food for animals. Simple.

Some fertile valleys across our globe are places where long ago great armies battled, and the bodies of fallen soldiers weathered in the elements for scores of years, rich soils afterward feeding new generations of plants and animals. God's people go through cycles too. God warned the Israelites for generations that he would punish them for their turning away from Him. Ezekiel, a prophet in Babylonian captivity, is told to warn of Israel's complete destruction. Their destruction was more than they could have imagined.

But wait! Even as God's Spirit brings Ezekiel to an open plain strewn with old, dried bones, He says that they are His people, and He can and will bring them to life again! Since he was a young man, Ezekiel has faithfully spoken God's word of doom. Now God invites him to speak His words of a gathering together of His people in life. This is God's promise.

Many of us go through life-sucking times of despair. Take heart, God's children, He continually brings life from ashes.

**Prayer:** *Our God, keep our eyes fixed on you, the giver of life. We praise you that your love is greater than our weakness. Please show us which roads lead to ashes, and guide us onto paths that lead to life in you. Amen.*

~Nona Wayne  
Christ the King Lutheran Church

**Wednesday March 7**  
Ezekiel 37:1-14

First comes the fire, then the ashes. That is the way the world works. But God has a way of turning things around, creating a new perspective. Ezekiel was in the middle of a valley filled with dry bones, dead and done. The Lord asked, “Mortal, can these bones live?” Ezekiel answered, “O Lord God, you know.” And God brought the bones back to life, putting on muscle, sinews, and flesh. Then as Ezekiel prophesied to the bones, breath came into them and they lived.

God takes dead, dried bones—ashes really—and brings them to life. The Holy Spirit gives life and purpose to us, with holy breath and tongues of fire, as he did with the apostles on Pentecost. When we think we have nothing to offer, when we feel dried up and done, when our hope is lost, God breathes new life into us. New life to be God’s people, to do God’s work in his kingdom, to know God is with us.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, when we feel dried up and burned out, put your Spirit within us. Only you can bring fire and life out of ashes. Bring fire out of our ashes, that we may live more fully in you. Amen.*

~Sharon Pope  
Grace Lutheran Church

**Thursday March 8**  
Ezekiel 37:1-14

The Lord is with us, even if we don’t feel like God is with us. In Ezekiel, the Lord and Ezekiel helped to bring the dry bones back to life with flesh on the bones, but no living breath in them until the breath of the Lord’s word is breathed into them.

When I think of “dry,” out of the dry bones, I think that the bones are empty, like they don’t have the Lord’s Spirit or word in

them...until God's Spirit and word are breathed within them...and they are mortals.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, please bless whoever is reading this. Breathe your life into these people like you did with Ezekiel and the dry bones. Breathe life into me, forever and ever. In the love of your name, Amen.*

~Julianna Trujillo, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Grace Lutheran Church

**Friday March 9**  
Ezekiel 37:1-14

The first line is, "The hand of the LORD came upon me," which represents God's presence that Ezekiel felt when being in the valley with the dry bones.

For me, whenever I get scared, or things in life seem beyond me, I try to look for God's presence, because at the end of the day, if one feels like there is no one there, no one who understands, there is always God, and his presence is with you for eternity. Sometimes you may have to look a little harder or longer, but He is always there. Even if you're dead in sin, God's love will never run out for you, and I always find that comforting through tough times, or for just something to think about every day.

**Prayer:** *Oh Lord, please give me strength when I get scared, or life gets too much for me to handle alone. Give me a sign that You are here for me, and help me feel your presence as I go about my day today. Amen.*

~Paige Diehl, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Christ the King Lutheran Church

**TWO REFLECTIONS FOR MARCH 10**

## **Saturday March 10**

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Why did the bones come to life? The bones represent having faith. When they came back to life, that represents being renewed and being saved.

