



7 MAR

3rd SUNDAY OF **LENT**

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION **8-13 MAR**



March 2021

CHRIST IS THE ROCK

READ

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. (1 Cor. 10:1-4)

REFLECT

The context of 1 Corinthians 10 is testing. This chapter contains that well-known verse, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful ..." (v. 13). The fact that everyone faces testing, temptation, and even suffering is softened by the truth that God is faithful and remains constant despite the changes and challenges of life. Knowing that the unchanging God is with us gives us hope and an abiding peace that defies explanation.

These specific verses remind us that not only is God with us, but we are with each other. Faith is a communal journey. We, the people of God are being reminded that we share the ups and downs of life. Our joys and sorrows are shared. God is faithful to us together as well as us individually. We are walking with each other through these days of Lent. Despite our cultural differences, locations, languages, and specific experiences, we can walk faithfully with each other and with God, as He faithfully leads us through uncharted territory.

REACT

What can you do to stay connected to friends, family, and your church family? Could you have lunch together via video chat? Is there an encouraging or just funny video you could share? How about a social media group that would keep people in your circle connected? The options are only limited by your creativity. We are all experiencing this time together. Let's keep it that way.



LIVING WATER

READ

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39)

REFLECT

The setting for this passage is the Feast of Tabernacles, a joyous and popular festival celebrating the miraculous provision of God for the people of Israel while they wandered in the wilderness. One of the ways God provided was, of course, water. In the wilderness and during the festival, water was an important symbol that God can, has, and does meet every need. It was the perfect time for Jesus to talk about Himself as living water, not as a temporary thirst-quencher but as a river of living water flowing in and through those who believe in Him. Although His original hearers may not have understood, He was describing the work of the Holy Spirit, who is the abiding presence of God with us and who continues the work of Jesus in and through us.

John described the coming of Jesus as the Word becoming flesh and dwelling ("tabernacling") with us for awhile (John 1:14), and here Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will abide with us forever, so that rivers of living water can be released in and through us to the thirsty world around us.

REACT

Every time you take a drink of water today, do two things – thank God for His provision for you at all times, and ask how you can be part of His provision for someone else. Living water is not meant to be contained!



PEOPLE OF GOD

READ

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:25-32)

REFLECT

As a reminder, the texts being used for this Lenten reflection series are from the Revised Common Lectionary. If you're not familiar with the lectionary, it's just a system for reading through the scripture on a three-year cycle. This version of the RCL was released in 1994.

This passage is about life in the community of faith. It's very practical advice for people living, ministering and worshipping together. On the other hand, maybe we need to think about this passage in new ways.

How about some of these:

- ❖ **Truth/falsehood** – Even if you're having very few face-to-face conversations these days, how about your social media presence? Is that social media article you're about to post or share true? Is it helpful?
- ❖ **Anger** – Emotions are running high ... are you helping or just throwing gas on the emotional fire?

- ❖ **Stealing** – Okay, you’re not actually stealing anything, but do you really need to buy more things than we need? Could you buy an extra and give it away? Could you NOT buy it and let someone else have the opportunity?
- ❖ **Unwholesome talk/edification** – Are you being sucked into the vortex of negativity? Are you part of the solution ... or part of the problem? Have you had a life-giving conversation lately? Could you?
- ❖ **Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor slander** – We all feel a little out of control right now, but are you spending a lot of time analyzing and criticizing the decisions of others? Are you scrolling/watching/listening/reading just to find things to be upset about?

REACT

KINDNESS/ TENDERNESS/ FORGIVENESS – If there has ever been a time for these three beautiful words, it’s now. If there has ever been a time for the people of God to be kind, tender, and forgiving, it’s now. If you have an opportunity to be or do any of these things today, take it! Better yet, CREATE an opportunity.

Faith and love are creative. We can find new ways to express and share the love of God. This is a moment when the people of God must be at our very best. We can be kind when others aren’t. We can be tender when times get tough. We can offer grace, which is the heart of forgiveness, when we disagree or don’t understand. We can be like Jesus. Always.



IMITATE CHRIST

READ

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth). (Ephesians 5:1-9)

REFLECT

If you've been to an art museum, you've probably seen an aspiring artist studying a great piece of art and trying to copy it in their sketchbook. Art students have always copied other people's work as a way of learning to make their own art. Actually, imitation is part of almost every kind of learning, whether it's art, music, math or science. Almost everyone learns better if they can watch someone else and then try to imitate the process. The best teachers stand by, correcting here and there, and guide their students along until they are confident enough to move forward on their own.

Paul told the Ephesians to be imitators of God, and then gave two specific instructions – walk in love and walk as children of Light. Those are action words, not talking-about-it words. They ask us to imitate the self-giving example of Jesus who gave Himself for us. They ask us to walk as children of light whose actions produce goodness, righteousness, and truth. Those two instructions are tall orders, but we have the perfect example to follow.

REACT

Prayer walking is a great spiritual discipline to practice. If you can, take a walk outside today. Even if you just go around the block, pray as you go. Pray for your neighbors, pray for anyone you see while you're out, pray for those who can't get out. Make it a true exercise of walking in love and spreading Light.



HE IS NEAR

READ

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness. For His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (Psalm 23)

REFLECT

This psalm is so familiar it's hard to write anything about it. Many people have either memorized it or could do a pretty good job of reciting it even if they bobbled a few words. It's comforting, like a favorite shirt or those jeans that fit just right.

It's also realistic. The sheep in this psalm don't just lie around eating grass while the shepherd dozes nearby. No, they also walk through the valley of the shadow of death, where there is plenty to be feared. But the sheep – and, just to be perfectly clear, we are the sheep – never walk alone. The shepherd is there too, guiding them along and preparing good things for them. They aren't going to stay there. They are on their way home, and the shepherd will be with them all the way there.

REACT

Maybe you need to hear the comforting words that the shepherd is with you today. Maybe someone you know needs to hear them too.



READ

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man." "How then were your eyes opened?" they asked. He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see." (John 9:1-11)

REFLECT

It's amazing how people can see the same thing very differently. When the disciples saw a blind man, their only interest seemed to be finding someone to blame. "Who sinned? Who caused this?" was their question.

When the neighbors saw the healed man, they went directly to denial. "No, that can't be him," they said. "It must just be someone who looks like him."

When Jesus saw the blind man, He saw a person who needed to experience and then become a living example of the work of God.

Lent is a time to get our vision corrected. It starts with a good, long inward look. It always ends in looking outward, where Jesus calls us to be living examples of the work of God in our lives.

REACT

Let's take time to practice a prayer of examen. One way to do that is to simply do a slow mental rewind of the past 24 hours and ask yourself where you have been particularly aware of God's presence and love in your life. What moments brought you joy and made you feel really close to God? Thank God for those moments. You might also remember some moments when you felt farther away from God. If you do notice those things, ask Him to help you move forward with faith and love.