

*Together in
the Word*



March 23-30, 2020

Fourth Sunday in Lent

This home devotional tool is designed to facilitate a form of worship that can take place in the home outside of Sunday morning. It is not meant to replace Sunday Worship, but to supplement it, especially as we live in this historical moment with an inability to gather together. Each week's issue will be based on the appointed readings for the previous Sunday in the church year.

INVOCATION

Leader¹: In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Family: Amen.

PRAYER FOR GRACE² (Morning)

Family: O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

OR

PRAYER FOR PEACE (Evening)

Family: Lord God, all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works come from you. Give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey your commandments. Defend us also from the fear of our enemies that we may live in peace and quietness, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

SCRIPTURE:

See attached sheet for Scriptures, notes, and devotional questions.

PRAYERS:

Include prayers for yourself and others, based on what you read and discussed in the Scriptures.

BLESSING:

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Family: Amen.

¹ In most homes, the head of household will serve as the leader and Scripture reader.

² Families may choose either prayer based on which time of day they are using this material.

THE SCRIPTURES:

Suggested days are in parenthesis³

DAY 1: HOSEA 5:15-6:3 (Monday)

Then I will return to my lair until they have borne their guilt and seek my face—in their misery they will earnestly seek me.”

“Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. ² After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. ³ Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.”

Some Notes:

Consider the context of this lesson carefully. On their face, this confession of Israel is beautiful, but the context reveals that at its heart it is empty. True repentance and selfless service are about more than saying the right words. The words sound nice, but there is no confession of guilt. This is a selfish “repentance” that is, in fact, merely made out of self-interest. True repentance leads to confession, trust, and fruits of selfless service that were absent in Israel.

Think about it⁴:

1. What does this Word of God teach me?
2. For what does this Word of God lead me to give thanks?
3. What sins does this Word of God lead me to confess?
4. For what does this Word of God lead me to pray?

³ The suggested days are just that: suggestions. Your family can use the readings on whichever days you would like.

⁴ These questions don't have a right or wrong answer. They are meant to lead us to think about the Scriptures and what they say to us. They are based on Martin Luther's "A Simple Way to Pray" – a letter he wrote to his barber. Simply talk through the questions one at a time, giving each question some time for input from the family.

DAY 2: MATTHEW 20:17-28 (Tuesday/Wednesday)

Now Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. On the way, he took the Twelve aside and said to them, ¹⁸ “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death ¹⁹ and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!”

²⁰ Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

²¹ “What is it you want?” he asked.

She said, “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.”

²² “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said to them. “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?”

“We can,” they answered.

²³ Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.”

²⁴ When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵ Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Some Notes:

Jesus revealed the plan of the Father to his disciples: the Son of God would leave his heavenly throne and selflessly give his freedom to his enemies, his body to the torturer, his life to the executioner in order that he might be our Savior. Rather than marveling at the depth of his love and self-sacrifice, the disciples argued about places of greatness in glory. The sons of Zebedee wanted to sit at the right and left of Jesus, but were only promised that they would join in drinking his cup. The other disciples were indignant, but not righteously so. Jesus corrected them, too. Followers of Jesus drink his cup and find greatness in selflessly serving others. For our motivation and our model, Christ points back to God’s plan for the Son of Man who came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Think about it:

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2. For what does this Word of God lead me to give thanks?
3. What sins does this Word of God lead me to confess?
4. For what does this Word of God lead me to pray?

Day 3: Romans 8:1-10 (Thursday/Friday)

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.

Some Notes:

One of Scripture's greatest chapters begins with one of its sweetest verses: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Christ's life ransomed mankind because it met God's demands and set us free from the Law of sin. Now we are free to live according to the Spirit. The sinful nature wants us to live in selfishness; the Spirit sets us free to live lives of selfless service to God and neighbor.

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