One time, I felt really sad and alone. I was overwhelmed with all of the school work that I needed to get done. However, that night, I was praying in my bed when I remembered that God was with me through all of it. That thought truly helped me persevere, and still keeps me going today.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, thank you for keeping me positive. Please help me to stay on task and to stay faithful and joyful, even through really tough times. Amen.*

~Austin Coltrin, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Ascension Lutheran Church

How did the bones act in such a way? It is like when you have a test that you are not prepared for. You “shake” and your bones “rattle” as if they were dry. But you just gotta have some faith in things sometimes.

**Prayer:** *The Lord is with us...when we are scared or shaky at times. May the Lord be with you, and have faith in you. God always comes with faith. May the Lord be with you. Amen.*

~Serinity Buss, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Ascension Lutheran Church

## **FOURTH WEEK OF LENT**

**March 11 - 17**

**Jonah 1:1 – 2:1**  
*The Deliverance of Jonah*

<sup>1</sup>Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.” <sup>3</sup>But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so, he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

<sup>4</sup>But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. <sup>5</sup>Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep. <sup>6</sup>The captain came and said to him, “What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish.” <sup>7</sup>The sailors said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us.” So, they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. <sup>8</sup>Then they said to him, “Tell us why this calamity has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” <sup>9</sup>“I am a Hebrew,” he replied. “I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” <sup>10</sup>Then the men were even more afraid, and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them so.

<sup>11</sup>Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. <sup>12</sup>He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.” <sup>13</sup>Nevertheless the

men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. <sup>14</sup>Then they cried out to the LORD, “Please, O LORD, we pray, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life. Do not make us guilty of innocent blood; for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you.” <sup>15</sup>So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. <sup>16</sup>Then the men feared the LORD even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

<sup>17</sup>But the LORD provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

<sup>2:1</sup>Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish.

## **Sunday March 11**

Jonah 1:1 – 2:1

“No, I don’t want to.” As a mother of a three-year-old, this is a phrase I hear on a daily basis and, as I read the story of Jonah, I can’t help but recognize one of the many struggles of not only parenting, but everyday life. Defiance.

Every day we can pretty much guarantee that we are going to be asked to do something. Often times, they are simple requests that we complete without any hesitation. But there may be some requests that challenge us and go against our way of thinking. So, channeling our inner three-year old, we simply say “no” and avoid it, like Jonah avoided God. But Jonah learns that, no matter how far you go, you can’t run away from God and the plan he has for us.

With this in mind, I’m challenging myself, and you, to listen carefully for God’s call in your everyday life. Listen with an open mind, an open heart, and do not be afraid. Even if you are faced with great winds and mighty storms, remember that it is part of

Gods plan, and He will provide a large fish to swallow you up and keep you safe.

**Prayer:** *God, our Father, As your children, help us to hear your word above all others with an open mind. Let us hear it, understand it, and act on it in the proper way throughout this Lenten season. Also, continue to show us that, even if we get caught in storms, you are always with us, fulfilling your great plan for each of us. We ask these things in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

~Sadie Hjelmstad  
Ascension Lutheran Church

## **Monday March 12**

Jonah 1:1 – 2:1

I was seated next to a woman on my flight to LA. I know her story, yet we never exchanged names. She came to the United States several decades ago. Her dream was to become successful and share her blessings. She became a citizen, opened a hair salon, bought a home and had three children. She worked six days a week, from 9am to 9pm. She stopped going to church, was unavailable to family and could only think of money. She kept telling God, next week, next month, next year. She woke up in a hospital and did not recognize her family. She could not move her arm nor her mouth. She did not remember how to speak English, or her native Spanish. She only remembered Jesus.

It has been 12 years since her stroke. She is back at Church and after service she visits the Nursing Homes in her community. She found her mission. The stroke saved her life. She is now successful. How many times do we tell God, next week, next month, next year?

**Prayer:** *Lord, let us find purpose, Amen.*

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~Joan Su'e  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

## **Tuesday March 13**

Jonah 1:1 – 2:1

Have you ever been surprised by God? When you see the first buds on a tree after winter or a flower pushing through the dirt to announce spring, do you marvel at God's majesty over all his creation? Jonah was surprised by God when God told him to preach repentance to the city of Nineveh. God created and designed the whole world and every part of it is blessed. When Jonah disobeyed God's command to go to Nineveh and went the other way, he was restricting God to only Israel, the chosen people. God is free to show compassion and mercy to all nations and creatures, even to the wicked. He had compassion on the Ninevites, the sailors on the ship with Jonah and Jonah by putting him in the belly of a whale instead of letting him drown. Are you restricting God by seeing him only as you *think* He is? God is greater than any of us can imagine. His thoughts are not our thoughts, His ways are not our ways. Our challenge is to trust and obey the ways of God as He truly is, not as we want Him to be.

**Prayer:** *Gracious and merciful God, thank you that you are greater than we can ever imagine. Help us to see others through the eyes of your Son Jesus and embrace all that you send us.*

**Amen.**

~Margaret Hyer  
Christ the King Lutheran Church

## **Wednesday March 14**

Jonah 1:1 – 2:1

As short as it is, the book of Jonah (just four chapters) is one of my favorites in the Old Testament. Jonah is a reminder of the trials and storms many of us go through in life. He is strong-willed, scared,

fretful, angry, pouty, rebellious, hasty, prayerful, and even unfriendly at times. Most people focus on Jonah's disobedience, confrontation, and eventual obedience to God, but I want to reflect on the storm.

We all have storms, and I think sometimes God allows storms in our lives because he is trying to get our attention! Our storms can be:

Whatever pulls us out of our comfort zone.

A place God calls where we don't want to go.

An illness in ourselves or a loved one.

A dangerous mission.

Something we hate that God loves deeply.

People who have hurt us deeply, especially when God says, "Go and give them my message."

What do you do when God says, "Go into the storm," and you hate what it is? You need to think about that, because sooner or later, that's what He's going to say.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, we're glad your grace is greater than our sin. For those of us looking into a storm now and crying out to you, speak to us. Help us to believe more deeply in your outrageous grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

~Tom Tindell

Grace Lutheran Church

## **Thursday March 15**

Jonah 1:1 – 2:1

This reading reminds me of a teenager who doesn't want to do what he or she is told. It reminds me of myself when I was a teenager. I dropped out of high school at age 17 and for a year I did

a whole lot of nothing good. I believed I could do whatever I wanted because I wasn't hurting anyone but myself and ended up getting pregnant at age 18. I could have easily kept the pregnancy to myself and had an abortion, but after praying in the belly of my own big fish, I realized that I couldn't be selfish anymore. I had to take responsibility, both for the hurt that I had caused others and for the life inside me. I went back to school and graduated; my son was born halfway through my senior year.

Unlike Jonah, I do not resent the outcome of my repentance, nor do I regret the experiences that brought me there.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, thank for giving me purpose. Thank you for the life of my children and for the continued blessing of my grandchildren. Their life gives me life. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

~Margie Ainsworth  
Grace Lutheran Church

## **Friday March 16**

Jonah 1:1 – 2:1

The mariners were afraid. These men had no idea why the sea was acting up and reacted like anyone else would with fear. So they went to Jonah, the only one not full of fear. They asked him what he was doing and asked, “Why is this happening?” Jonah told them and offered himself up. The men didn't throw him over at first; they just continued to try and steer the boat.

Why would these men not listen to Jonah? He was a Hebrew that none of them knew. Personally, I would have thrown Jonah over right off the bat to try and save myself and the rest of the crew. Instead, these men give him another chance to pray to his God and save them all.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, thank you for sending kind people into our lives who will still show us undying kindness though we may be*

*strangers. Bless us that we may be those people to others whom we have not yet met. Amen.*

~Emma Snider, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Ascension Lutheran Church

**Saturday March 17**

Jonah 1:1 – 2:1

Why did Jonah run from the LORD?

What did he do in the fish belly?

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, even when we learn about you and get taught about you did, in fear we always run. Help us not run; find us so we will always trust you. Amen.*

~Riley Tichenor, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Ascension Lutheran Church

**FIFTH WEEK OF LENT**

**March 18 – 24**

Isaiah 61:1-4, 9-11

*Clothed in Garments of Salvation*

<sup>1</sup>The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the broken-hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
<sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;

<sup>3</sup> to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.  
<sup>4</sup> They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.

<sup>9</sup> Their descendants shall be known among the nations,  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.

<sup>10</sup> I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

<sup>11</sup> For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

## **Sunday March 18**

Isaiah 61:1-4, 9-11

Anointing: A “To-do list” for Abundant Life  
(Inspired by: Isaiah 61:1-4, 9-11)

Chapter 61 of Isaiah begins with the powerful, upbeat words “The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me.” Some of us Lutherans are not all that familiar with the use of anointing in our church. The fact is that the NRSV Exhaustive Concordance has 224 listings for oil and 170 for anointing. Priests, kings and queens were anointed with oil. Oil was offered as a sacrifice. Oil was used as an agent of healing. During the baptismal rite, oil may be used as the sign of the cross is made on the forehead of the newly baptized as the presiding minister says, "Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever." More about the use of anointing in ELCA worship can be found here:

[http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/How\\_is\\_oil\\_used\\_in\\_worship.pdf](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/How_is_oil_used_in_worship.pdf)

So, what does our anointing by God mean about our lives as followers of Jesus? Years ago, when I was teaching English, I would encourage my students to find, circle or underline the active verbs in a reading passage, in order to discover its main focal points. Sometimes, by pulling these verbs out of the context of the entire passage, we create a sort of “to do list”, which can guide our thinking and our actions. If we take a look at the verbs in the text of Isaiah 61, we find a virtual “to-do list” for active ministry of salvation and abundant life which God intends for us to share with others. Among the powerful verbs of the passage are **bring, bind up, proclaim, release, comfort, provide, give, display, build up, raise up, repair, rejoice, spring up.**

God anoints us to encourage, support and uplift each other, so that we may believe and rejoice in His promise of hope in the broken world we see around us. The verbs of this passage in Isaiah stress the meaning of our anointing as purposeful, outgoing, other-oriented, selfless human acts, communal acts, a social covenant.

As we examine and put into action these active verbs in our daily lives, we recall the anointing we received in baptism, the purpose to

which we are called as Christians. These verbs become a recipe, a “to-do list” for the joyous and abundant life we are intended to enjoy here and now, and to share with others.

Let’s take a few moments to meditate on each of these verbs and think about how we can actively work them into your everyday behaviors towards others. Here are a few examples:

**BRING** - a meal for a grieving family / an unexpected gift of flowers to a lonely congregant / a copy of this week’s bulletin or newsletter to a shut-in

**BIND UP** - a wound seen in the heart of a friend / the scattered memories of a friend with Alzheimer’s / the trash and recyclables in the churchyard

**PROCLAIM** - good news in the verses of a simple greeting card / a summary of the highlights of pastor’s last sermon to an absent church member / gratitude for the way a friend made us feel happier about something

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, we rejoice that we are baptized, anointed and commissioned by you, our loving, trusting God, to love as you loved, boldly acting upon the “to-do list” you have entrusted to us, following your life, your example, your teachings, We ask your help in sharing salvation and abundant life with others. Amen.*

~Dan Joslin

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

**Monday March 19**

Isaiah 61:1-4, 9-11

*Dan Joslin’s Reflection Continued...*

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Let’s take a few moments to meditate on each of these verbs and think about how we can actively work them into your everyday behaviors towards others. Here are a few examples:

**RELEASE** - bad feelings we’ve been harboring toward someone / memories of past emotional injuries someone has caused us / a child to make his/her own decision about something challenging

**COMFORT** - a child who is fearful of a bully or bad dreams / a sick and lonely parishioner afraid to die / a homeless person reaching out with basic human needs: food, water, shelter

**PROVIDE** - a word of encouragement / a small token of gratitude to a helpful friend / assistance in worship: reading, leading, singing

**GIVE** - to ELCA World Hunger or Disaster Relief / to a special cause which affirms life / a few hours of time in your busy week to volunteer

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, we rejoice that we are baptized, anointed and commissioned by you, our loving, trusting God, to love as you loved, boldly acting upon the “to-do list” you have entrusted to us, following your life, your example, your teachings, We ask your help in sharing salvation and abundant life with others. Amen.*

~Dan Joslin

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

**Tuesday March 20**

Isaiah 61:1-4, 9-11

*Dan Joslin’s Reflection Continued...*

As we examine and put into action these active verbs in our daily lives, we recall the anointing we received in baptism, the purpose to which we are called as Christians. These verbs become a recipe, a

“to-do list” for the joyous and abundant life we are intended to enjoy here and now, and to share with others.

Let’s take a few moments to meditate on each of these verbs and think about how we can actively work them into your everyday behaviors towards others. Here are a few examples:

**DISPLAY** - God’s welcoming love and beauty by serving on altar guild / positive encouragement on church signs and publications / achievements and acts of kindness by children in the congregation

**BUILD UP** - a community of sisterhood and brotherhood in Christ by participating in WELCA and church activities

**RAISE UP** - someone’s spirits with a smile or a special visit / a child to behave as Jesus would

**REPAIR** - a broken bookshelf, toilet, or hymnal at church / a broken relationship keeping us from mutual joy

**REJOICE** - praise the Lord out loud in worship / be happy in our outlook toward bad news / sing

**SPRING UP** - get up out of our chairs and walk, exercise, hike, literally jump with joy

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, we rejoice that we are baptized, anointed and commissioned by you, our loving, trusting God, to love as you loved, boldly acting upon the “to-do list” you have entrusted to us, following your life, your example, your teachings, We ask your help in sharing salvation and abundant life with others. Amen.*

~Dan Joslin  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

**Wednesday March 21**  
Isaiah 61:1-4, 9-11

Several years ago, my church (Our Savior's Lutheran) was contacted by another ELCA congregation (Bethany Lutheran) to see if we could meet and discuss a possible joining of churches.

At the time, Bethany had serious structural problems with their building and insufficient financial resources to fix them. Our Savior's was having financial issues as well, due to declining membership and a mortgage to pay. The closure of both churches was inevitable without consolidation. Through faith, both churches decided to consolidate and become a new church, Grace Lutheran. This was a stressful time for all involved. Both churches experienced a time of grieving. Bethany was leaving their building, and Our Savior's was dealing with burying old ways of doing things and compromising on many new issues.

God was instrumental in sending the right leadership Grace needed to make the consolidation a success. Even though both former congregations mourned the closing of their respective churches, a new spirit of family, community outreach, and gladness filled this newly formed church. Descendants of these members will continue to grow and flourish, praising God, and thanking him for his many blessings.

**Prayer:** *Gracious God, help us to remember to trust in you and your plan for us. Thank you for bringing that which is dying to new life in you. Amen.*

~Lorinda Laabs  
Grace Lutheran Church

### **Thursday March 22**

Isaiah 61:1-4, 9-11

When I first read this section, I struggled with what to write about it and how does it apply to us today. This reading is one of hope for the Jews who have returned from Babylon and are disconsolate because of the tremendous destruction they came home to in

Jerusalem. The opening verse uses “me” three times. You would think that “me” refers to the prophet Isaiah, but it is interesting that Jesus uses these same words to describe himself in Luke 4:18-19. Throughout the rest of the reading, it felt like Isaiah was speaking to me and our fellow Christians. We will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. This reading is as reassuring to me as it must have been for those returning from Babylon. Despite the pain and suffering we have experienced, God has “clothed me with the garments of salvation...and the robe of righteousness.”

**Prayer:** *Lord, thank you for never abandoning us and for clothing us with the garments of salvation. We can never merit the love you shower on us, but yet we are grateful for grace you have freely given us through your son Jesus Christ. Amen.*

~John Hayes  
Ascension Lutheran Church

**Friday March 23**  
Isaiah 61:1-4, 9-11

Isaiah 61:11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

My dad will describe himself as a seed man. He believes in the mustard seed, sowing seeds and that what you sow, you also reap, knowing it is God who causes the growth. My father is a fabulous man, who leads by example, attends worship services, gives to those who have less than he does, delivers food to the pantry, cuts the church lawn, tithes, and serves on church council. He has been an active believer in God for all of his life. He started his life in the middle of the depression and is the oldest of six children. They didn't have much in the way of material goods growing up, but the stories he can tell you of love, family, and devotion are priceless. He met my mother when they were ten years old. They have been

married for 65 years. They have been strength in the wind and a shelter in the storm for many people. Both of my parents have been sowers of kindness, gentleness, generosity, compassion, forgiveness, and love. They are thankful in everything. Their lives have been a living praise to God and a testament to sowing good seeds. The Lord has blessed them beyond measure.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, Thank you for all of our gifts. Use us as your hands as we sow seeds in our homes, communities, and world. Let our voices sing praises before you. In your Name we pray. Amen*

~Nancy Ellis  
Christ the King Lutheran Church

### **Saturday March 24**

Isaiah 61:1-4, 9-11

As a Christian, the Holy Spirit is upon me; therefore I am called to comfort those who hurt and encourage those who are discouraged. This passage is about love and what the power of love is capable of. I am to believe in what God promises as a consequence of love. I am to bless others and trust that God will propagate those blessings. What does this mean in my own life right here in Colorado Springs?

- To greet everyone I meet with a smile.
- To be approachable and show respect for all.
- To offer a hug to anyone who needs it.
- To share my gifts generously and listen with a kind heart.
- To be patient in traffic and grocery lines.
- To feed His lambs.

As Christians, we are oaks in God's garden of righteousness and praise. The garden is our church and our community, and we are not alone.

**Prayer:** *Thank you, Lord, for this awareness and may the Unseen Wind blow the seeds of your grace all over the world. I ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

~Arlayne McKee  
Ascension Lutheran Church

## **SIXTH WEEK OF LENT**

**March 25 – 31**

### **Romans 6:3-11**

*Incorporated into the Death and Resurrection of Christ*

<sup>3</sup>Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup>For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup>We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup>For whoever has died is freed from sin. <sup>8</sup>But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup>We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup>The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. <sup>11</sup>So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

### **Sunday March 25**

Romans 6:3-11

I've sometimes found myself in situations which made me wish I could simply start over with a clean slate. But in today's world of social media, "starting over with a clean slate" is about as practical

as deleting an embarrassing picture from Facebook and hoping no one saw it yet (but they did, they ALL did). The idea of learning from a mistake and moving on can seem unrealistic when you know that there's a digital snapshot of how everyone felt after "that thing" you did or said. It's these feelings that came to mind while reading today's passage.

Through baptism we are bound to Christ and the tremendous sacrifice He made. His death frees us from the dominion of sin, and his resurrection provides us the "clean slate" we desperately desire. No matter how far back our digital footprints stretch, God's love and promise of new life goes further.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, your grace in our lives is not cheap. And over and over we fall short. Thank you for never letting us go through all of life alone. Even to the 'end' of our time on this earth, we are blessed to continue our life in You. Amen.*

~Patrick DeLoughry  
Ascension Lutheran Church

## **Monday March 26**

Romans 6:3-11

"So, we might walk in newness of life."

In the early 1960's when I was teaching at boarding school in Tanzania, East Africa, I had assignment of contracting the bus that would take our students twenty miles to the rail stop for their trip to their homes. The school was located in a rain forest area near a village about five miles from a larger town that was the administrative center for the area. In this town was the bus company I needed to contract for the transport off the mountain to the rail stop. When I arrived at the bus company's office, the manager was not in but at the market a short distance from the office. I went to find him and quickly located him. He immediately greeted me and grasp my hand and escorted me across the market green to his office. In the

office we would write and sign the contract. At that time the U.S. was extremely homophobic. So, I felt uncomfortable in the situation, but I realized that the holding of my hand was culturally appropriate and a way of honoring me and my work in the school. The experience helps me in a new way of looking at life and the natural way of working with someone of the same sex. If new understanding and attitudes qualifies, I was indeed walking in “newness of life.” This experience changed me in my whole understanding of African culture and its difference from U.S. culture in regard to contact with other males.

*Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to be open to experiences even if we are uncomfortable that create “newness” in our lives. Amen.*

~Gary Gabrielson  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

**Tuesday March 27**  
Romans 6:3-11

Fly from Sin

I'd like you to consider the phoenix. A purely fictional animal (unfortunately), but one of poignant interest. A bird, made of flames, that is consumed by its own brilliance soon surrenders to ashes...yet from those ashes, it is reborn and starts anew. I believe humanity is infatuated with stories of redemption and rebirth. This is evident in the mythological conjuring of the phoenix itself—a bird that can be identified in Chinese, Egyptian, Native American, Greek, Russian, Japanese, and Arabian cultures.

We like the idea of the burned, belabored, and malcontent getting the opportunity to change their fate. We like under-dogs succeeding. We like emancipation. This motif does not appear alone in our mythology, but in literature, history and popular culture. From Abraham Lincoln (trust me on that one) to Jean

Valjean to Severus Snape to Tony Stark—phoenixes are everywhere.

“Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” And in that vein, we too may become phoenix’s. Before sin corrupted God’s creation, we gallivanted without a care throughout Eden. Then when we tried to “be God” as opposed to be “like God,” our pride produced evil and we quickly fell into sin’s slavery. A slavery that brought us back to ashes—as we were before God breathed life into us—dead to the world.

However, God wasn’t going to let us get away that easily. He did something tremendous. He became man, endured the slavery of mortality, and died to defeat the sin that had captured us. He then returned, as only He can, and brought us the gift of new life. From that gift, we may be redeemed once more and never again have to worry about becoming slaves.

“For death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.” Now, we display the “burial” of our sinful selves with the resurfacing of Christ’s resurrection through baptism...this is where my phoenix metaphor breaks down a bit, because dousing oneself with water is a much-preferred symbolic choice, instead of fire. Anyway, I think you get my point.

The wonderful thing about Christ is that we are all potential phoenix’s. Not a single man, woman, or child on this Earth is unanimously a pile of ash subject to the penalty of sin. That debt has already been paid. The question now lies in our choice—our decision to recognize that payment and receive the Lord who willingly paid, to baptize ourselves in God’s following. We must decide whether to be a “heavenly” or “hellish” creature. We can be one of “joy and peace and knowledge and power” or one of “madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence, and eternal loneliness,” (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*).

I don't know about you, but I'm ready to remain a bird of fantastic feather and flame...rather than a deposit of indignant cinders.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, You alone came among your creation in order to sacrifice yourself for that same creation. You see us complicated mortals, composed of Light and Dark, as worthy of your love and mercy. You see the beautiful redemptive qualities we possess. Stay with us now, that we may never forget the freedom from sin you've granted. We thank and praise you, o Lord. Amen.*

~Annie Saunders  
Ascension Lutheran Church

### **Wednesday March 28**

Romans 6:3-11

Our daily life tasks, which can include care of others, pets and self, are in a dynamic state. Encounters with others become the challenges and joys when living the Word. Bringing food to a lonely neighbor, going to the hospital with prayer during and after a surgery, taking a get-well kit to a friend with the flu, or something as simple as listening can bring life to the passage as we interact with others.

Issues such as war, acts of hostility, loss of health-limbs-memory seem as mini-deaths, but God is with us, and the pain and suffering are not final. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ bought for us the hope of union with our God.

The death of a loved one, whether it was sudden, or somewhat expected due to illness, or sadly when the circumstances are not understood, is a passage we must cross through. We grieve and let go as Christ did through his death and resurrection. It is always about hope, an aid to our human spirit.

**Prayer:** *Our loved ones are with God as we praise Jesus Christ for His sacrifice and His love for all of us. God we honor you with our*

*daily life until we are with You, your Son, and the Holy Spirit.*  
**Amen.**

~Bea Roybal  
Community Member

**Thursday March 29 – Maundy Thursday**  
Romans 6:3-11

There was an old baptismal rite used in Lutheran churches in which the pastor would hold the cute baby all dressed in white with family gathered around the font. And then the pastor would hold baby over the water and proclaim that this was the baby's death. I wonder why this language didn't make it's way into our new hymnals?

Baptism is about new life. Baptism is the promise of the resurrection being delivered through water and words. The thing is, new life doesn't really work unless old life has past. Resurrection needs death. And death scares us. Death - even death not of our physical bodies but death of our old sinful self, as Paul likes to say - death means giving up the life we lived. Giving up the stuff and priorities and relationships. That scares us.

But what if that old life isn't very ... life-giving? What if it's more of a weight around our feet? What if, to really live that new life, we need to be freed from the old? Death and resurrection – not just in the coming world, but in this one too.

**Prayer:** *Unite us in Christ's death, O Lord, that we might be united in new life. Amen.*

~Pastor Daniel Smith  
Ascension Lutheran Church  
**Friday March 30 – Good Friday**  
Romans 6:3-11

Do you ever get “hangry”? I have normally sweet friends who turn irritable and irrational when they miss a meal. Other people require

medicine to maintain chemical balance in their brain and seem to become someone completely different without it. Our bodies can have a profound effect on our behavior and attitudes.

Paul conveys a wise truth: As long as we live, we are tempted to sin. Our bodies demand comfort and pleasures, pressuring us to act selfishly. We sin in thought, word, and deed. We turn our back on each other, and on God.

But we are also spiritual beings. Imagine stepping out of your body, existing as pure energy without lust, hunger, fear, insecurity, worry, or pain. All that is left is love.

If we focus on the world, no matter how good our intentions we are drawn to sin. But when we follow Christ, we are fed with the bread of life. Dying to sin, we live in the love of God.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, thank you for the hope that your son, Jesus Christ, gives to us. Through him, we overcome sin and death. Help us to leave the shackles of this world behind, and love as Jesus loved. In his name, Amen.*

~Chris Mortenson  
Grace Lutheran Church

## **Saturday March 31**

Romans 6:3-11

Today is Easter Eve, or Holy Saturday. Many congregations conduct Easter Vigil services on this night. If you are able, check-out the Holy Week schedule at the beginning of this devotional booklet and attend a service. This is the third of a three-day celebration in the church called the Triduum. The Three Days include Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil. The Vigil is the pinnacle of our three-day celebration. Tonight, we celebrate with the service of Light and lift our candles high. The light of Christ breaks the darkness of sin and death! We listen to

the readings from the Old Testament which help us to understand our own baptismal passage from death to life. On this night when Christ passed from death to life, we remember our baptisms and celebrate with those who are baptized into the family of God. Some congregations may celebrate in the Lord's Supper on this Holy Night, while others will continue Vigil until Easter morning!

**Prayer:** *Eternal giver of life and light, this holy night shines with the radiance of the risen Christ. Renew your church with the Spirit given us in baptism, that we may worship you in sincerity and truth and may shine as a light in the world, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

